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Tribal demography in India

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Tribal Demography in India

By

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Lecturer, Maharana Bhupal College, Udaipur (Raj)

With a Foreword by

Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, M.A., Ph. D.,

Director, Indian Institute for Population Studies, Madras.

KITAB MAHAL

ALLAHABAD ♦ DELHI ♦ BOMBAY

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To
My Revered Gurus
Shri R. P. Gupta, M. A.,
(With whom I read during 1935-39)
and
Dr. R. N. Bagchi, M. A., Ph. D., (London)
(With whom I conducted Research during
1952-56)

With profound respect and devotion
This Monograph is humbly dedicated
as a token of gratitude and
memory of those happy
days.

—C. B. MAMORIA.

FOREWORD

For some strange reason, all the studies on Indian demography have hitherto ignored the question of India's aboriginal population. In fact, many do not know that we have in our country more than fifty million aboriginals, the descendants of some of the original settlers and earliest inhabitants of India.

India is a melting pot in more than one sense. For centuries different races and tribes, castes and communities have met and mingled together and this gradual but incomplete process of welding has left different groups at different levels of cultural evolution. Today the population of India can be roughly divided into the great majority of "civilised" Indians of the plains and the minority of tribal population of the hills and forests constituting about 16 per cent of total population.

The tribals are scattered all over India but they are mainly concentrated in three zones—in the north-east, the centre and the south. They are divided into several tribal groups such as the Badagas, Bhils, Chenchus, Gonds, Khonds, Mundas, Nagas, Nayadis, Oraons, Santhals, and Savaras, etc. While these tribals have been our neighbours for centuries we know relatively little about them or their way of life.

In past, down to the early nineteenth century, the Government of the day was so ignorant of Anthropology and Ethnology that they approached the tribals from the point of the much needed peace in the land. All that mattered to the Government was whether the tribals would co-operate with the Government or not. Some of the tribals were even labelled "Criminal Tribes". The Government confined some millions of these people to what amounted to reservations⁴ forced innumerable disabilities on them, encroached upon their land and other means of livelihood, widened the already existing isolation between the tribals and other Indians, and allowed them to be exploited, unwittingly, of course,

by the planter and the forester. Efforts to safeguard their culture, language and the way of life were either lukewarm or were lacking. It denied them education and medical help, disputed their tribal organisation and practically took away some of the things they cherished most, leaving nothing to take their place, and on the whole, made them easy victims of exploitation by their "civilised" fellow-Indians and proselytizing foreign missionaries. The alien Government was more interested in collecting revenue and maintaining law and order than in rehabilitating the lives of these 'submerged' groups. It must be said to the great credit of the British Government, however, that despite their *laissez faire* policy, they did put down the custom of human sacrifice among some of the tribals.

With the advent of the political freedom, the situation has, however, changed for the better, but still much needs to be done. Today the welfare of the tribal population is the subject of Article 6 of our Constitution, which says, "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the Scheduled Caste, and Scheduled Tribe, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." There is also special provision for separate representation of the scheduled tribes in the Central Parliament and State legislatures. Article 275 of the Indian Constitution provides financial help to the States for the development of scheduled areas and for welfare schemes for scheduled tribes in the States.

But what is the basic policy behind this governmental concern and welfare measure? In the past official policy has ranged between total non-interference with the tribal population and forcing the tribals to adopt and adapt themselves to the Indian way of life. In practical policy this meant measures aimed at isolation which in turn meant no restriction or regulation of any kind or assimilation which involved bringing tribesmen down to the plains. Whatever the policy, the fundamental basis should be not to disturb the tribal way of life—their customs and manners on the one hand, and accelerate the process of assimilation,

integration and accentuation by persuasion on the other hand. Such a policy would prevent the exploitation of the tribals by others and at the same time provide them with the amenities of modern life such as drinking water, sanitation, public hygiene, medical aid and educational opportunities.

A policy implies an adequate knowledge of the ways of life of all tribal groups. A plan, if it is to be successful, must be predicated upon objective facts and scientific data. Here is the big gap in our knowledge. We know very little of the growth of population of different tribes, the economic, social and biological factors behind such growth or decline, their fertility, morbidity and mortality rates. We need more and reliable knowledge of their family life, marriage pattern, sexual behaviour, social and ritual structure, their levels of living and in a word, the total demographic and cultural milieu in which they have their being. It is true that we do have some able and pioneering studies like those of Verrier Elwin, Hutton, Risley, Haimendorf and others. But most of these studies are either anthropological excursions or ethnographic surveys. None of them go to the demographic roots. In fact, we do not have a single demographic study of any one of the tribes based on intensive field work. It is here that Shri Mamoria breaks new ground in this study on the Tribal Demography of India. This book is an able and scholarly survey. He has carefully assembled all the available data, evaluated their worth and has drawn conclusions. This book not only brings together data not available in a handy form hitherto, but focusses attention on several obscure points. Shri Mamoria deserves to be congratulated on bringing out this monograph.

This study is useful in another and more important direction. It reveals how little we know of Indian tribal demography. What is the birth of the Chenchus? What is the infant mortality rate among the Bhils? What is the expectation of life at birth of the Mundas? What is the maternal mortality rate among the Nayadis? What is the sex ratio among the tribals? What is their

survival rate ? Questions such as these can be asked without end. At present the only answer is, "We do not know". We need fundamental demographic research, based on field work among everyone of these tribes on the basis of census questionnaire and cohort analysis. Without basic and scientific data, no sound administrative policy can be formulated. Lord Keynes once remarked that there is nothing a Government hates more than to be well informed, for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult. Public administration can be defined as the art of reaching right decisions on insufficient evidence. We must so change this situation that every decision of the Government is backed by a vast body of objective, scientific and unimpeachable data. Here, in the case of our tribal population, the objective is not mere demographic research but sound knowledge on which our nation-building policies can be based.

The tribals are our brothers and sisters and they should be levelled up to the highest potential possibilities. Further, we want to evolve a strong and united India. Despite the deep and fundamental unity pervading our cultural evolution continually for some five thousand years, we do not have a unified culture like the British, German or French. Ours is a composite type and the component parts stand out in bold relief, as in the United States of America, where each immigrant group has brought with it its own cultural patterns and blended them into melting pot of the American way of life. In our country, the various regional, linguistic, religious and tribal cultural blocks are only different aspects of the one Indian culture. Despite the centripetal forces that are binding all these different cultural patterns into one strengthening unity, distinctive features of our provincial, regional and tribal cultures still stand out in bold relief. They are bound to continue and flourish, for India's cultural unity is bound to be a federal one like that of the Soviet Union. India, thus presents a colourful diversity and a dull colourless uniformity.

This, of course, does not mean that the process of assimilation and Indianisation of the small minority centrifugal cultural patterns has been completed. The lack of assimilation does sometimes constitute a problem and raises acute issues, though the fact that there is no immigration of new groups into India is a great help in building up of our nation. Leaders who have India's welfare at heart might well profit by American experience in this regard. An effort in the right direction will be an acceleration of inter-caste, inter-provincial, inter-religious, inter-"Indian"-tribal exchanges and marriages. To become a strong nation India's communal, linguistic and tribal groups need not be merged into a common mass as to resemble the colourless drab which results from mixing many colours. Rather that these castes, linguistic groups and tribes might be woven into a brilliant fabric, in which none of the colours have been destroyed, but all preserved in their original hues, and so blended as to gain new lustre from the new associations and contrasts. Such an objective as this might well be the basis of our policy towards our tribal minorities.

Gandhinagar,
Madras, 20.
15th August, 1957.

S. Chandrasekhar,
M. A., Ph. D.,
Director,
Indian Institute for
Population Studies.

PROLOGUE

Historically Dravidian, Aryan and Buddhistic cultures have made distinctive contributions in the shape of characteristic institutions which, established in successive epochs down to prehistoric times, existed side by side thereafter, supplementing rather than supplanting one another, each type serving a specific purpose or a particular class, while all conduced collectively to render the entire system comprehensive as well as inter-related, to suit the needs, conventions and determine the standards of times. The attainment of freedom by our country has propped up many problems touching Indian national life, which under an alien rule was lop-sided. The population of India is problematical and still more the problem of its primitive tribes, the original (Swadeshi) residents, which unfortunately has so far escaped the attention of our scholars.

Prof. C. B. Mamoria's monograph on the "The Tribal Demography in India" is the result of his sincere studies and sound scholarship. There are many within the country and abroad who require authentic information on this aspect of our national life. Prof. Mamoria's monograph fills the chasm in scholarship created by the biased accounts of foreign missionaries and European travellers. Now that India has a constitution and our Government has a genuine interest for the upliftment of the primitive tribes as evidenced by the working of the First Five-Year Plan a study of Indian tribal population through the angle of vision rightly chosen by the learned scholar affords welcome release to those interested in this problem. A profound scholar, proficient in literature, keenly alive to all progressive ideas, Professor Mamoria's versatile and dynamic personality is set on a mental background calculated not merely to vitalise and inspire, but to visualise and compel realisation.

It is a unique feature of the primitive tribes that no external influence altered their character to this day. In the very words of the author, "The aboriginals are the real

“Swadeshi” and the oldest inhabitants of India in whose presence every one is a foreigner”. While touching all aspects of the problem, in Prof. Mamoria’s graphic description of the marriage rituals of the aboriginals, one finds enough material of comparison and contrasts with the 8 types of marriages amongst the Hindus as described by Manu.

If politics and polemics permeate to the fire-side and the kitchen from the rostrum of the nationalist, if the tempo of social life is to be refined, rustic aspirations ennobled, if amongst the primitive tribesmen there is more of a saner attitude towards life, a growing readiness to strive to look backward and to live forward, it is the indubitable outcome of our population problem that this subject (Primitive tribes) must form an important feature in the study of Economics, Geography, History and Sociology courses of our Indian Universities and Prof. Mamoria’s stupendous, yet congested work must render great service to the cause of our educational set-up in the modern times. The author deserves to be heartily congratulated for this nice attempt.

Dated Udaipur :

The 20th Aug. 57.

S. S. KULSHRESHTHA,

M. A. (Geog), M. A. (Econs),

B. Com; L. L. B., Ph. D.,
(Geog.)

PREFACE

Since the achievement of Freedom and the adoption of the New Constitution, greater attention has begun to be given to the welfare of the so far neglected vast humanity of tribals which number over 19 millions in India. No doubt some valuable Reports have been issued, both by the Central Government and some of the State Governments yet the information is so vast and scattered that it is not within the easy reach of the average advanced students as well as the laymen and others interested in their welfare. Necessity was, therefore, felt for a brief and sufficient account of these people which could give a clear yet impartial view of their present position and future prospects. This monograph attempts to meet this need.

Being conscious of my own limitations of knowledge, incompetency and ill-equipment to deal with this important topic, I have ventured upon this project only in response to an urge from a teacher in me, which I could not resist but to act upon, for which I offer my due apology to the scholars of the subject. I do not know how far I have been able to handle this important problem, it is for the experts to judge. An attempt has been made in this Monograph to discuss such topics as the distribution and classification of the tribes, their standard of living, their role in national economy, their dietaries, sex and marriage rituals, demography, housing and living conditions, education, economic pursuits in which they are engaged, the problems which confront them and how can their conditions be bettered. A chapter in the beginning is also devoted to the Peoples of India, over which a clear expression is generally not available.

Needless to say that in preparation of this Monograph, I have necessarily, drawn upon copiously on the existing reports especially those of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' Commissioner for India and the Adam Jati Sevak Sangh, and the various Census Reports as well as individual surveys undertaken by the experts in the field

for which I sincerely express my heart-felt thanks. I should frankly confess that the writings of such eminent scholars as Dr. V. Elwin, Dr. B. S. Guha, Dr. G. S. Ghurye, Dr. J. H. Hutton, Dr. D. N. Majumdar, Prof. N. K. Bose, Late Shri A. V. Thakkar, and N. Bhattacharjee and a host of others have benefited me much. The debt to all these authorities can better be realised than described in words.

I sincerely hope that this brochure will prove immensely useful to the Post-Graduate students of M. A. (Geography) and Sociology. It will be equally found profitable by the laymen, social workers and others interested in the welfare of these people.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Dr. S. P. Chatterjee, M. Sc., Ph. D., (London), D. Litt (Paris), University Professor and Head of the Department of Geography, University of Calcutta, who so kindly responded to my humble request for an illuminating Foreword to this book. I am also highly obliged to Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, M. A., Ph. D., Director, Indian Institute of Population Studies, Madras for also providing me with a thought-provoking and learned Foreword who in spite of heavy engagements did his job so nicely. My friends Dr. S. S. Kulshreshta, M. A. (Econs); M. A. (Geog.), LL. B., B. Com., Ph. D., (Geog.), Professor S. L. Doshi, M.A., and R. D. Saksena M. A., M. Com., also deserve my hearty thanks for their kind words of encouragement and appreciation of this work. My publishers also richly deserve my sincere thanks for giving such a nice printing and get-up to this volume, and without whose hearty co-operation this Monograph would not have seen the light of the day.

If this monograph could stimulate among the educated masses for their fellow brethren I would feel my labour more than amply rewarded.

UDAIPUR,

28th Aug., 1957.

C. B. MAMORIA

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I. PEOPLES OF INDIA

Introduction

The population of India is made up of many strains which entered her territories at one time or another from the older Palaeolithic to the historical periods. Situated at the southern extremity of the Asiatic land-mass at the head of the Indian Ocean, flanked by high mountain ranges on her northern and upper parts of her western and eastern frontier, and with the sea separating the shores of the remainder, India geographically formed a naturally protected region into which man could move only through gaps in the mountain barriers. One of the results of her topographical conditions was that the races that had come earlier and were in occupation of the country were not destroyed, but pushed south and eastwards and to this day they form some of the main components of the population. Similarly the hills and the forests gave shelter to a large number of primitive tribes who were left comparatively unmolested and had thus better chances of survival, living their own life. Racial types still occurring in the Indian population, therefore, contain many extremely primitive strains and represent elements from all the main divisions of mankind not found elsewhere to the same extent.

Racial Types and Elements

The absence of standard techniques of measurement and want of definite knowledge about racial

significance of the various physical traits in man, explains diverse schemes of classification formulated by ethnologists. The classification of the Indian people (from anthropometric point of view) was first attempted by Sir Herbert Risley in the Census of India, 1901. He distinguished seven different ethnic types in the population of India. They are as follows :—

Risley's Classification

1. The *Indo-Aryan type* which is found generally in the E. Punjab, Rajasthan, and Kashmir and has as its characteristic members the Rajputs, Khattris and Jats. The structure of these people is mostly tall, complexion fair ; eyes dark ; hair on face plentiful ; head long ; nose narrow and prominent but not specially long. This race covers about 75 per cent of the population of India.

2. The *Dravidian type* inhabits the southern part of India especially Madras, Hyderabad, southern portion of M. P., and the Chota Nagpur. Its most characteristic representatives are the *Paniyans* of Malabar and the *Santhals* of the Chota Nagpur. They are probably the original type of the population of India and now modified to a varying extent by the admixture of the Aryans, the Scythians, and the Mongoloid elements. In typical specimen the structure is very short or below mean; the complexion very dark (approaching black) hair plentiful, with an occasional tendency to curl; eyes dark ; head long ; nose very broad, sometimes depressed at the root, but not so as to make

the face appear flat. They form about 20 per cent of the population of India.

3. *Mongoloid type* is distributed like a belt along the Himalayan region, Nepal and Assam. They are represented by the *Kanets* of Lahul and Kulu ; *Lepchas* of Darjeeling and Sikkim. Their chief features are : the head is broad, complexion dark (with a yellowish tinge), hair on face scanty ; stature short or below average ; nose from fine to broad ; face characteristically flat, and eyelids often oblique.

4. *The Aryo-Dravidian (or Hindustan) type* is the intermixture in varying proportions of the Aryans and the Dravadians. They are found in U. P., in parts of Rajasthan and in Bihar, and are represented in its upper strata by the *Brahman* and in its lower by the *Harijans*. The head form in them is generally long with a tendency to medium ; the complexion varies from lightish brown to black ; the nose ranges from medium to broad ; (being always broader than among the Indo-Aryans) ; the stature is lower than in the latter group and usually below the average height.

5. *The Mongolo-Dravidian (or Bengali) type* is found in Bengal and Orissa (comprising of Bengal Brahmins and Bengali Kayasthas). This type is a blend of the Dravidians and Mongoloid elements, with a strain of Indo-Aryan blood in the higher groups. The head is broad and round, complexion dark ; hair on the face plenty ; nose usually medium with a tendency to flatness in

some cases. The stature is medium and sometimes short.

6. *The Scytho-Dravidian type* is an admixture of the Scythians and the Dravidians. They generally inhabit the hilly tracts of M. P., Saurashtra and Coorg. The Scythian element is more prominent in higher social groups of these regions, while the Dravidian features are more prominent in the lower groups. This type has lower stature, a greater length of head, moderately fine nose, fair complexion and hair on the body quite scanty.

7. *The Turko-Iranian type* is now found in Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

Risley does not mention anything about the Negrito element in the population of India. But the occurrence of Negrito element in some of the pre-Dravidian tribes cannot be denied. Iyer observes woolly hair among the *Kadars*, and *Pulayas* of Cochin and also among the *Uralis* and *Kanikars*. The infiltration of the Negroid element must have taken place during the 8th to 10th century A. D. Haddon has referred to an early dark Negroid race in Susiana and its drift to India is not impossible.¹ Lapique also found some distinct Negro faces near South Indian virgin forests. Hutton has shown that there is a Negrito substratum in the population of the eastern frontiers of India.

Subsequent Classifications

After Risley various anthropologists have tried

¹ A. C. Haddon, *The Wanderings of Peoples*, 1919, p. 25.

to classify the Indian people but none could give a precise and scientific classification till the census of 1931 when Dr. Guha revised the earlier accounts and made a classification of the Indian people.

Giuffrida's Classification

According to Giuffrida Ruggeri, the following ethnic classification of India can be made :—

- (i) *Negritos*, Veddahs (in Ceylon) and some southern Indian jungle tribes.
- (ii) *Pre-Dravidians* or Australoid, Veddaic, Santhals, Oraons, Mundas and Hos, etc.
- (iii) *Dravidians*. Telegu and Tamil-speaking people.
- (iv) *Tall Dolicho-cephalic elements*, Todas.

Haddon's Classification

According to Haddon, India is divided into three main geographical regions, *viz.* the Himalayas, the northern plains and the southern mostly jungle-covered plateau. In his opinion the racial history of India is not yet thoroughly known. The following racial elements are noticed in :—

- (a) the Himalayas, (i) *Indo-Aryans*, *Kanets*, east of the Punjab with a trace of the Tibetan blood.
- (ii) *Mongoloid*. In Nepal and in higher mountains.
- (b) The main racial element of the plain is the Indo-Afghan. The Jats and the Rajputs are the representatives of this type.

- (c) For the main population of Deccan, Haddon uses the term *Dravidian*. The main racial elements, as observed by him, in Deccan are :—
- (i) *Negrito*. A suspected strain is taken into account. It is represented by the Kadars.
 - (ii) *Pre-Dravidians*. The Santhals and the Mundas are the best examples.
 - (iii) *Dravidians*. Tamil Brahmins, the people of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore are included in this group.
 - (iv) *Southern Brachy-cephals*. Parava (fishermen of the Tinnevellay Coast) and Pariyan (of Tamil district).
 - (v) *Western Brachy-cephals*. are represented by the Nagar Brahmins, Coorgs, etc.

The position of Todas is anomalous.

Eickstedt's Classification

Freiherr von Eickstedt (who led the German Indian Anthropological Expedition in this country in India during 1926-29) has classified the Indian people both from physical and cultural points of view. He has given four main divisions :—

I. *Weddid* or *Ancient Indians*. Primitive people of jungles. It is divided into :—

- (a) *Gondid*. Dark brown complexion, curly hair, totemistic, mattock-using culture, matriarchal influence—the Oraons, the Gonds, etc.

- (b) *Malid*. Hair is curly with black brown colour, originally ancient culture with foreign influence—the *Kurumbas* and *Veddahs*, etc.

II. *Melanid or Black Indians*. Radially mixed group. It is divided into

- (a) *South Melanid*. Black brown people in the most southern plains of India with strong foreign matriarchy—the Yanadi.
- (b) *Kolid*. Primitive people with dark brown complexion of the north Deccan forest, strong totemistic and matriarchal influence—the Santhals, the Mundas.

III. *Indid or New Indians*. Racially advanced people of the open region. They are divided into

- (a) *Gracile Indid*. Brown people with gracile appearance, have enforced patriarchy—the Bengalis.
- (b) *North Indid*. Light brown people, possibly original patriarchal headmanship—the Todas, the Rajputs.

IV. *Palae-Mongoloid*. Palayan from Wynad.

Dr. Guha's Classification

According to Dr. B. C. Guha the following are the ethnic composition of the present-day Indian population :—

1. The Negrito.
2. The Proto-Australoid
3. The Mongoloid.

- (a) Palae-Mongoloid.
 - (i) Long-headed type.
 - (ii) Broad-headed type.
 - (b) Tibeto-Mongoloid.
4. The Mediterranean
- (a) Palae-Mediterranean.
 - (b) Mediterranean.
 - (c) Oriental Type.
5. The Western Brachy-cephals or the Alpo-Dinaric.
- (a) Alpinoid.
 - (b) Dinaric.
 - (c) Armenoid.
6. The Nordic.
- 1. The Negrito**

There have been continued disputes regarding the existence of Negroid strain in Indian population. As a matter of fact one finds true Negrito people in the Andaman Islands, in the Bay of Bengal, in New Guinea, the Philippines and also in the *Semangs* and *Sakais* of the Malaya Peninsula. On the mainland of India Lapique claims the existence of a Negrito strain among some of the forest tribes of Southern India. The wooly hair (which is anthropologically indicative of Negro blood) is to be found among the *Kadars* and *Pulayans* of Travancore-Cochin, and probably also among the Irules and primitive tribes of the

Wynaad. But Thurston denies the above statement. On the contrary Guiffida Ruggeri thinks that among many of the south Indian jungle tribes Negritos who are supposed to have been there before the pre-Dravidians, are still to be found. Haddon admits that a Negroid population has been suspected in the Deccan (*e. g.* among the Kardars) but it has not been definitely established. Dr. Hutton has given much attention to the Negrito problem. According to him Negrito substratum is found in the population of eastern frontier of India. He has found out distinctly frizzly hair among some of the *Angami Nagas* of Manipur and Cachar Hills.* The Negrito strain has also been found by Dr. Guha, among the Kadars and some other hill tribes.† S. Sarkar also found spirally twisted hair among many aboriginal tribes of the Rajmahal Hills.‡. Dr. Hutton generalising the facts writes, "The earliest inhabitants of Indian Peninsula were probably Negroid in type and the Negrito rapidly disappearing though he is, still survives in the Andaman Islands.....but he has left a few traces on the mainland of India (and Burma). In the *Kadars* and *Uralis* of the forests of the extreme south of India occasional individuals with frizzly hair and low stature and Negro-like features are very suggestive of the survival of the Negro race." Guiffida Ruggeri maintains the pre-existence of

* J. N. Hutton, *Man in India* (1927), p. 7.

† B. S. Guha, *Nature* (1929), p. 123.

‡ S. Sarkar, *Nature* (1936), p. 37.

Negritos between India and Persian Gulf and their survivals in Susiana up to historic times.

In the Bay of Bengal, in the Malaya Peninsula, in parts of the Fiji Islands, in the New Guinea, in Southern India and southern Arabia, the presence of a Negritos or a suspected Negroid substratum induces one to suppose that at some remote pre-historic time a Negroid population occupied a very great part of the Asiatic mainland and specially the southern part of it. Subsequently, on arrival of the pre-Dravidians and the Dravidians, who proved themselves stronger, this primitive population might have been dispersed, extinct or absorbed. At the present time they are not found in any strength but only as remnants of an ancient race pushed into the hills of south-western India where they were partially absorbed by other tribes, but in more isolated inaccessible tracts such as Perrambiculum they were segregated and preserved their features.

The chief characteristics of these Negritos are as follows. The texture of the hair is fine and of wooly nature, they are of pigmy stature, the mean being below 5 ft., small head, bulbous forehead, smooth brow-ridges and feeble chins. They are dark in colour. Head form is variable; it may be round, medium or long. Their limbs are delicate with arms long in relation to the legs. The face is short and protruding and the nose flat and broad and the lips are thick and everted.

What the Negritos contributed to the Indian culture is not known, but there is some ground

for thinking that the cult of the ficus tree originated from them.

2. The Proto-Australoid

Most probably the second immigrants were the Proto-Australoid or the Pre-Dravidians, whose earliest ancestors could be traced to Palestine. But when and by which way they came is still unknown. However, this type is the predominant element at present in almost all the tribal population in India, especially southern, central and partly northern. Their great affinities in skin, colour, head form, hair, face, etc., with the Veddahs of Ceylon, Australian and the Melanesians indicate that the four belong to the same type. But whether this people migrated out of India or are immigrants into India cannot yet be definitely known. For their affinity with the Australians the term *Proto-Australoid* is given. It is true that in the typical Australians the brow-ridges are extremely stout, the nasal root very sunken, and there is an abundance of bodily hair not usual in Indian tribes, but there is a large number, especially among such tribes as the *Chenchus*, *Malayans*, *Kurumbas*, and the *Yeruvas* of South India and among many members of the *Munda*, *Kol*, *Santhals* and *Bhils* groups—where these characteristics are also marked. The exterior castes of Hindu society throughout the greater part of the country are also mainly constituted from this racial strain.

The physical features of this type are: colour dark brown to nearly black, long head, broad and

flat nose but depressed at the root, wavy and even curly hair, fleshy everted lips, and short stature.

This race contributed a lot towards Indian culture. To them may perhaps be attributed a large share of totemistic rites, exorcism, food taboos and magical beliefs still obtaining in Indian life. The ban on commensality and inter-marriage which forms the basis of caste system must also owe its origin to them.

3. The Mongoloid

The Mongoloid people came into India from their homes in north-western China about the middle of the first millenium B. C. to Tibet, and in subsequent centuries they penetrated the plains of the North and East Bengal and the hills and the plains of Assam. Though the difficult land routes in the north and north-east have always stood in the way of large-scale invasions or migrations yet slow infiltration could not have been checked and the three types of the Mongoloid people are still found in the north-eastern India in Assam, Nepal and parts of eastern Kashmir. This type differs from the other group by the following special characters : (i) Flat face with prominent cheek bones, (ii) almond-shaped eyes, and (iii) scanty hair growth on body and face.

As said above the Mongoloid group contains three types, *viz* : (a) *The Palae-Mongoloid* who are of more primitive nature and do not exhibit the characters so conspicuously. It is distinguished by the form of the head, long to medium with

bulging occiput nose, medium, eye-slits oblique, face short and flat with prominent cheek bones, dark to light brown skin. This variety is known as the *Long-headed type*. They are predominant in the tribes—such as the *Nagas* living in the sub-Himalayan regions, Assam and Burma Frontier. It extends far into Yunnan and south-eastern China. The *Semi Naga* is the true representative of this type. (b) The other one of this group, the *Broad-headed type* is found in the hill tribes of Chittagong (such as the *Chakmas* and the *Mughhs*) now in Pakistan. The *Lepachas* of Kalimpong are also included in this group. Their head is broad, nose medium., darker skin, obliquity of eye-slits and eye-folds are more marked. The face is short and flat. The character of the hair is straight but tending towards short waves (wavy).

(b) *The Tibeto-Mongoloid*. They are broad-headed people with light skin, tall stature, flat and broad nose, very marked face with long and flattish character. The absence of hair on body and face are more marked. They are found in Sikkim and Bhutan.

The Mongoloid type had exerted a great influence on the culture of India. The use of milk, tea, rice, paper, terraced cultivation, communal houses, head-hunting and betelnut culture may be mentioned as the contributions of the Mongoloid races. To one of its branches—*Oceanic*—we also owe the introduction of outrigger canoe the cocoanut and the pine apple.

The three types Negrito, Proto-Australoid and the Mongoloid constitute the main tribal population in India. In addition to these, the general population contains mainly the Mediterranean, the Alpo-Dinaric and the Nordic races. Of these the Mediterranean group is the largest. There is not one uniform type of this race but rather a number of closely graded types characterised by the common possession of moderate stature, long head, slightly built body and dark complexion. This group probably differentiated in the southern steppes of northern Africa and the adjoining Asiatic mainland, and following the northward movement of the storm zone at the close of the Ice-age, drifted both westwards and eastwards. Three distinct types of this race can be distinguished in India :—

(a) *The Palae-Mediterranean.* Dark skin, long head with high vault and projecting occiput, narrow face but disharmonic in character, broad nose, medium stature, hair growth scanty on body and face, are the distinguishable characters of this people. This type appears to be predominant in the Telugu and Tamil Brahmins of South India.

The Palae-Mediterraneans probably brought pottery, Megalithic culture, with its associated fertility rites and human sacrifice, and it seems likely that they were responsible for introducing matriarchal institutions and the high position of women in peninsular India.

(b) *The Mediterranean Type.* This type is responsible for the development of Indus Civilization

and were subsequently dispersed by the Aryan-speaking Vedic invaders—who came from the Northern Mesopotamian regions about 2,500 B.C. via Iran to the Gangetic basin and to a smaller extent, beyond the Vindhya. It forms today a dominant element in the population of northern India and occupies chiefly the East Punjab, Kashmir, Rajasthan and U. P. This type is represented by Marhattas of M. B ; Brahmins of U.P. and Cochin, Bombay and Malabar.

Dark to olive brown skin, head and face long, narrow nose, medium to tall stature, slender build of the body, the growth of hair on face and body much more pronounced, better developed chin, and large open eyes are the chief features of this people.

This race developed the civilization of the Indus valley, and to it we owe the largest content of the present-day Indian religion and culture. Most of the common domestic animals, river transport, garments, the structure of houses, the use of brick, painted pottery and the building of towns are due to them. Astronomy and the Indian script are also their contributions.

(c) *The Oriental Race of Fischer* (or the *Semitic Type*). The chief concentration of this race has always been in Asia Minor and Arabia, from where it must have come to India. This type resembles the Mediterranean except in nose formation, which is long and convex and this type is strongest in the Punjab but throughout Rajasthan and the western U.P. it is common.

(d) The *Western-Brachy-Cephalis* (Broad-heads) came into India from the west. They are designated as *Alpine* (from their associations with that European regions); *Dinarics* (from the Dinaric Alps which stretch from Dalmatia to Croatia) and the *Armenoids*.

(a) *The Albanoids*. Skin lighter than the Mediterraneans, head broad with round occiput round face, with prominent narrow nose, stature medium, sometimes short, hair growth in abundance on body and face, the body thick-set and strongly built are the main criteria of this group. This type possibly moved from southern Baluchistan through Sind, Saurashtra, Gujarat, Maharashtra into Kannada, Tamilnad and Ceylon and along the Ganges to Bengal. The intermediate Malabar and Andhra country remained unaffected. The people of this group are found in Saurashtra, (*Kathis*), Gujarat (*Banias*), and Bengal (*Kayasthas*). The major racial strains of Bengal and Bombay belong to this group.

(b) *The Dinaric*. Skin slightly darker, head not so broad but very short with flattened vertical occiput and vault very high, forehead seems to be rather receding slightly, face comparatively long, nose long and often convex, stature tall—are the main features of this sub-type. The presence of this sub-type is very marked in Bengal, Orissa and Coorg mixed with the Mediterraneans.

(c) *The Armenoid*. Twany white skin, short to medium stature, broad head, narrow and aquiline nose with a depressed tip and broad wings. The

Parsees of Bombay are the true representatives of this group. The occurrence of this type among the *Bengali Vaidyas* and *Kayasthas* is not a rare one.

(d) *The Nordics*. This race came last of all from the north and belonged to the Northern Steppe folk, moving south-westwards in a great racial wave along the Kassites, they swept into north-west India somewhere during the second millenium B. C. This type bears the following physical features; fair skin, head long often medium with arched forehead and occiput protruding, prominent narrow nose with tall stature. In north India this type is noticed but marked by admixture with the Mediterraneans. The sprinkling of this element has reached the western side of India and well as far east in Bengal.

This type contributed a lot to the culture of India. They brought horses, probably iron and best variety of wheat. The use of milk, alcoholic drinks, dicing, chariot racing, and tailored garments were due to them. They introduced patriarchy in Indian social life, but their chief gift was the *Aryan language*. They have been, in fact, directly or indirectly responsible for most of the glories of Indian literature, philosophy and art.

Conclusion

From what has been stated above it will be found that the present population of India is an admixture of almost all the races of the modern world with some variations due to climate and

environmental influences. Though ethnic zones can be demarcated according to the predominance of the groups, it must be clearly understood that no rigid separation is possible as there is considerable overlapping of types. The Negrito is nearly extinct. The *Proto-Australoids* are found in distant parts, almost in secluded areas in the hilly regions and jungles of southern, western and central India. The Mongoloid group were not intermixed with the whole population though scattered and stray cases may be found in the north-eastern regions. The Mediterraneans gradually settled in the Indus valley, the present desert tracts and travelled along the Ganges valley. These settlements and movements were the results of fresh incursions, fights, defeats and conquests. This group and the Alpine groups with a sprinkling of Nordics settled and intermixed in vast northern plain. In the Ganges valley we find in the upper portion a dominance of the Mediterraneans, while in the lower valley (in Bengal), the Alpo-Dinaric is decidedly dominant. While the Mediterranean and the Alpo-Dinaric groups with some proto-Australoid, settled down, intermixed and became dominant in the area south of the Vindhya, the Nordic or the Proto-Nordic is scarcely found in the Deccan excepting a very few in the Central India region.

2. TRIBES IN INDIA

I. Introduction

The peoples of India include a very large number of primitive tribes who subsist on hunting, fishing or by simple forms of agriculture. Various authorities have described them by different names. Sir Herbert Risley and Lacey, Mr. Elwin and Shri A. V. Thakar called them "Aboriginals"¹; Sir Baines included them under the category of "Hill Tribes"²; Mr. Grigson regards them as "hill tribes or wilder aboriginals" while Mr. Shoobert called them "aborigines"³. They have been regarded as "animists" by Mr. Tallents, Mr. Sedgwick, Mr. Martin⁴ and Dr. Hutton calls them as "primitive tribes"⁵ and Mr. Baines calls them "jungle people, forest tribes or folk"⁶. Mr. Elwin calls the Baigas, the "original owners of the country."⁷ The

1 H. Risley, *The Peoples of India* (1904), p. 218; Lacey, *Census of India (Bihar and Orissa)*, 1931, p. 288-9; V. Elwin, *The Loss of the Nerves*, p. 1; A.V. Thakar, *The Problems of Aborigines in India* (1941), p. 1.

2 Baines, *Ethnography*, p. 112, 113.

3 Shoobert, *Census of India (C. P. and Berar Report)*, 1931, p. 312.

4 Tallent, *Census of India (B. and O. Report)*, 1921, p. 125; Sedgwick, *Bombay Census Report* 1921, p. 67; Martin, *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. 1 Pt. I p. 110-111.

5 Hutton, *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I Pt. I. p. 391.

6 Baines, *Census of India*, 1891, Vol. I, Pt. I. p. 158.

7 V. Elwin, *The Baigas*, p. 519.

eminent Indian anthropologist and sociologist, Dr. Ghurye calls them "Backward Hindus"⁸. Dr. Das and Das rename them as "submerged humanity"⁹. Article 342 of the Indian Constitution relates to a special provision in respect of "Scheduled Tribes," which are defined as the "tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribal communities which the President may specify by public notification." The tribal groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the national population. The term "Adivasis" (Adi-original; Vasi-inhabitant) has recently become current to designate these groups.

It may be pointed out here that different and often contradictory criteria have been used by the administrators, the lawyers, the sociologists and the anthropologists as a basis of their definition, such as colour of the skin, language, customs, tribal conditions and living standards. Every country containing a large number of such population has tackled the problem of definition in its own way, according to its own tradition, history, social organisation and policies.

II. Their Origin

The origin of India's Scheduled Tribes has been traced to such races as the Proto-Australoids, who one time practically covered the whole of India; secondly, the Mongolians who are still

8 G. S. Ghurye, *The Aborigines—So-Called And Their Future* (1943), p. 21

9 Dr. R. K. Das and S. R. Das, *India's Submerged Humanity*, in *Modern Review* (Oct., 1955), p. 269.

located mostly in Assam, and finally, to a limited extent, also to the Negritos strain as indicated by frizzy hair, among the Andamanese and the Kadars of the South-west.

The Scheduled Tribes of India are the earliest inhabitants or indigenous peoples of the country, who were unable to defend themselves and were gradually forced to recede before the invading hordes of such peoples as the Dravidians, Indo-Aryans and Mongolians coming from the West, North-west and North-east respectively, who were not only superior in numerical strength but also in mechanical equipment. The indigenous peoples thus took shelter in the mountain depths and thick jungles, where a considerable number of them are still found and have been estimated to be about 5 millions. Those who were left behind on the plains gradually disappeared either by absorption or by acculturalization.

Though these original tribes in India have been divided and sub-divided into a large number of subtribes, all mutually exclusive, each having the endogamous and exogamous clans with their town names and their own customs. The common features of all these tribes are :

- (1) They live away from the civilized world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forests and hills,
- (2) They belong either to one of the three stocks—Negritos, Austroloids or Mongoloids,
- (3) Speak the same tribal dialect,

- (4) Profess primitive religion known as "Animism" in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element,
- (5) Follow primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting, and gathering of forest produce,
- (6) They are largely carnivorous or flesh and meat eaters,
- (7) They live either naked or semi-naked using tree barks and leaves for clothing, and,
- (8) They have nomadic habits and love for drink and dance.¹⁰

The Tribal Welfare Committee which met under the auspices of the Indian Conference of Social Welfare Work at Calcutta and consisted of anthropologists and other social workers, recommended the following classifications of the existing tribes :

- (1) *Tribal Communities* or those who are still confined to the original forest habitats and follow the old pattern of life;
- (2) *Semi-Tribal Communities* or those who have more or less settled down in rural areas and have taken to agriculture and allied occupations;
- (3) *Accultured Tribal Communities* or those who have migrated to urban or semi-

¹⁰ Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes 1952.

urban areas and are engaged in modern industries and vocations and have adopted modern cultural traits; and

- (4) *Totally Assimilated Tribals* in the Indian population. ¹¹

III. Distribution of the Tribal People

The chief home of the tribes is in the barren and sparsely populated tracts of hills and jungles, corresponding in extent fairly closely to east Satpuras but encroaching eastwards and westwards along the Vindhyan range through the south of Madhya Bharat Plateau on the eastern extremity of Gujarat. The only other tract where they are numerous are the outlying parts of Assam range and the hilly country that divides Assam from Burma. The geographical distribution of aboriginals in India is reported as falling into three main regions in which they are concentrated :

Firstly, the tribal people are distributed all over the sub-Himalayan region and the mountain valleys on the Eastern Frontiers of India which merge imperceptibly with those of Burma in the south-east, *i.e.* in Assam, and the Central Khasi and Garo Hills.

Secondly, the other major groups of the aboriginal tribes occupy the mountain belt between Nurbada and the Godawari—the Central barrier that divides the North from the Peninsular India has provided a shelter for these tribes from very ancient times. This region extends to the Santhal Parganas in the east, Hyderabad in the south and

Rajasthan Gujarat with a strong Bhil population in the west or north-west.

Thirdly, the third group is found chiefly concentrated in the southernmost parts of the Western Ghats stretching from Wynad to Cape Comorin, *i.e.* south of the Kistna river below latitude 16 north. From the fact that they occupy the marginal areas and also from the records in the oldest Tamil literature of the Sangam period, they appear to be one of the most ancient and primitive inhabitants now living in India having been pushed by the intrusion of more advanced people into their present habitats, where safety and shelter were found against increasing pressure.

In addition to these three major zones, there are small groups in some parts of the country or within the Indian political boundaries. Of these the Andamanese and the Nicobarese who live in the Islands bearing their names, though now separated from the main body of India's aboriginal tribes, are ethnically connected with them. 1'

IV. Their Strength and Growth

The aboriginal population of India is the most numerous of those in Asia concerning whom more or less detailed information is available. Doubts have been expressed about the reliability of their numbers for two reasons. Firstly, because of the difficulty of classification and secondly, because of deliberate misrepresentation; as after 1909, with the inauguration of the separate religious electorates, there had been an increasing pressure on the part of religious groups to swell their number in the

Census. As a result of these errors, the data on the tribals are most inaccurate of all those gathered by the Census. The net effect is to understate the number of tribals and correspondingly to overstate the number of other group.

Some of the most recent statements concerning their numbers insist on the unreliability of the 1941 Census figures. "Adivasis, as they are now called, number not less than 30 millions according to the verdict of scientists at the last session of the Indian Science Congress. As the process of absorption and acculturation has gone on for centuries and the Census enumeration of Adivasis is unreliable, it would be nearer the truth to say that ethnically, tribal numbers would be four times what is shown in the Census."¹¹ Another source states that, "the 1941 Census figures for these people have proved to be rather misleading, for the aboriginals were confused with the so-called untouchables in certain places in the Census returns. In the last 20 years, however, they must have grown in numbers in keeping with the growth of the general population. The figure of 25 million may not be too wide of the mark..... There is nothing common between the Aborigines and the Harijans, or the so-called untouchables, because the latter are ethnically identical with the Hindus."¹²

¹¹ I. Singh, *Development and Adivasis*, in *Asian Labour*, Vol. I. No. 4 (Jan. 1950). p. 52.

¹² S. Chandrasekhar, *India's Population—Facts and Policy*, (1950), p. 39-40.

The following table gives the absolute number of persons belonging to the tribal religion :¹³

Year	Number in Lakhs	Number per 10,000	Per cent of the total pop.
1881	6,426,511	258	2.58
1891	9,112,018	323	3.23
1901	8,584,148	292	2.92
1911	10,295,165	328	3.28
1921	9,775,000	309	3.09
1931	8,280,000	236	2.36

In 1931 and earlier censuses, a table classifying the population by the religion professed was published. Another table was also published showing the population analysed by Race/Caste/Tribe. The system was changed in 1941. In place of two tables a single set was prepared in which population groups were differentiated into "Communities" on a composite basis with reference to the answers to the Census question on "Religion" as well as "Race/Caste/Tribe." According to this change in classification, the number of the persons of tribal origin was 25,441,489 as against 22,615,708 in 1931. According to these two figures, the growth in the number of aborigines would be 12½% or slightly less than that of the total population.¹⁴

In 1948 the Conference of Social Workers and Anthropologists for tribal people estimated their number to about 25 millions of which 20 millions live in the plains and are assimilated with the rest

¹³ *Census of India*, 1901, p. 576 ; *Ibid* for 1921, p. 110 and *Ibid* for 1931, p. 587.

¹⁴ *Census of India* 1931, Vol. I. Pt. 2. p. 522-33 and Pt. 1. p. 503.

of the people, more or less, and only 5 millions may be taken as the population residing in the hills.¹⁵ According to the 1951 Census, their number amounts to about 20 millions and they form about 5·6 per cent of the total population of India.

The numerical strength of a tribe ranges from few hundreds to more than 2 million, as for example, among the Santhals (2,732,266 in 1941) and the Bhils (2,330,270) and the Gonds (3,201,004). Some of the tribes have increased in number while others have declined considerably and hold their lives on slender terms. The following table will indicate the trend of tribal demography in India :¹⁶

Name of Tribe	1921	1931	1941	1951
Chenchu	12,402	10,342	12,898	N.A.
Kota	1,204	1,121	952	N. A.
Toda	640	597	630	879
Nayadi	301	296	250	N. A.
Mavillar	1,737	1,341	—	N. A.
Gadaba	53,770	48,154	74,813	54,454
Malpaharis	38,972	37,437	40,498	374
Bhoksa	7,628	7,618	274	N. A.
Badaga	45,821	43,075	56,047	67,286
Naga Tribes	1,47,262	1,39,965	2,80,370	N. A.
Angami Nagas	51,730	49,239	52,080	28,678
Lhota Nagas	18,309	18,238	19,374	22,402
Andamanese	786	460	...	27

In the following table will be found a number

15 *Report of the Conference of the Social Workers and Anthropologists for Tribals in India* (1948). p. 2-3.

16 *Census of India* 1931, Vol. I. Pt. I. p. 391; for 1941; and *Census of India* Paper No. 1, 1954—Languages—1951 Census, p. 8.

of larger tribal groups who have shown considerable increase in numerical strength and also those who have shown increase but such increase has not been progressive :¹⁷

Name of Tribe	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951
Asur	3,716	2,245	2,024	4,564	1,510
Bhils	1,067,792	1,795,808	2,013,177	22,48,152	1,160,299
Birhors	2,299	1,810	2,350	2,755	N. A.
Gond	...	2,902,592	3,069,069	3,201,004	1,232,886
Ho	4,20,179	440,174	523,184	3,83,737	599,876
Juang	12,823	10,454	15,024	17,032	12,559
Katkari	91,841	81,202	88,336	69,170	N. A.
Kachari	...	207,266	345,248	4,28,733	N. A.
Kharai	1,33,657	1,24,521	1,46,037	1,67,669	N. A.
Khond	7,50,289	6,98,668	7,41,078	7,44,904	280,561
Khorwa	2,00,077	1,85,553	2,37,847	2,05,638	N. A.
Munda	5,58,200	5,59,662	6,58,450	7,06,869	5,85,211
Oraon	8,35,994	8,42,902	1,021,355	1,122,926	6,44,042
Santhal	20,78,035	21,89,511	25,08,789	27,32,266	28,11,578
Tharu	63,629	61,751	64,403	61,366	N. A.

From the above table, it will be gathered that in India the most important tribes are Gond, Santhal, Bhil, Oraon, Kond and Munda—all of these taken together numbered 18,838,239 in 1941. Other tribes, over 180 of them, numbered less than 500,000 each.

In the 1951 Census, however, in conformity with the Government's policy of discouraging community distinctions based on caste, information about Race, Caste or Tribe has been collected only

¹⁷ *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. I Pt. I. p. 112; *Ibid*, 1931, Vol. I. Pt. I p. 391 and *Ibid*, 1941. And *Census of India*, Paper No. 1. p. 10-17.

from certain groups of people who have specifically been referred to in the Constitution. Accordingly, a person is a member "Special of a Group" if he is a member of a "Scheduled Caste," of a "Scheduled Tribe," or of any other Backward Class or if he is an "Anglo-Indian." Thus most of the submerged peoples fall into three categories, namely, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes, numbering respectively 20·55, 55·0, and 35·6 millions or 5·6, 15·3 and 9·3 per cent of the total population. In other words, 110·6 millions or 30·2 per cent of the total population of India are backward in social, educational and economic achievements, as indicated below :

India's Submerged Population in 1951¹⁸

Submerged population	Number in Million	Per cent of total
Scheduled Castes	20·0	5·6
Scheduled Tribes	55·019	15·3
Backward Classes	35·6	9·3
	-----	-----
Total Backward People	110·6	32·2
	-----	-----

In addition to the above three groups of peoples, there are 198 Ex-Criminal Tribes, although the exact number of their population is not known.

The following table gives the distribution of tribal population in different parts of the country

¹⁸ *The Second Five Year Plan* gives these figures as : Scheduled tribes, 19 million ; Scheduled castes 51 million ; and Criminal Tribes, 4 million.—*Second Five Year Plan*, 1956, p. 588.

¹⁹ See the *Indiagram*, The Embassy of India, Washington, July 18, 1955, p. 742.

and the percentage of tribal population to total population :

State	Total Aboriginal Population ²⁰	% age of the Tribal Population to the Total ²¹ Population
Assam	17,35,245	33.9
Bihar	40,49,183	14.1
Bombay	33,59,305	9.2
Madhya Pradesh	24,77,025	22.6
Madras	6,35,979	1.1
Orissa	29,67,334	25.4
U. P.		0.5
West Bengal	11,65,337	6.5
Madhya Bharat	10,60,812	15.4
Mysore	15,310	0.1
Rajasthan	3,16,348	11.7
Travancore-Cochin	26,580	1.8
Ajmer	9,816	15.6
Bhopal	59,114	9.0
Coorg	21,084	11.6
Manipur	1,94,239	29.8
Tripura	1,92,293	6.4
Vindhya Pradesh	4,18,282	5.9

The following table gives the percent of total population in each religion since 1881-1951, in India²² :—

	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951
Hindu	75.09	74.24	72.87	71.65	70.73	70.67	69.46	84.99
Muslims	19.97	20.41	21.88	22.39	23.23	23.49	24.28	9.93
Tribal	2.57	3.26	2.88	3.17	2.97	2.26	2.6	0.47
Christians	0.71	0.77	0.98	1.21	1.47	1.77	1.91	0.30
Sikh	0.74	0.68	0.77	1.00	1.06	1.28	1.46	2.74
Jains	0.49	0.51	0.47	0.41	0.39	0.37	0.37	1.44
Buddhists	0.07	0.09	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.06
Parsi	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
Jewish	—	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Others	0.32	—	—	—	—	—	11	—

(Denotes less than 0.05%)

²⁰ Census of India, Paper No. 4, 1953. *Special Groups*—1951 Census. p. 15.

²¹ First Five-Year Plan, 1951, p. 636.

²² K. Davis, *Population of India and Pakistan*, 1951, p. 178.

It has been observed that the aboriginal population has been on decrease since 1911. It may be pointed out in this connection that while the aboriginal population is under ordinary circumstances exceedingly prolific, the majority of them inhabit those parts of the country which are exposed chiefly to the ravages of malaria.

Secondly, there has been a real absorption of the tribes into Hinduism in the Assam plains and North Cachhar Hills.

Thirdly, the spread of Christianity among the tribes in Lushai, Khasi and Jaintia hills as well as in the Madhya Pradesh and Travancore-Cochin has also helped in reducing their strength.

Fourthly, through acculturation—which is the process of change due to the contact with other people and it involves acceptance and adoption—when a tribe comes into close contact with civilization it may accept some of the traits of its neighbours so that their original traits gradually disappear and the tribal dialects are being replaced by Aryan languages and the tribal beliefs are giving way to the direct onslaught of the inhabitants of the plains.

It would not be inappropriate to deal here in brief with the factors which have made the contact of tribes with their neighbours easy. This contact may result from the following factors :

1. Existence of the mines and minerals in tribal areas in various parts of Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal—coal-bearing districts and iron ore mines encourage immigration of alien people, part

of which must settle down and live in their new homes.

2. Emigration of tribal labour to mines and factories situated far-away and to the distant plantations in Assam and W. Bengal, which have attracted a considerable amount of contractual labour, the main cause of such immigration being land alienation or expropriation of the aboriginal peasant proprietorship.

3. The opening up of the tribal areas by a network of communications, railways and roadways has reduced the shyness of the tribal people with astonishing quickness and many landless families have settled down along the roads, while others make their living by catering to alien people domiciled in their midst.

4. The setting up of the Missionaries in out-of-way and often inaccessible areas has produced an impact of culture, and the tribal people have received all sorts of help from them in their distress and disease and fight against the Zamindar or Bania or both and have responded to such help by adopting Christianity.

5. The administrative officers, personnel of the Public Health Services, the forest officials and their agents, contractors, traders, merchants, touts, litigants, lawyers, the police and the *patwaris* or revenue agents and others whose contact with the tribal people has been effective enough in producing discomforts and disintegration of the culture indigenous.

3. TRIBES IN INDIA—THEIR CLASSIFICATION

1. Introduction

The total population of India is 356,829,485, out of which the Scheduled Tribes account for 19,111,498.¹ Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India has defined "Scheduled Tribes" as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this Constitution." By the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order 1950, issued by the President in exercise of the power conferred by Clause (1) of the Articles 342 of the Constitution of India, 212 tribes in 14 States have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes.² These tribes constitute 5.36 per cent of the total population of the country, *i. e.* out of every 1,000 Indians, 54 belong to the tribal community.

2. Classification

It is a bit difficult task to classify the tribes into different groups. However, the Indian Com-

¹ *Census of India*, Paper No. 4 (1953)—Special Groups 1951 *Census*, p. 16.

² *Ibid.* p. 38-41 and 46-47. Of these tribes 29 are in Assam; 24 in Bombay; 31 in M. P; 40 in Madras; 42 in Orissa; 7 in West Bengal; 3 in M. B; 6 in Mysore; 18 in Tripura; 14 in V. P; 7 in Bhopal and 3 in Manipur.

missioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes recently investigated the possibility of adopting a classification criterion going beyond the legal concept cited above. With this aim in view the different State Governments were asked to suggest the characteristics which seemed to them most suitable in distinguishing the so-called "Aboriginal" groups from the rest of the population. The variety of elements suggested shows the difficulty inherent in such an attempt. For instance, (i) The Assam Government gives these characteristic features: (a) descent from Mongoloid stock, (b) the members of the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group and (c) the existence of a unit of social organisation of the village clan type. (ii) the Bombay Government: residence in forest areas; (iii) the M. P. Government: tribal origin, speaking a tribal language and resident in forest areas; (iv) the Madras Government: primitive tribal way of life and residence in less easily accessible hills and in remote or interior forests, with little or no contact with other population groups; (v) the Orissa Government: pre-Dravidian or Mongoloid racial origin; (vi) the West Bengal Government: residence in jungle and tribal origin; (vii) the Hyderabad Government: residence in jungles, animistic religion, the use of local dialect, forcible marriage, hunting, fishing and gathering of forest food as the main means of subsistence, etc., (viii) the Mysore Government: the habitation in remote hilly tracts in the jungle, (ix) the Travancore Government: habitation in the jungle, tribal religion and certain racial or cultural charac-

teristics, (x) the Bhopal Government: habitation in remote jungle and hill districts, nomadism, hunting and gathering of forest fruits as the main means of subsistence and (xi) the Vindhya Pradesh Government: dark skin, flat noses, preference for fruits, roots and animal flesh, rather foodgrains, the use of bark and leaves of trees as clothes on ceremonial occasions, nomadism, witch-doctoring and the worship of ghosts and spirits.³

From the above description it will be evident that different Governments have given different characteristics for the people to be labelled as tribals, although certain features are common to them all. We may classify them on the basis of their (i) Territorial distribution; (ii) Linguistic affiliation; (iii) Occupation or economy; (iv) Culture contact, and (v) Physical characteristics.

(i) Territorial Distribution

According to the first classification, they may be divided into four important groups : (a) the tribes living in the northern and north-eastern zone; (b) tribes inhabiting the central zone, (c) tribes scattered over the extreme corners of south-western India in the hills and the converging lines of the Ghats; and (d) small groups in several parts of the country or even within the political boundary of the country.

³ L. M. Shrikant, *Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes* for the period ending 31st Dec., 1951. p. 109-11 (1952)

(a) The northern and north-eastern zone consists of the sub-Himalayan region and the mountain valleys on the Eastern Frontiers of India which merge imperceptibly with those of Burma in the south-east. This zone lies approximately between $31^{\circ}7' N$ and $35^{\circ}0' N$ on its western end $23^{\circ}30' N$ and $28^{\circ}0' N$ on its eastern end between $77^{\circ}33' E$ and $97^{\circ}0' E$ East. The eastern most tribal concentration is found in Assam, Manipur and Tripura, where they number 2.1 million. The tribal areas of eastern Kashmir, East Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and northern U. P also fall in this zone.

The most important tribes living between Assam and Tibet may be mentioned the Aka, the Dafla, the Miri, Gurung, and the Aptanic on the West of the Subansiri river, and the Gallong, the Minyong the Pasi, the Padam and the Pangi in the Dehong valley. The Mishmi tribes live in the high ranges between the Dehong and Lohit rivers, the Chulikata and Belejiyas on the western and the Digaree and the Meju on the eastern parts. Farther east are found the Khamtis and the Singhops and beyond them, converging on the south are the different Naga tribes occupying the mountain valleys on both sides of the Patkois.

The Naga tribes consist of five major groups: the Rangpan and the Konyak in the northern; the Rengma and the Sema, and the Angami in the western; the Ao Lahota, Phom, Chang, Santam and the Yimstsunger in the central; the Kacha and the Kabui in the southern and the Tangakhul and the

Kalyo-Kengu in the eastern section. South of the Naga hills running through the States of Manipur, Tipperah, the Chittagong hill tracts live the Kukis, the Lushais, the Lakhers, the Chins, the Khasis and the Garos, many of whom are really overflows of the tribes from across the Frontiers or are closely related. In the Sub-Himalayan region in Sikkim and the northern portions of Darjeelling, there are a number of rather primitive tribes of whom the Lepchas are the best known. In U. P. also a number of tribes such as the Tharus, Bhoksa, Khasa, Korwa, Bijar, Bhuia, Majhi, Cheri, Raji, and Kharwar are found.

(b) The central or the middle zone is separated from the north-eastern zone by the gap between the Garo hills and Rajmahal hills and consists of plateaus and mountainous belt between the Indo-Gangetic plain to the north and roughly the Krishna river to the South. This zone lie approximately between $20^{\circ}0'$ N and $25^{\circ}0'$ N and $73^{\circ}0'$ E and $90^{\circ}0'$ East. In this zone we have another massing of tribal peoples in M. P. with extensions in U. P., M. B. and Hyderabad, Southern Rajasthan, Northern Bombay, Bihar, Orissa. Northern Rajasthan, Southern Bombay and Bastar form the peripheral areas of this zone. The important tribes inhabiting this zone beginning from the Eastern Ghats and Orissa hills are the Savara, Gadaba, and Borido of the Ganjam district; the Juang Kharia, Khond, Bhumij and the Bhuiya of the Orissa hills. In the plateau of the Chota Nagpur live the Mundas, the Santhals, the Oraons, the Hos and

the Birhors. Further west along the Vindhya ranges live the Katkaris, Kols and the Bhils, the latter extending as far as north-west as the Aravalli hills. The Gonds form the largest group and occupy what is known as the 'Gondwanaland' and extend southwards into Hyderabad and the adjoining States of Kankar and Bastar.

On both sides of the Satpuras and around the Maikal hills are found similar tribes like the Korku, the Agaria, the Pardhan and the Baigas. In the hills of Bastar State live some of the most picturesque of these tribes, *viz.* the Murias, the Hill Murias of the Adbhujhamar hills and the Bison-horn Marias of the Indravati valley. Majority of these people show similarity of race and culture.

(c) The third zone consists of that part of the Southern India which falls south of the river Krishna (below latitude 16° N) stretching from Wynaad to Cape Comorin. This zone approximately lies between $8^{\circ}0'$ N and $20^{\circ}0'$ N and $75^{\circ}0'$ E and $85^{\circ}0'$ East. Hyderabad, Mysore, Coorg, Travancore-Cochin, Andhra and Madras fall within this zone. From the fact that they occupy these marginal areas and also from the records in the oldest Tamil literature of the Sangam period they appear to be one of the most ancient and primitive inhabitants now living in India having been pushed by the intrusion of more advanced people into their present habitats, where safety and shelter were found against increasing pressure.

Beginning from the north-east the Chenchus occupy the area of the Nallaimallais hills across

the Krishna and into the Hyderabad State. Along the western Ghats from the Koraga of South Kanara, the Yeruvas and the Todas living in the lower slopes of Coorg hills; the Irulas, Paniyans and Kurumbas of Wynaad, and stretching almost to Cape Comorin along the ranges of Cochin and Travancore and sheltered in the isolation of the forest are found the most primitive of Indian aboriginal such as Kadars, Kanikkars, Malvadan, Malakurvan, with many of their original traits still preserved.

(d) In addition to these three major zones there is a fourth small and isolated zone consisting of Andamans and Nicobar Islands. The main tribes living in this zone are the Jarawa, Onge, North Sentineless, the Andmanese and the Nicobarese, though separated from the main body of India's aboriginal tribes are ethnically connected with them.

(ii) Linguistic Affiliation

Linguistically these tribes may be divided into a number of groups based on their affiliation to the various families of languages :

(a) The Austro-Asiatic linguistic branch under which come the Kol or Munda speeches of the Central and Eastern India, Khasi of Assam. Nicobarese in the Nicobar Islands. Santali (2,811,578 speakers), found in Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam; Mundari (536,338); Ho (599,876); Kharia (180,000); Bhumij (101,508) Garo (239,816); Khasi (230,982) and few other which

belong to Bihar and Assam. The language of Korku (170,607) is spoken in M. P. and Berar; while Savana (Saora) (256,259) and Gadaba are spoken in Orissa. Outside the Kol group, there is the language of Nicobarese (only 10,000) in the Nicobar Islands.⁴

(b) The Dravidian Linguistic Group is popular in Central and Southern India. It is spoken by Gonds—Gondi (1,232,886) in M. P., Hyderabad and Andhra States; Khondh or Khond (280,561) in Orissa; Kui (206,509); the Kurukh or Oraon (644,042) in Bihar and Orissa; Malto (71,000) in Rajmahal hills in Bihar. The other tribes under this group are: Maler, Polia, Saora, Koya, Paniyan, Chenchu, Irulas, Kadar, Malser and Malakurwan.⁵

(c) The Tibeto-Chinese family includes the tribal languages of various people belonging to the Mongoloid element and found along the southern slopes of the Himalayas, from northern Punjab to Bhutan and also in northern and eastern Bengal and in Assam, *e.g.*, the Nagas, the Kuki, the Abhors, the Dafla, the Miris, the Khasi and the Mikirs.

(iii) Occupational Classification

The tribes of India not only speak different languages, but also have distinctive economy of their own. They live in different economic stages ranging from food gathering and hunting through

⁴ *Census of India*, Paper, No. 1, 1954—Languages—1951 *Census*, p. 8. The figures in the bracket denote the number of speakers.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 8.

shifting cultivation to settled plough cultivation. *e.g.* the Birhor, Kharia, Korua and Hill Maraiia Malapantaram, Kadar, the Paniyan, etc. The Paliyan depend on food-gathering and hunting for their livelihood. The Baiga, Pauri (hill) Bhuiyan, Jhuang Maria, Khond, Naga and Kutia Kandh are shifting cultivators. The Munda, Bhils, Baiga, Gond, Majhwar, Kharwar and Ho Santal and Oraon depend primarily on permanent plough cultivation for their living. The Naga tribes have developed a system of terraced cultivation with elaborate means of irrigation by aqueducts.

Dr. Hutton classified these tribes into three groups : (i) Primitive tribes collecting forest produce, (ii) Primitive tribes, pastoral and (iii) tribes practising agriculture, hunting, fishing and industries.

The following table shows the economic status of the tribes :⁶

Where found	Hunting and collecting stage	Shifting or Jhum cultivation, lumbering, manufacturing catechu	Settled agriculturists who keep poultry, cattle, know weaving, spinning, pottery and terraced farming
U. P.	Raji	Karwa, Saberia, Bhuia, Kharwar	Tharu, Majhi, Bind, Bhokasa, Khasa, Kol.
Bihar	Kharia, Kadars Birhors,	Korwa, Asur Khond	Munda, Ho, Tamarria, Oraon, Korwa,
Assam	Kuki, Konyak Nagas.	Naga tribes, Garos Lakhers	Khasi, Manipuri
W. Bengal	Kuki.	Garos, Malpahari	Polia, Santhals,

⁶ D. N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India*, p. 92.

M. P.	Hill Maia	Muria, Dandami, Parja, Bhatra, Baigas Maria, Gond, Baiga, Kamar
Madras & Hyderabad	Chenchu, Kurumba Koya, Paliyan Contam— Reddi, Hill Pantaram Paniyan, Yanadi.	Khonds, Kurumb, Badaga, Kota, Iruba, Gonds, Saora, Las, Parja Mudavan
Orissa	Juang	Saora
Bombay & Rajasthan	Bhils	Bhils Bhils and Gond

(iv) Physical Characteristics

Physically the tribes of the north-east frontier are Mongoloid with light skin colour, straight and dark hair and flat nose and prominent cheek bones. Majority of them are of medium stature with long heads, scanty hair growth on body and face and almond-shaped eyes. All these tribes, including the women, are muscular with great development of calf-muscles. They are great mountaineers and carry considerable amount of loads to high altitudes. They are healthy, hard-working and of independent spirit and their life is well balanced with democratic councils and considerable stress on personal liberty of thought and action. They have childlike simplicity and are very honest but not trained for sustained labour and concentration of mind.

This type is represented by the Nagas, semi-Nagas, Chakmas, Mughas, and Lepchas.

(b) In the central zone the Negrito strain is most marked. The tribes very largely conform to the pattern of what are called the "Austroloid

characters.” Physically they are from short to medium stature, dark skinned with long head, and generally possessing curly but not frizzly hairs, broad and flat nose but depressed at the root, fleshy everted lips. They are strong, muscular and well-built.

This type is represented by the tribes like the Chenchus, Kurumbas, the Yeruvas, Malayans, Munda, Kols, Santhals and the Bhils.

(c) In the southern zone there is an undoubted Negrito strain, although at present greatly submerged, but still surviving among some of the more primitive and isolated of these tribes—such as the Kadars of Perambiculam, hills of Cochin, and the Irulas and Panyans of the Wynaad. Physically they are of short to medium stature, of deep chocolate brown skin colour, small head, bulbous forehead, smooth brow-ridges and feeble chins. The face is short and protruding and the nose flat and broad and the lips are thick and everted, the head shape is long, hair fine and of woolly nature and the body well developed.

At the present time they are greatly intermixed and it is only in the extreme interior that more archaic types are to be found.

(iv) **Classification according to culture-contact**

There are four main cultural divisions among the aboriginals.” “The first two classes consist of the comparatively small block of real primitives

7 V. Elwin, *The Aborigines* (O. U. P. Pamphlet on Indian Affairs No. 14), p. 8-12.

living in the hills. Their religion is characteristic and alive ; their tribal organisation is unimpaired ; their artistic and choreographic traditions are unbroken; their mythology still vitalizes the healthy organism of tribal life. Geographical conditions have largely protected them from the debasing contacts of the plains”.

The wilder aborigines have to be sub-divided into two sections : (a) the first class in the most primitive and simple stage of all is comprised of Hill Marias of Bastar State, the Juangs of Keonjhar and Pal-Labara, the Gadabas and Bondos of Orissa, the Baigas of Pandaria and Kawaedha, many of smaller communities and more isolated villages even of comparatively sophisticated tribes. This group has the following characteristics : (i) Its members live a largely communal life like those of the Hill Marias, Hill Baigas and the Juangs (ii) Economically they share one another ; (iii) Their life still centres round a peculiar form of agriculture (Jhum) and (iv) They are shy of strangers but among themselves honest, simple and innocent. Crime is rare and women virtuous.

(b) The second class of aborigines live in country equally remote and they are equally attached to their solitude and to their ancient traditions but they have begun to change in many ways. The important tribes of their class are Bison-horn Marias or the Bhomia and Binjhwar and Baigas. Their chief characteristics are : (i) Their village life has become individualistic, (ii) They no longer share things with one another, (iii) Axe-cultivation

is more a habit rather than a part of their life ; (iv) They are more accustomed to outside life and are generally less simple and honest than the above class.

(c) The third class of aboriginals is the most numerous. It consists of all those who under the influence of external contact have begun to lose their stronghold on tribal culture, religion and social organisation.

(d) The fourth class, which consists of the old aristocracy of the country represented today by the great Bhil, Naga chieftains, the Gond Rajas, a few Binjhar and Bhiya landlords, Korku noblemen, wealthy Santhal and Uraon leaders and some highly cultured Mundas. These retain the old tribal name and their clan and totem rules and observe elements of tribal religion though they generally adopt the full Hindu faith and live in modern style.

Process of Transformation of Tribal Cultures

The process through which the tribal cultures are usually transformed or modified may be either : (i) simple adoption, which means the acquisition of technical skill, adoption of tools, implements, ideas, customs and rites by one social group from another, *e.g.* the Warli of Thana district is yet simple and unostentatious, put on a loin cloth without anything on his head but his colleague in the south being in much contact with the Kolis puts on a shirt, dhoti and turban after the latter's fashion. Similar taking over of the elements of material culture from neighbouring groups is found in all tribes today especially the Bhils, the Gonds and the Santhals, etc.

(ii) Acculturation is the process of change due to contacts with other people. It involves acceptance and adoption. A tribe in contact with civilization may accept some of the traits of their neighbours such as the employment of Hindu priest in indigenous ceremonies and festivals among some of the tribes in Bihar is an example of simple acceptance. Similarly Munda tribes have accepted some of the cultural traits from their neighbours, while Rajbansis have shown an adaptation to Hindu culture. The Lambadis of the Deccan have taken to agriculture, they have adopted the dress of their neighbours and tribe is divided into sections based on occupations. Similar adaptation is found among certain sections of the Gonds, the Raj Gonds and the Navgharia Gonds and the Bhils.

(iii) Assimilation, *i. e.* by a gradual drift to Hinduism. When certain members of a primitive tribe move down into the plains they tend to become assimilated in contrast to other members who remain behind. The evidence of assimilation in many cases is apparent. Certain Santhals of Bengal give distinctly Hindu names to their children, practise child-marriage before the age of 7, revere the Tulsi plant, abstain from beef, cleanse "their living quarters with cowdung, decline food cooked by Muslims, cremate their dead and place the vermilion mark and the iron bangle upon their wives."⁸

⁸ *Census of India*, Vol. V (Bengal and Sikkim), Pt. I, 1931 p. 383.

Effects of Culture Contacts

The effects of such contacts have been very far-reaching on the life of the aborigines. Contacts with civilisation have undermined social solidarity, invaded tribal security, introduced discomforts, diseases and vices. The results may be detailed as below :

(i) The rapid opening up of the means of communications has resulted more in conflict than in useful contact not necessarily a conflict of arms but of culture and material interest. Says Dr. Hutton, "Attempts to develop minerals, forests or land for intensive cultivation can only be made at the expense of the tribes whose isolation is thus invaded : tribal customs which regulate the ownership, usufruct or transfer of land are normally superseded by a Code in the application of which the tribe is deprived of its property, generally in the name of law, either by alienation to foreigners or by transferring the trusteeship of a tribal chief into absolute ownership of a kind foreign to the customs of a tribe. The complicated system of administration of justice has tended to impair the natural truthfulness and honesty of the people and social solidarity of the tribes has weakened the authority of the social heads and the respect they formerly commanded." In spite of the best intentions a lot of injustice is done to the aborigines by the Judges and Magistrates and the police officers of all grades owing to their ignorance of customs and mentality of the aboriginal tribes they have to deal with.

(ii) The introduction of the outstill system in tribal area in mines and industrial centres, where they frequent for employment, has led to an increase in drunkenness and immorality. "The temptation of distillary liquor", wrote Shri S. C. Roy, "introduced by the Government in some aboriginal areas is another evil that is working havoc, economically, morally and physically."

(iii) One of the most important effects of contacts has been the spread of diseases in tribal areas. Mills has shown, while writing about the effects on some primitive tribes of Assam of contact with civilization, "That improved communications while they have immensely facilitated internal trade, have undoubtedly spread disease; not only have specific diseases—such as venereal diseases and T. B. been introduced but epidemics spread more quickly. The opening of the road to Manipur has led to an increase in prostitution." Emigration of labour from tribal areas to plantations and factories—where conditions are not favourable to settlement has been the main source for the spread of epidemic diseases. The lure of free life unhampered by social control pulls women to plantations and factories where they are tempted to a corrupt life and the large incidence of V. D. like syphilis and diabetes, gonorrhoea, etc., among the labourers is directly traceable to such indiscriminate mixing of the sexes. Missionaries and the philanthropic agencies have caused T. B., and other contact diseases to spread in tribal areas through indiscretion, as for example, doling out second

hand clothes and apparels collected from the dead or diseased population, which are a foci of infection.

(iv) Urban contacts have everywhere disorganised primitive social life. The village has ceased to be living community; it is now an aggregate of isolated units. Old myths are being forgotten and the old gods neglected. Many of the traditional dances—which used to provide recreation to the youths of both sexes, translate joys and sorrows are being abandoned and village politics, rivalry and social disputes are replacing their old-time recreation. The effects of this transfer of interests have already been evident in the high incidence of imported diseases, poor physique, inferiority complex and a bitter antagonism against advanced groups in the neighbourhood.

(v) A large number of tribes have been living on hunting and collection of jungle products supplemented by Jhum cultivation. The effects of Jhum cultivation have led to strict rules regarding denudation of forests and today many of the tribes (who lived by shifting cultivation) have come down to the plains though most have not succeeded in adapting themselves to other kinds of agriculture found in the plains. This is mostly due to tribal inertia, shyness of the aborigines, apathy of administration and as Dr. Hutton says, “may be due to ignorance of appropriate magico-religious ceremonial necessary for other types of farming.”

(vi) Many tribes have failed to maintain their tribal structures and have either been assimilated with more vital stock or have withdrawn themselves from contacts as a defensive measure. The Andamanese, Korwas, Todas and Chenchus are on evil days and are preparing themselves for exit. Some other tribes have left their tribal moorings and have settled in the neighbourhood of higher cultural groups whom they serve. Today they have developed some sort of interdependence. The Gond tribe of M. P. and Bhils of southern-eastern Rajasthan may be taken as an example.

(vii) The nomadic tribes who secured their livelihood by catering to the periodical requirements of settled communities as the Marwaris or the Lakhota supplying agricultural implements to the latter or repairing their indigenous tools and utensils, the Nats supplying crude nostrums for the restoration of the lost manhood, the Kanjars providing amusements, acrobatics and dances for the village communities, find it difficult to continue their customary life and have enlisted themselves into the ranks of criminal tribes whose attention to the rural communities is a perpetual concern of the administration.

(viii) Lastly, the itinerant seller of goods and trinkets, the moneylender, the licensee of excise shops, collectors of lac, honey and other forest produce are mostly aliens in culture and language. They have settled in tribal areas and have taken advantage of the gradual drift of tribal society from a moneyless economy to one in which exchange depends on the circulation of money. The

implications of money economy are better understood by them and thus they have succeeded in solidly entrenching themselves in tribal areas and today they are a source of great discomfort to the tribal people. In many areas the land has passed from the aborigines to the moneylenders and sahu-kars who make the very people work for them.

4. TRIBES IN INDIA—THEIR ROLE IN NATIONAL ECONOMY

What part do the tribal people play in the economy of a country is hard to estimate, because the grading of the tribes on the basis of their economic life and occupations and in accordance with any approved schemes of classification is indeed difficult as most of the tribes possess either marginal culture or follow more than one occupation. The tribal stage does not provide for any specialisation of functions and as such a variety of occupations are followed by a tribe. A tribe uses all kinds of occupations to eke out its subsistence and combines hunting with honey gathering, lumbering with chase, shifting cultivation with domestication of animals.¹

Shri Thurnwald has listed the following types of economic life, which incidentally are also met with in tribal India² :—

1. Homogeneous communities of men as hunters and trappers, and women as collectors. The Chenchus, the Kadars, the Kharia, the Korwa, the Bihors and the Kurumbas are some of the Indian tribes belonging to this group.

¹ P. G. Menon, *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I., Pt. III. B., p. 216.

² R. Thurnwald, *Economics in Primitive Communities*, 1932.

2. Homogeneous communities of hunters, trappers and agriculturists. The Baigas, the Birhors, the Kamar belong to this class.

3. Grade Society of hunters, trappers, agriculturists and artisans. Most of our tribes belong to this category but the most important examples are the Chero and the Agaria.

4. The Herdsmen. Todas and some sections of Bhils may be included under this category.

5. Homogeneous hunters and herdsmen. This category is not represented by Indian tribes. The Todas do not hunt, nor do they catch fish or birds.

6. Ethnically stratified cattle-breeders and traders. The Bhotiyas of the sub-Himalayan region of U. P. breed yak and jibus and are traders also.

7. Socially graded herdsmen with hunting, agricultural and artisan population.

Both Forde and Herskovits agree as to a five-fold division of economies among the tribes: (i) collectional, (ii) hunting, (iii) fishing, (iv) cultivation and (v) stock-raising, and a people need not abandon one economy to adopt another.

Nieboer divides economic life into: (i) gleaners, (ii) hunters, (iii) fishers, (iv) agricultural nomads or hunter-agriculturists, (v) settled agriculturists of a lower grade who also hunt or tend cattle, and (vi) superior farmers who have implements and (vii) nomad shepherds.

The I. L. O. Committee on Living and Working Conditions of Aboriginal Populations in Independent Countries classifies the indigenous populations according to their occupations in five groups thus³ :

(i) Nomadic or semi-nomadic forest-dwelling tribes which live by hunting, fishing and food-gathering and sometimes also by primitive forms of agriculture on land cleared by burning.

(ii) Semi-nomadic tribes living in geographically and economically marginal areas, engaged in subsistence agriculture or grazing or both and in gathering vegetable raw materials for handicrafts.

(iii) Settled independent farmers or stock raisers, working on an individual or collective basis.

(iv) Tenant labourers, bound to the estates by a traditional semi-feudal system entailing a number of personal obligations to the land-owners.

(v) Wage-earners, who constitute the main source of labour on plantations, cattle ranches, mining, forestry, etc.

1. Agriculture

Broadly speaking, the tribes in north-eastern India are settled agriculturists living on terraced fields, while shifting cultivation is the prevalent form of food production in the central zone. In the southern zone, economic life is based mainly on the collection of forest produce. Shifting cultivation is, however, a common feature in all

³ I. L. O. : *Living and Working Conditions of Aboriginal Populations in Independent Countries.*

zones. Hunting, fishing and minor cottage industries such as basket making, etc., are the most important subsidiary occupations.

In the most hilly tracts the agricultural produce consists generally of coarse grains, in other areas rice, wheat and jowar are produced. Cultivation by means of cutting down a patch of forest and then planting seeds in the burnt earth and ashes with the help of a digging stick is perhaps capable of supporting about 20 to 30 people per sq. mile. Predatory form of axe-cultivation is quite popular among many of the Mongolian tribes living near the north-eastern border of India. In central belt also a few tribes like the Bhuiya, the Juang or the Savara practise this type of cultivation. As the methods of agriculture followed by the tribal people are primitive and crude, there is generally no production surplus. An important subsidiary occupation for the aborigines is employment by the forest departments and their contractors.

The following table shows occupational distribution of Scheduled Tribes according to 1951 census⁴ :

Occupation	Males	Females	Total	Per cent
<i>Agricultural</i>				
Owners	6,276,023	6,266,991	12,543,014	
Tenants	957,046	916,775	1,873,821	
Labourers	1,402,883	1,400,283	2,803,171	
Absentee landlords	29,686	34,568	64,254	
Total	8,665,638	8,618,622	17,284,260	90

⁴ *Census of India*, Paper. No. 4 (1953)—*Special Groups*—1951 Census, pp. 16-21.

Non-Agricultural

Production other than cultivation	411,288	353,696	764,984	
Commerce	59,467	64,174	123,641	
Transport	33,966	28,588	62,554	
Other services and miscellaneous	442,474	428,769	871,243	
Total	947,195	875,227	1,822,422	10
Total Population of Scheduled Tribes	9,617,905	9,498,593	19,116,498	5

From this table it will be seen that 90 per cent of the total population of the tribal people are dependent on agriculture, as against 70 per cent among the general population. The following table gives the number of tribal people per 1,000 people engaged in different occupations, as also among the general population⁵ :—

Number per 1,000 persons

	General Population	Tribal People
Agricultural Classes	1000	70
Non-Agricultural Classes	1000	17
Cultivators of land	1000	75
Tenants	1000	59
Cultivating Labourers	1000	63
Absentee Landlords	1000	12
Production other than cultivation	1000	20
Commerce	1000	6
Transport	1000	11
Other services and miscellaneous	1000	20

Wherever the virgin forest abound Jhum or shifting cultivation has been in vogue and it is known by different names in different parts of

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the country. In northern India it is called *Daya*, in southern India it is known as *Poduar*, *Bodaga*, in the Ganjam Agency Tracts, *Deppa* in Bastar State, *Jhum* in Assam, *Khil* in the Himalayas, *Kumari* in Western Ghats, and *Walra* in S. E. Rajasthan.⁶ The Bhuiyas distinguish two forms of it: *dahi* and *Koman*; the Maria call it *Penda*, and Baiga call it *Bewar*. The usual method is to fell trees, burn them and to sow in the ashes either broadcast or by digging holes on the ground and putting all sorts of seeds together. All these wasteful ways of subsistence are being followed on a much larger scale in the Sirohi, Udaipur and Dungarpur districts of Rajasthan as the forest tribes of Bhils, Meenas, Gerasias find it more and more difficult to live by robbery and being pent up within their own wilds are compelled to draw their food from the soil.⁷ While agriculture is thus clearly the main occupation, the more advanced tribes are giving evidence of a growing diversification, tribal economy depending in each case on the raw materials available and the manpower demand in the region.

The Gonds of M. P. are gradually abandoning agriculture and taking up employment in charcoal burning, forestry, the transport of firewood, gathering of forest fruits and the manufacture of bamboo articles. The Oraons are coming down into the plains to engage in primitive agriculture. The Bhils of Bombay and Udaipur Division prefer

⁶ *Imperial Gazetteer*, Vol. III., p. 25.

⁷ *Rajputana Gazetteer*, Vol. I, p. 23.

settled agriculture, which they have practised for last 150 years, even when they have to work the land as wage-earners. In Hyderabad the same tribe, though it lives by gathering forest produce, fishing and hunting, prefers some settled occupations and when the Bhils can obtain land they show great aptitude for agriculture. Lacking land and drought animals they work as seasonal or day labourers.⁸

The Santhals are almost all agriculturists. In the same group falls the Majhwars, Kharwars and the Korwas of U. P. The first two have abandoned their wild habits and have learned the rudiments of crude agriculture from their neighbours.⁹

Among the Kolams in M. P. the practice of Podu cultivation is disappearing. Only those near the hills practise it. With increased facilities of improved methods of agriculture, the Kolam is giving up readily the method of Podu.¹⁰

In Assam, agriculture is the general practice among the eastern tribes. The cultivation of fruits, coffee and tea has been introduced and taken up with avidity.¹¹

⁸ For further details, see various articles in *Tribes of India*, Vol. I and II—published by Adinajati Sevak Sangh, Delhi.

⁹ D. N. Majumdar, *Fortunes of Primitive Tribes*.

¹⁰ P. S. Rao, *Among the Gonds of Adilabad*, 1949, p. 64.

¹¹ *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. III. p. 149.

The main occupation of the Tharus and Bhoksas in Bengal, U. P., West Bihar and Orissa is agriculture, supplemented by occasional hunting and fishing. The Bhotiyas furnish a transition between primarily agricultural and primarily pastoral people.¹² The Todas are purely a pastoral race remaining in India.

2. Hunting, Fishing and Gathering

About half a century ago only a little less than 50 per cent of the hill tribes of southern India depended to a great extent on food gathering and the collection of food gathering for sale or barter in the plains. At present such hill tribes as still subsist on food gathering without any agricultural production of their own are not numerically strong. Dependent hunters, who do not practise agriculture but live on the outskirts of villages and come into the markets to sell jungle produce include the Yanadi, Chenchu, Korumba, the smaller tribes of western Madras, Hyderabad and Travancore-Cochin, and the Katodi of Baroda. However, in all the large tribes there are sections which live almost entirely on jungle produce before the autumn crop is harvested.¹³

In Travancore the Pantarams are a nomadic hunting tribe but there is an understanding among the various groups that they shall not roam over each other's domain in quest of food.¹⁴

¹² S. D. Pant, *Social Economy of the Himalayas*, p. 43-44.

¹³ W. H. Gilbert, *Peoples of India*, p. 75.

¹⁴ *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. III. B., p. 229.

The Bagatas of Madras are principally cultivators but about 25% of them live by coolie work and the collection and sale of minor forest produce.....such as honey, soapnut, myrobolan, tamarind, adda leaves, etc.¹⁵

The Bhils of Bombay, Rajasthan and M. B. live not only by primitive agriculture, but also depend on hunting and pastoral pursuits.

The other means of earning bread are wood and fodder cutting and selling, charcoal burning, gathering of wild fruits, honey, gum, wax and service in military service.¹⁶

3. Handicrafts

A number of primitive tribes in various regions engage in basket making, spinning and weaving. In Assam, the most widely practised craft is the manufacture of cloth from cotton dyed with indigenous vegetables. The people, Mombas and Sherdukpen, north of the Brahmaputra make fine bowls, cleanly varnished and ornamented with delicate silver work.

In M. P. the Maria Gonds are mainly occupied in distilling spirits from the products of the forests. The Sawara, the Konds, and the Gonds also take to cow-herding, metal working, weaving, cane working and pottery. The Korwas in some regions smelt iron and forge their own weapons and imple-

¹⁵ A. Aiyappan, *Report on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of Province of Madras*, p. 72.

¹⁶ *Indian Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXX. No. 2 (1946), p. 73.

ments. The Agharias of M. P. are traditional smelters of iron and forge a variety of tools and implements of daily use.

The Ghasis make gut from the fibrous issue of the animals. The Tharus in addition to farming make furniture and household utensils, baskets, musical instruments, weapons, ropes and mats. Baskets and mats are manufactured by the women from bamboo and reed for sale in the weekly markets and fairs.¹⁷

The Irulas of Madras also make bamboo mats and baskets, as well as ploughs and wheels.¹⁸

The Bhotiyas have developed a special aptitude for spinning and weaving wool into beautiful and durable fabrics. The women have a sound knowledge of the treatment, grading and dyeing of the wools.¹⁹

4. Mining

Some of the aboriginal tribes, living in the neighbourhood of the main collieries specially in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal work in the coal-mines. In M. P. also the bulk of the coal-mining labour belong to such tribes as Gonds, Mawasipuds and Mahars. Some of the aboriginal groups show special aptitude and skill in particular operations. The Santhals are good pick miners and

¹⁷ D. N. Majumdar, *The Fortunes of the Primitive Tribes*, p. 83-84.

¹⁸ A. Aiyappan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 140.

¹⁹ S. D. Pant, *Op., Cit.*, p. 61-64.

coal-cutters.²⁰ Almost all the unskilled labour force in the mines and quarries of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (about 17,000) is aboriginal. In the Manganese mines too about 50 per cent of the labour employed is still aboriginal.²¹ In the iron-ore industry also the labour force employed by the contractors consists of largely Santhals and Kols. In Bihar mica industry some 250,000 aboriginals find employment. Before the war 70 per cent of the workers in these mines were Santhals, this proportion has now dropped down to 25 per cent mainly on account of migration to tea plantations of Assam.²²

5. Plantations

Over half a million adult workers and the same number of children are employed in the plantation estates of Assam. About 50 per cent of this number is aboriginal—the Gonds, Konds, and Santhals and much of it comes from other States of southern and central India, by recruitment under the Tea Districts Immigrant Labour Act (XXII of 1932).²³ During 1949-50 over 25,000 persons were recruited outside Assam—over 10,000 from

²⁰ S. R. Deshpande, *Report on an Enquiry into Conditions of Labour in Coal Mining in India*, 1946, p. 21.

²¹ Rege, *Labour Investigation Committee's Main Report* 1946, p. 75.

²² C. M. Rajgarhia, *Mining, Processing and Uses of Indian Mica*, 1951.

²³ For methods of recruitment and measures taken to protect the forest workers and better their conditions, Rege, *Op. Cit.*

Bihar, 9,670 from Orissa and over 4,500 from M. P.²⁴

6. Forestry

Aboriginals are also employed in collecting forest produce as well as in other works in the forests either for the government department directly or for contractors. The contractors obtain from the Government the right to collect forest produce—fruits, bark, dyes, myrobolans, leaves for bidi-making, lac, gum, resin, wax, and fodder—of a demarcated area of the forest, or to cut timber for themselves or as agents of the government. They may also be engaged in the manufacture of wood, charcoal, and catechu as in the south-eastern Rajasthan in the districts of Dungarpur, Banswara and Udaipur.

7. Serf-Labour²⁵

Aboriginals are also forced to perform compul-

²⁴ Rege, *Op. Cit.*

²⁵ For interesting account of Serf-Labour in India see, S. C. Dubey : *The Kamar*, 1951 ; C. B. Mamoria : *Agricultural Proletariat in India*, *Modern Review*, Oct/Nov., 1952 ; Dinkar Desai : *Agrarian Serfdom in India*, in *Indian Sociologists*, 1942 ; D. N. Majumdar : *Experiment in Tribal Life in Indian Journal of Social Work*, 1950 ; K. G. Sivaswamy, *Serf Labour Among the Aboriginals*, in the *Indian Journal of Social Work*; and his *Forced Labour in Agriculture*, in *Asian Labour Quarterly*, 1949 ; A. M. Lorenzo ; *Agricultural Labour Conditions in Northern India*, 1950 ; S. D. Patel ; *Agricultural Labour in Modern India and Pakistan*, 1952 ; and *Agrarian Reforms Committee Report*, 1952. *Agricultural Labour Enquiry Committee Report Vol I.*

sory labour²⁶ for local authorities, landlords or contractors, as would be clear from the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. "In spite of the vigorous efforts of the government forced labour is still in existence and it is mostly the Scheduled Castes and also the Scheduled Tribes who are suffering on account of this unlawful practice."²⁷ According to the same authority in spite of the constitutional prohibition of forced labour in general, the State is empowered to impose compulsory service for public purposes.

The tenants are compelled to do some type of agricultural labour in landlord's fields for a number of days either without wages or for some very meagre wages. Sometimes his family members are also made to work for the landlord. Landlords sometimes advance loans to their tenants, grant them house-sites and thus bind them to

²⁶ *The Indian Labour Year Book*, 1950, defines forced labour as: "work or service, whether with or without payment which is expected from a person against his will either by the government for public purposes under legal provisions or by landlords or creditors, or by other private individuals."

In the first category are included certain commercial services rendered by aborigines for sanitation or the upkeep of public property. The second category includes work or service exacted by Zamindars, malguzars, and other non-cultivating land-owners or proprietors from their tenants.—*Vide*, p. 268.

²⁷ L. M. Shrikant, *Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, 1951, p. 26.

render service for ever.²⁸ This system for forced labour is prevalent not only in Madras in various districts but also in Bombay, Hyderabad and M. P. In Bombay all jungle tract tenants are liable to be called upon to work for their landlords. This forced labour is demanded for as many days as are necessary for the landlords' requirements..... The maximum remuneration is 1 anna per day. More often rice is given, barley sufficient for one man for one meal. If the landlord is also a forest contractor he will use his tenants' labour by *veth* for working his coupes.⁹

The system of debt-bondage had reduced the aborigines to a state of servitude in which they work for third parties for a bare subsistence. In Hyderabad, the aborigines have been forced to work 10 days in every year in teak-plantations and to bring with them their own ploughs and bullocks, and they are not paid for this work.³⁰

In M. P. also in localities vestiges of forced labour are still encountered. The workers supply

²⁸ This practice exists in many parts of rural India and is known under different names such as the Harwahi system in U. P., and certain parts of Bihar and M. P., Kamiauti in other parts of Bihar; Gothi in Orissa and certain parts of Madras; Veth in some parts of Madras; Hali in Gujarat; Panniyal in Tamilnad, Gassigully in Andhra; Bhagia in Hyderabad; Jeetham in Karnatak; Barsalia and Shalkari in M. P.; Haliyas and Choras in Kumaon; Chakar in Orissa; Dublas and Kolis in Bombay—(see my *Agricultural Problems of India*, 1953, p. 169.)

²⁹ Quoted by K. G. Siwaswamy in *Serf-Labour Among the Aborigines*, in *Indian Journal of Social Work*, p. 317.

³⁰ C. F. Haimendarf, *Tribal Hyderabad*, 1945.

in interior villages free labour, services and articles in demand by landholders. Straws for cattle, and storing grains, vegetables for festivals and fruits, timber, fuel, free bullock cart service for Dewali and other festivals are common articles and services supplied to the landholders by labourers.³¹ If they take loans it is often granted at a very high rate of interest from 25 to 50 per cent. The small loan in a year accumulates like a snowball which, being irrepayable, ties the tenant to the money-lender. Sometimes the servant is transferred to another landlord who repays the loan to the previous landholders.³² Forest contractors illegally collect fees from the aborigines for use of fruits and flowers of forest trees ; when they combine shop-keeping the aboriginal slaves supply valuable produce to contractors in exchange for trinkets... There are terrible sanctions, fear of which makes the aboriginals render forced service such as carrying loads free or at nominal prices.³³ In Bihar the Kanas are bound servants of their masters ; in return for a loan received they bind them to perform whatever menial services are required of them in lieu of the interest due on the loan. In Santhal Parganas and Singhbhum, aboriginals are asked to maintain roads and buildings by their labour and released from the obligations of paying local taxes.³⁴

³¹ K. G. Siwaswamy, *Forced Labour in Agriculture*, in *Asian Labour Quarterly* 1949, pp. 45-46.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁴ A. V. Thakkar, *The Problems of Aborigines in India*, pp. 11-12.

Even the local government officials in various parts of the country were in habits, until recently, of exacting services and compulsory labour from tribes under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1934. "Low paid officials generally abuse their powers and take advantage of these restrictions to exact forced labour from numberless victims."³⁵

³⁵ V. Raghaviah, *The Problem of Criminal Tribes*, 1949, pp. 7-8.

4. TRIBES IN INDIA—STANDARD OF LIVING

As a rule, the living standard of the aboriginal population is extremely low. In many parts they stagnate in conditions of economic destitution and pronounced cultural and technical backwardness, which severely limit their production and consumption capacity. This is due to the primitive conditions in which they are obliged to earn their living, to the lack of educational stimuli and opportunities and to the almost complete absence, in some parts, of welfare services and measures for social and labour protection.

In this note we shall be dealing with the problems like the dietaries, the housing conditions, health, and literacy, etc.

1. Dietaries

Studies undertaken in India and other parts of the world reveal several important facts about the dietary habits of the aboriginal peoples, but the actual intake of calories, proteins, minerals and vitamins by them is not known. Nevertheless the data disclosed provide valuable information regarding the wide variations in diets of the primitive peoples.

Of all the primitive tribes of the world, the Eskimos are prevailingly carnivorous, living mainly on the marine animals like the seal, polar bear, whale, walrus, Arctic hare and eggs of Arctic birds.

Their diet is not complete and lacks starchy food. But the Eskimos are strong, vigorous and have unlimited energy. The Ainus of Japanese island, Yezo, are also carnivorous. They are hunters and eat the flesh of fox, wolf, horse, the fowl and some varieties of fishes in abundance. They also depend on a few vegetables, herbs and edible roots. While the Hunzas of the Upper valleys of the Karakoram live entirely on fruits and agricultural produce and yet possess better endurance and superior physical strength. Their diet is rich and nutritive consisting of wheat, barley, milk, ghee, butter-milk, pulses, millets, beans, potatoes, green vegetables and fruits like apricots, mulberries, etc. Occasionally they take meat and drink home-made wine of good grapes. In the words of Sir Robert McCarrison, "These people are unsurpassed by the Indian race in perfection of physique, they are long-lived, vigorous in youth and age, capable of great endurance and enjoy a remarkable freedom from disease in general. Their diets are unsophisticated foods of nature and the healthiest diets of mankind."¹ The Bakitara tribe living in Banyoro, north-west of Victoria Nyaza and the Todas of Nilgiris are prevaillingly lactovegetarians.

At this stage it may be pointed out that there appears to be no uniformity in the type of food taken by the different tribes but there seems to be some relation in the type of food consumed by

¹ Quoted by P. N. Sengupta, *The Dietaries of the Primitive Tribes of India*, in *March of India*, Vol. VI. No. 2., 1953, p. 60.

them and the climatic conditions of their environments. Herbivorous tribes appear to be the most numerous, the carnivorous and the omnivorous coming next and the lactivorous last.² But in the absence of any systematic investigations and the availability of complete data, it is possible to know only the variations in the actual consumption of food groups and not the actual intake of calories, proteins, minerals like calcium, phosphorus and iron.

Like the diets of the primitive tribes in other parts of the world, the diet of the aborigines in India varies according to the stage of their development and the areas they inhabit. Some of the tribes that rank as the most primitive live on forest products such as tubers, fruits and roots and such fish and animals as they can catch. In general these tribes are omnivorous and there are few limits to what they will accept as food. Others at a higher level of development eat beef and venison and produce their food by more or less permanent cultivation or jhum cultivation.³

The Anthropological Department of the Government of India has for some time past undertaken extensive systematic investigations on the dietaries, nutrition and adequacy of food, the general cause of various ailments, the birth and

² P. N. Sengupta, *Dietaries of the Primitive Tribes*, in *The Asiaticist*, 1953, p. 90.

³ A. Aiyappan, *Report on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes in the Province of Madras*, 1948, p. 63-69.

death rates, the expectation of life, the rate of growth among children, basal metabolism, etc., among the primitive tribes of India, first in the Abor hills on the N. E. Frontier of India and then in southern India in Travancore hills. As a result of these surveys much useful information is now available about the dietaries of these people and their effects on the constitution of the tribes.

Starting from south India we find that the staple food of the Paliyan consists of roots (the wild yam), honey and flesh of animals and birds. They also eat cumbu and cholum. They do not eat beef. They obtain game by means of traps.⁴

The food of the Chenchu consists briefly of roots (gaddalu) and berries (pandulu) herbs and fungi are also eaten; tamarind fruits are eaten mixed with ashes obtained by burning the bark of the same tree; mahua flower is eaten boiled. No salt is added to the food. They eat animal flesh when available, the skin is also eaten after the hair has been singed and the intestines after cleaning.⁵

The Kadar like "all sorts of game and fish, but the bison and the bear are two animals which no Kadar will touch, living or dead. They are very fond of honey."⁶

Kodo, Kutki, Pej (gruel) and vegetables and tender leaves of trees, particularly 'pipal' and

⁴ R. Faulkes, *A Note on the Paliyans of the Madura District in Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Pt. III. B, p. 196.

⁵ G. A. Khan, *The Chenchu*, in *Ibid.*, p. 210.

⁶ K. G. Menon, *The Kadar of Cochin*, in *Census of India*, Op. Cit., p. 213.

roots form the diet of Gonds. They would not spare any animal for the sake of flesh, even snakes and crocodiles would be their favourite dish. They love liquor brewn from mahua flowers.⁷

Murias also take rice at night and Pej prepared of broken rice pieces or millets usually in the day time. They are non-vegetarians but not beef-eaters.⁸

The Todas of the Nilgiris take mainly milk, ghee, buttermilk, curd, some cereal grains, sugar, herbs and fruits. In the olden times they lived only on herbs, fruits, honey and milk products.⁹

Rice and nagali are the staple food of the Warlis. They eat leafy vegetables and fish, if available. They also eat dry fish, fowls and flesh of such wild animals like boar, hare and deer. When they do not get normal food they eat bitter kands (big round roots grown below the soil) from the jungle, after boiling them as far as over 12 hours.¹⁰

The Katkaris of Bombay province eat rice, nagali, river fish, field crabs and rats. Occasionally they eat fish.

⁷ K. A. Gafoor, *Tribal Welfare in Hyderabad*, 1952, p. 16.

⁸ S. R. Dass, *Bhatras and Murias*, in *Tribes of India*, Pt. I., 1950, p. 50.

⁹ P. N. Sengupta, *Op Cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁰ K. J. Save, *Warlis and Katkaris*, *Ibid.*, Pt. I., p. 165-67.

The food taken by the Bhils is very coarse and poor but nutritious. It consists chiefly of maize, kuri, kodra, mal.¹¹ They also take meat of goat and sheep and are habituated to drink mahua-malt extracted from the flower of widely grown mahua tree in the neighbouring areas of Rajasthan, Bombay and M. B. Rice is taken on festivals.

The Baigas of Vindhya Pradesh are addicted to liquor, their main diet is a coarse type of rice (Kodo) and jowar, pigs and hens are freely used.¹²

One subdivision of Oraons is considered purer than the rest because it refuses to eat rats and lizards, a part of the daily diets of the others.¹³

In U. P. maize and various kinds of millets constitute the basic food of the Korwas, the Kharwars, the Ghasi and Chero. But rice is a luxury. The Korwa are among the only people who will eat bear, pig, fowls, ox, buffalo, and kinds of beer while Ghasi are fond of pork and goat.

The Panika will eat anything except the flesh of cows and buffaloes, horses, crocodiles, snakes and lizards, while the Buia eat both beef and crocodile. The Kharwars, having become Hinduised, refuse fowls and pork.¹⁴

¹¹ B. S. Mehta, *The Bhils & Meenas*, in *Tribes of India*, Pt. I, p. 211.

¹² A. B. Lall, *Baigas*, *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹³ W. H. Gilbert, *Peoples of India*, p. 75-81.

¹⁴ D. N. Majumdar, *The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes*, 1944.

The Raji of Askot in the Himalayas live mainly on tubers and other natural vegetable foods, supplemented by rice and millet raised in forest clearings, and fish, birds, and certain wild animals. They are generally omnivorous.¹⁵

The Abors of Assam practise jhum and therefore, eat cereals, millets, chillies, vegetables like Arvis, yams, pumpkins, brinjals, ginger, onions and stems and flowers of some wild plantain trees. Leaves of wild plants are also taken by them in large quantities. Pigs and chickens, fish and deer, wild boar, squirrels, wild cats and birds supply them with meat. Apong (slightly fermented beverage) is very common among them. They do not know how to use milk as food. Sugar and jaggery are not available to them.¹⁶

The diet of the Urali and Kanikkar tribes of Travancore hills is very inadequate. They live mainly on tapioca, small quantities of rice, some wild roots and yams. Meat, fish, milk and milk products do not form part of their diet. They have no fermented or intoxicating native beverage.¹⁷

Shri Sengupta enables us to compare the average daily diet of various food groups in ozs.

¹⁵ S. D. Pant, *Social Economy of the Himalayas*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁶ P. N. Sengupta, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 61-62

¹⁷ Sengupta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 62

among the non-tribal Indians, the Abors, and the Uralis in the following table : ¹⁸

Average Daily Intake of Various Food Groups (in ounces)

Food	Non-tribal Indians	Abors	Uralis	Recommended for non-Tri- bal Indians
Rice	16.6	26.4	7.1	14.0 (Cereals)
Other cereals	...	0.3	21.4	
Millet and Pulses	2.3	0.5	1.1	3.0
Green leafy vegetables	0.9	1.8	0.04	4.0
Other vegetables	4.1	1.4	16.9	6.0
Flesh foods	0.9	1.4	nil	4.0
Fats and oils	0.9	nil	0.2	2.0
Milk, etc.	3.3	nil	nil	10.0
Fruits	0.6	0.6	0.5	3.0
Sugar-jaggery	0.7	nil	nil	2.0
Drink (pints)	...	0.9	nil	...

Nutritive Value of Food consumed per day

Contents	Non-tribal Indians	Abors	Uralis	Recommended for non-tribal Indians
Calories	2,550	2,962	2,228	3,000
Protein (gm)	72.1	84.7	36.7	82
Fat (gm)	24.7	17.3	6.1	...
Carbohydrates (gm)	498	624	498	...
Calcium (gm)	0.6	1.0	0.3	1.0
Phosphorus (gm)	1.9	3.1	6.8	1.5
Iron (mgm)	26.5	30.8	11.6	20
Vitamin A-(I U)	3,020	4,103	265	3,000-4,000
Thiamine (mgm)	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.5
Riboflavin (mgm)	...	0.3	0.5	1.8
Niacin (mgm)	...	35.4	15.1	15
Vitamin C (mgm)	44.5	66.0	27.6	50

An analysis of these tables shows that according to calories, proteins, minerals and vitamins, etc., intake the Abors get 16 per cent more calories and the Uralis about 9 per cent less than the average

¹⁸ Sengupta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63.

Indian. The consumption of proteins is about 17 per cent more among the Abors and about 67 per cent less among the Uralis than what the Indians get. The calcium intake is about 70 per cent more in the case of Abors and 50 per cent less in the case of Uralis than intake among the Indians. As regards Vitamin A the Abors and Uralis are respectively getting 33 per cent more and 21 per cent less than what the average Indian gets.

It may be well remarked that in spite of the wholesome nature of the diet of the two aboriginal tribes, it suffers from several defects. For instance, the calory intake is not in accordance with the climate, body size and work; animal protein of high biological value is inadequate, and calcium is supplied by the green leafy vegetables, the maximum value of which may not be absorbed in the system. The nutritive value of food consumed by other tribes is not available.

2. Health

The health of the aborigines in India is stated to be on the whole above the average of that of the people inhabiting the plains, unless intensive culture-contact, through coolie labour or other agencies, has set in. Where the aboriginal still lives on forest produce or shifting cultivation, his general level of health is better than that of the plains-man, mainly because malnutrition is less pronounced. The same is reported of skin and respiratory diseases. Abandonment of their original mixed diet in favour of rice diet has

caused dysentery and cholera to spread. Scabies, ringworm, skin and venereal diseases are now more frequently found. Wound and fractures, because of lack of proper treatment are frequent causes of death or permanent mutilation.

In Assam, closer contact with civilization has brought about an increase in diseases. "Not only have some specific diseases such as venereal diseases and T. B., been introduced but epidemics spread more quickly."¹⁹ In mining areas of Bihar and Orissa, the malaria incidence has been brought down to the minimum so that the general health of the people is satisfactory.²⁰ In Bombay and south-eastern Aravalli hills the general health of the aboriginal is poor. The most common diseases being malaria, scurvy, guinea-worm, and others resulting from unhealthy climate, use of drinking water from the step-wells and malnutrition. Treatment by witch-doctors and magic are most frequently resorted to by the aborigines. Among the Abors the high incidence of goitre is found both among the males and the females, the main cause of this is the deficiency of iodine which perhaps can be explained because of the distance from the sea. There is no goitre among the Uralis and Kanikkars of Travancore.²¹

In the south malnutrition has caused ravages among the tribes as a result principally of change

¹⁹ J. P. Mills, *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I., Pt. III. B. p. 147

²⁰ I. L. O. *Indigenous People*, 1954, p. 149

²¹ Sengupta, *Op. Cit.*, p. 97

from wholesome forest produce to rice diet, accompanied by arrack and opium introduced by forest contractors. Mainly through contacts with outsiders, the Kaddars suffer from cholera, smallpox, diabetes and albuminaria.²² The Koya also suffer (together with the Reddi and the other tribes of the south) from yaws.²³ More particularly in Travancore, it is stated that leprosy is now found among the Kanikkars, the Muduvan, and the Vishawan, elephantiasis among the Kanikkars; syphilis among the Paliyan; and smallpox among the Muduvan, the Mannan and others. All hill tribes are subject to malaria to which many fall victim.²⁴

Scientific medical care—both preventive and curative—is inadequate in the majority of the areas inhabited by aboriginals. For economic reasons a very high percentage of doctors, pharmacists, nurses and social workers is concentrated in the capital cities and urban centres, at great distances from areas with a large tribal population. The situation is aggravated by the survival among tribals of empirical practices of mythical or religious origin, in matters of food, illness, child-bearing and weaning, and by illiteracy of an extremely high proportion of the tribal people.

Modern medicines have not found favour with these people because of the superstition and lack

²² A. Aiyappan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63

²³ K. G. Menon, *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I. Pt. III. B, p. 215

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 237-8.

of faith in them. They have their own medicine-men, their own methods of diagnosis and cure and diseases are generally attributed to the work of evil spirits. So that whenever diseases break out these medicine-men are called for. This attitude of the tribal people can be changed if not only the administrators but also the doctors and medical practitioners approach these people in a spirit of love, without any desire to impose themselves on them. By patience, skill and sheer friendliness, the barriers can be broken down and then those who never have known relief from pain and fever will come to them with gratitude and hope. Indigenous systems of medicine must be explored and simple natural remedies used whenever possible. In this way, the healing touch of science will reach the tribes, naturally and inevitably.

3. Literacy

In view of the low percentage of literacy for the country as a whole only 16.6% (for males, 24.9% and for females, 7.9%, in 1951) it is not surprising that nearly whole of the tribal people are illiterate. According to 1931 census figures of 7,611,803 persons belonging to tribal group, 7,567,452 were illiterate, *i. e.* only 0.58% were literate.²⁵ Although 1951 census figures for literacy among the tribals is not available, there is no reason to believe that there has been any change in the situation. Not to say of middle,

²⁵ *Census of India* 1931, Vol. I., Pt. II., p. 427

high school and college education even the primary education is negligible among the aborigines. The following table indicates the literacy per 1,000 aged 5 and over in tribals as compared with other important religious groups in the country since 1901 to 1931.²⁶

Literacy per 1,000 aged 5 and over

Community	1901	1911	1921	1931
Tribals	4	6	9	...
Muslims	33	38	53	64
Hindus	50	55	75	84
Sikhs	50	67	68	91
Christians	210	217	285	279
Jains	252	275	341	353
Parsis	649	711	794	791

Taking the figures for 1921 and 1931 by communities, it appears that whilst other communities, including the tribals, have shown progress there had been a decline in the literacy of the Parsi and Christian communities. According to the Census report it had been due to economic depression in the case of the former and due to the inclusion of illiterate converts coming largely from the tribals and lower Hindu-castes in the case of the latter.

The low figures of literacy among the tribes is to be expected for the following reasons:

1. Not only are there few schools in villages inhabited by the aborigines but the people cannot

²⁶ *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. I. Pt. I., p. 177; *Ibid* for 1911, p. 311; *India* for 1921, p. 186. and *Ibid* for 1931, p. 329. Later figures are not available.

afford or do not wish to send their children to urban or rural schools situated far from their villages.

2. Because of inaccessibility of the indigenous areas, very few teachers are available who may be willing to work among the aborigines or to stay for a reasonable period of time in the areas unsuited to their taste and devoid of all facilities of modern life, to which our present youths are usually accustomed.

3. There is also the difficulty of the language. There are not enough people who know tribal languages.

4. The aborigines themselves do not take the advantage of the facilities offered, the schools being for the most part situated in or near places not easily accessible to them.²⁷

For some time past, indigenous education has made considerable strides in Assam, though this system does not result in literacy as it is known in the West.²⁸ Such education as has been imparted to the Nagas has not been an unmixed blessing for there is a surplus of half-educated youths, unwilling to go back to the village life of their fathers and looking in vain for employment which they consider suitable for their talents.²⁹ The

²⁷ A. V. Thakkar, *The Problem of Aborigines in India*, p. 15-17.

²⁸ N. K. Rustomji, *Glimpses of Tribal Life in North East Frontiers in Amrit Bazar Patrika*, Puja Number, 1950, p. 131-32.

²⁹ J. P. Mills, *Op. Cit.*, p. 147-48.

Lushais also dislike manual labour, thus increasing the number of unemployed and discontented youths.³⁰ So also literacy among the Kaddars has tended to make them dissatisfied and unfit both for their own mode of living and for any other. In Travancore too, education has undermined their tribal ways and encouraged an attitude of contempt towards manual labour.

A special syllabus should be drawn up for the primary stages incorporating activities familiar to the tribal folk, and later it should incorporate lessons bearing on the culture of their neighbours. The medium of instruction must naturally be the mother-tongue, the tribal language spoken at home. The regional language should have its place as a subject of study in the upper forms. Regarding the script to be adopted the solution is not so easy. The tribal people should adopt the script of the regional language of the State, if the State has a single script. A few new phonemes, to represent sounds peculiar to the tribal language should, however, be added. These should be drawn up bearing in mind the need of new phonemes for the various tribal languages, so that no symbol should have more than one sound, nor should the same sound be indicated by more than one symbol in different areas.

4. Housing Conditions

The aboriginal dwelling is generally always damp, insufficiently ventilated, overcrowded and

³⁰ C. H. Helme in *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I., Pt. III. B., p. 149.

devoid of most rudimentary sanitary facilities, all of which factors strongly favour the spread of respiratory and digestive diseases, malaria, etc. In fact, aboriginal dwellings in trees are found in the continuous belt, from south India (especially among the Kanikkar and Mandavar in the extreme south) and sometimes among the Irulas of the eastern Nilgiri hills, to Assam (among Garo) and various parts of Indo-China as far as the Miao country on the Chinese frontier.⁸¹ The houses are usually mere huts made of forest saplings and branches and covered with leaf thatching. The floor is sometimes raised by dumping earth and beating it down into a platform.⁸²

In Travancore the Kanikkar, the Mannam, Muduvan and Paliyan do not raise floors of their huts above ground level and hence drainage and sanitation are defective. In Madras, the pastoral Toda of the Nilgiris have a type of dwelling peculiar to them. It is rectangular, built of wood and thatch, with an ogival roof. The Paniyans live in poorly constructed low huts built of bamboo and leaves. A number of huts form a hamlet. The houses of Lyngngum Khasi in central Assam are long rectangular pile dwellings, raised a little above the ground at entrance which faces the inner square of the village.

⁸¹ G. Montandon, quoted in I. L. O.'s, *Indigenous People*, p. 119

⁸² P. C. Menon, *Kadars of Cochin*, in *Census of India*, Vol. I., Pt. III. B., p. 213.

The houses of the Bhils living in the hilly country is different from those of the plains. In the plains they live in villages close together, while in the hilly country the living is of the scattered type. The house about 10' $\times$ 8' has low roofs, scarcely 6' high, mostly thatched and in some cases tiled, supported by four mud walls with no window, hole or aperture of any kind for light or air protected by a door of bamboo matting.

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

Raw meat is not eaten by the Kharias and beef is unpopular with all sections of the tribe. Salt is very popular with them and they take plenty of it with their food. Meat is salted and dried, vegetables are boiled with salt, and the advanced section of the Kharias have learnt to prepare curry with vegetables, onion, powdered turmeric, pulses and meat salted to taste. This preference for salt may lead to some physiological change and such

aspects of nutrition in primitive society require careful investigation. The Kharias have experimented with all kinds of leaves and tubers as food and have developed a taste for a large number of leaves and flowers.

The Kuki villages consist of tiny settlements in the jungles, of four to five huts, built of bamboo and cane. The Kukis are 'by temperament nomadic.' The peculiar vagabond strain if not controlled leads to villages splitting into hamlets and the latter subdividing till, as in the Manipur hills, we find single houses in the midst of dense jungle several miles from the next habitation. In the jungle the nomad Kuki builds lightly and a habitation of sorts can be erected in a few hours with bamboo mats as walls and with leaves for the thatch to keep out the rain. Where the Kukis live a settled life, they construct large solidly built houses, 50 to 60 ft. long, 15 to 20 ft wide and 7 to 10 ft. high. The houses are built on long bamboo poles, the lower halves of which when covered up provide accommodation for cattle and pigs. Each house has a few bamboo cages, kept on either side of the entrance, in which fowl and pigeons are kept.

6. TRIBES IN INDIA—THEIR CIVIL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Sex Distribution

Apart from the general disparity of sexes in the country, there is found a great inequality of sexes between different socio-economic groups too. Among the major communities of India, the scarcity of females is the largest. In 1931, the Sikhs had only 78 females for every 100 males as against 95 females in the case of Hindus and Christians; 90 in Muslims and 94 in Jains and Parsis. The tribals had slight excess of females. In 1951, the position was something like this: there were 84 females among the Sikhs, 94 among the Hindus, 99 among the Christians, 92 among the Jains, 98 among the Parsis, 94 among the Muslims and 95 among the Tribals per 100 males. The following table gives the sex distribution of population in the important religious groups since 1891 :¹

Community	<i>Females per 1,000 Males</i>				
	1891	1901	1921	1931	1951
Hindus	962	969	954	953	948
Muslims	940	937	909	904	944
Tribals	991	1016	996	1009	951
Christians	913	935	935	952	992
Jains	N. A.	N. A.	931	941	927
Sikhs	N. A.	N. A.	755	784	848
Parsis	N. A.	N. A.	944	940	982
India	958	963	945	941	947

¹ *Census of India, 1921; 1931 and Census of India 1951, Vol. 1, Pt. I. A.*

It will be observed that in comparison to other communities Tribals have, except Christians, Jains and Parsis, a higher number of females per 1,000 males, this is because they have generally late marriages, and hence the early years of greater fertility are over by the time marriage is contracted.

Menarche

Most of our data about the primitive tribes are of a perfunctory nature. The statistical value of the accounts given by the travellers, missionaries, and the anthropologists are very dubious. The data regarding the age of menarche among the tribal people are even more so. Of course, some data have been collected by eminent workers in the field like those of Dr. Elwin and Dr. Majumdar. According to Dr. Elwin, the most likely age for the menarche among the tribal people of Madhya Pradesh is between 12 and 15. Dr. Majumdar examined 367 girls, all of them in their teens, of seven tribes of northern India, of which only the Hos, the Korwas, and the Tharus provided most reliable data. Out of the total number, only 12 had their first menstruation below 10 years, 97 had it between 10—12, ; 191 between 12—14 ; 56 between 14—16 and 11 at 16 and above. Calculated on the percentage basis, 3.3% of the cases were below 10 years ; 26.4% between 10 and 12 years ; 52% were between 12 and 14 years ; and 15.3% between 14-16 years ; and only 3% above 16 and over. Thus it will be observed that in 78.40% of the cases the ages of menarche

among the tribal girls were between 12 and 14 compared with 92.0% among the girls of all races in India. Secondly, menstruation appears at early age among the Mongoloid tribes—the Garos, the Kukis, and the Tharus—which distinguishes them from the Austroloid or pre-Dravidian tribes like the Hos, Mundas, and others.²

As compared to the Tribals, 80 per cent of the Indian girls (according to the Age of Consent Committee) get their menstruation between 12 and 15 years. J. Robinson found 12 years 4 months as average age for menarche in Hindu girls of Calcutta; 13 years 2 months in Madras; and 13 years 3 months in Bombay. In cool climate the period sets in at a bit higher age. Kreiger observes that the average age for menstruation in Christiana is 16 years 9 months 25 days; it is 15 years 7 months 25 days in Berlin; 15 years 1 month 14 days in London; and 14 years 5 months 29 days in Lyons; 13 years, 11 months 11 days in Marseilles; 10 years, 0 months, 0 days in Sierra Leone and 12 years, 0 months, 0 days in Calcutta.³

Marriage

Between menstruation and motherhood there

² D. N. Majumdar, *Matrix of Indian Culture*, p. 78-80.

³ Carr Saunders, *World Population Problem*, p. 91.

It is interesting to note that some authors like Carr Saunders are of the opinion that, there is no close or definite connection between climate and menstruation; but others like Engelmann believes that there is some connection. In support of his views he gives the menstruation average age as 12.9 years for the Tropics; 15.5 years for the Temperate and 16.5 yrs. for the cold zone.

is a longer gap among the tribal women than is noticed among others. Marriage is usually late but practised almost universally in the tribal society, the only exception being the Hos of Kolhan. From the Census statistics, 1931, we find that there were 687 wives per 1,000 females between the ages of 15 to 20, as compared with 564 among the Christians, 909 among the Hindus, and similar number among the Muslims. The following table gives marital status by religion, in percentages, for India in 1931 : ⁴

*Marital Status of Women aged 15-39 by Religion
(In Percentages)*

Community	Unmarried	Married	Widowed
Jains	4	78	18
Hindus	4	80	16
Muslims	5	85	10
Sikhs	8	87	15
<i>Tribals</i>	10	80	10
Christians	15	80	5
Buddhists	15	80	5
Parsis	45	50	5

Thus it will be seen that all the religious groups sharply differ in marital status.

Child marriage is practically absent among the tribes, though of late many tribes have introduced child marriage under the influence of Hindu culture. In Chota Nagpur the more well-to-do

⁴ *Census of India, 1931*. Later figures not available.

families of Santhals, Mundas and the Oraons have come into close contact with the Hindus. Among them the age of marriage for girls has come down to even 9 or 10 and for the boys to 12 or 13. The same is the case with the Bhils of Gujrat and Nimar division in M. P. But among the Nagas and Kukis of Assam, girls marry between the ages of 15 to 20 and the boys between the age of 18 and 25. Some tribes like the Hos and the Mundas of Chota Nagpur marry their girls pretty late. The high bride price necessary for marriage makes it difficult for the young man to marry and marriage is consequently postponed till late in life. Girls seldom marry before 18 and 20 and men seldom below 25 or even 30. In other tribes too in Northern India, the average age of girls does not fall below 15 or go above 20.

The groom is usually older than the bride in the tribal areas but the opposite is not unknown in Assam, *e. g.* among the Purum Kukis. Usually the difference in age between the husband and wife is never below 15. Many of the cases of rape, abduction, elopement and widowhood are to be traced to this disparity in the ages between husband and the wife. More often than not, a man is married at the age of 35 to a girl of 15, so that when he is 50 the girl is 30. The psycho-sexual life of a woman demands her normal sexual life to continue while the husband may feel it otherwise. This great difference in age between husband and wife reacts adversely on the fertility of the wife.

Pre-martial and Extra-martial Sex Relations

There is considerable opportunity for the satisfaction of the sex-impulses outside marriage among the tribals of India. Pre-marital sexual chastity is not very rigidly insisted upon in a large number of tribes. Among the Muria Gonds of Bastar, according to Dr. Elwin, bachelors and maidens of a village pass the night in a common house where they pair off according to their choice. The mates are changed occasionally or regularly. This continues till they are married and leave the organisation. Marriage between the mates of the Ghotul (Bachelor's House) is very rare.⁶ Each Oraon bachelor had a sweetheart in the spinster's house half a century ago. If a girl refused to accept a lover, she was 'cut' off by the older girls who refused to dance with her till she accepted a paramour. The Bachelor's House organisation has now gone underground and it is difficult to say what the present conditions are.⁷ Among the Naga tribes also we find similar pre-nuptial laxity. "The Aos," writes Dr. Hutton, "are notorious for the unchastity of their women...From a tender age girls are free to do as they like before marriage, and are thus with difficulty prevented from doing so afterwards. The unmarried girls sleep in small houses, built for the purpose, in twos or threes, and the unmarried men sleep with them."⁸ Only adult marriage is in vogue among the Ao Nagas, according to Smith, "but prior to wedlock

⁶ Elwin, *The Murias and Their Ghotul*, p. 333.

⁷ S. K. Roy, *The Oraons*, pp. 246-7.

⁸ Dr. J. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, p. 374.

the girls are allowed great freedom. It is said that Naga brides who are entitled to wear the "orange blossom of virginity" on the wedding day are very rare. The girls sleep by twos or threes in separate houses or in the houses of widows, where they are visited nightly by their lovers."⁹ Girls among the Angami Nagas consider short hair, the symbol of virginity, to be a disgrace and are very anxious to become entitled to wear it long.¹⁰

Post-marital laxity is also not unknown among the tribes of other parts. During the more important festivals, such as the *Magh Parab* among the Hos and the *Khaddi* among the Oraon men and women freely indulge in sex-relations. It may, therefore, safely be said that there is considerable opportunity for the satisfaction of sex-desires outside the marital tie among at least some of the tribals of India, yet we find that marriage is universal among them. It may, hence, be concluded that sex-activity is not the main objective of marriage. Economic co-operation seems to be the basis for marital union, though emotional inter-stimulation and procreation of children as motives of marriage also exist.

Among the Konyak Naga a girl continues her amours even after her marriage. It is only when a child is born to her that she moves to her husband's household, it being known that the child if it is not his does not cause any inconvenience.

⁹ W. C. Smith, *The Ao Nagas Tribe of Assam*, p. 57.

¹⁰ Compare Westermarck, *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas*, Vol. II, p. 423.

Playfair says of the Garos, "On the occasion of certain festivals it is an uneven law that young girls and men sleep together after the entertainment is over, and the partnership of one night is expected to precede a life-long union. It is not absolutely necessary that they should thereafter live as husband and wife, and no obloquy is incurred by the girl on account of her lapse from the path of virtue, unless she is found later to be an expectant mother."*

In middle India, pre-marital liaisons are overlooked unless of course they lead to pregnancy, which is generally regarded as shameful for the girl's parents, even if the pregnancy be caused by a suitor-servant's attention. The girl is asked to name the child's father and he is forced to marry her. No, or only reduced bride price may be paid when such girls are married off.

Among some tribes, like the Muria, adolescent life is one of preparation for all the activities of adult; and in their dormitories grown-up girls are often found to train younger boys in the art of love and sex-life.

The Tharu men are so much under the thumbs of their beautiful wives that they take no offence at the latter's lax sex morals. The Khasa have developed a double standard of morality whereby a woman as a wife (ranti) has to observe a strict sex-moral code, but as a daughter (dhyanti) has free scope to have as many liaisons and amours as

*Playfair, *The Garos*, 1909, p. 68.

she likes. In view of this the Khasa women never completely cut off themselves from their parent's households.

Pre-marital sex-laxity is also observable in other tribes of the world. Among the Port Barrow Eskimos, according to Murdoch, "promiscuous sexual intercourse between married and unmarried people, or even among the children, appears to be looked upon merely as a matter for amusement."¹¹ Of the Indians of the North-west, U. S. A., Gibbs writes, "Cohabitation of unmarried females among their own people brings no disgrace if unaccompanied by child-birth...This commences at a very early age, perhaps ten or twelve years."¹² Speaking of the Columbian Indians, Bancroft says, "Unmarried women have not the slightest idea of chastity and freely bestow their favours in return for a kindness or for a very small consideration in property paid to themselves or parents."¹³

Powers thinks, "There is scarcely an attribute known as virtue or chastity in either sex before marriage among the Californian Indians."¹⁴ Writing of conditions in Africa, Johnston says, "As regards the little girls, over nearly the whole of

¹¹ *Ethnological Results of the Port Barrow Expedition*, Ninth Annual Report, 1884, p. 419.

¹² Gibbs, *The Tribes of Western Washington and North-west Oregon*, Vol. I, p. 189

¹³ Bancroft, *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, Vol. I., p. 212.

¹⁴ *The Tribes of California*, U. S. A. Geog., and Geol. Survey, Vol. III., p. 157.

British Central Africa, chastity before puberty is an unknown condition. Before a girl is to become a woman it is a matter of absolute indifference what she does, and scarcely any girl remains a virgin after about five years of age."¹⁵ Weeks says that among the Bangala "above the age of five years it would be impossible to find a girl who was a virgin."¹⁶ "If," writes Willoughby, "there is ever a time when Bantu boys and girls are not familiar with sexual subjects, it must be in years when they have not yet become familiar with anything. Little effort is made to shield children from sexual contaminations ; but on the contrary, it adds spice to the elders' amusement when little voices try to sing these fearful songs, and small children ape their parents' vices. Nothing seems to matter till puberty is approached ; and then there is a sudden attempt to look after the girls."¹⁷ In regard to the people of Burma, Webb writes, "Among many of the tribes there is great moral laxity prior to marriage. Thus among the Siyin and Sokte tribes of the Chins, female virtue is not expected, provided an unmarried girl takes the precautions to prevent motherhood before marriage. Boys and girls sleep together without hindrance, and a young man openly cohabits with his mistress in the house of her parents. Similarly among the Kachins, young people are allowed

¹⁵ Johnson, *British Central Africa*, p. 409.

¹⁶ *The Bangala of the Upper Congo, Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, Vol. XXXIX, 1909, p. 442.

¹⁷ *Race Problem in New Africa*, 1923, p. 127.

to consort as they please before marriage though the marriage prohibitions are usually observed even in pre-marital intercourse. Special bachelors' huts are placed at the disposal of any couple who wish to try the experiment with each other. The experiments are continued indefinitely on both sides until a suitable match is found, and then marriage ensues. It is claimed that unchastity after marriage does not exist, owing to the freedom of experiment before marriage"¹⁸ Of the people of New-zealand, writes Best, "that a girl would have intercourse with a youth before she arrived at puberty. At times marriage took place and was consummated at this early age."¹⁹ "It would appear," says Hartland, "that sexual intercourse before puberty is either recognized by a formal marriage or tolerated as the gratification of a natural instinct among a great variety of people in all quarters of the globe."²⁰

Among a number of tribes there is a general sexual indulgence with the girl when she is initiated. Among some tribes the old men have priority rights during the initiation of the girl; while with others the girl is subject to all the men who may get hold of her. Wilshire reports that after initiation of the girls (circumcision ceremony) are sexually "at the mercy of all who

¹⁸ *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. IX, Burma, Pt. I., p. 148.

¹⁹ *The Peopling of New Zealand*, *Man*, Vol. XIV., 1914, p. 32.

²⁰ *The Primitive Paternity*, 1909, Vol. I., p. 272.

may get hold of them.”²¹ Oldfield tells us that there is a sexual initiation ceremony before a female is considered fit for marriage among the west Australian tribes, and in it all the males of the tribe partake.²² Malinowshi, speaking in general of chastity, says, “Before marriage the girl has to submit to a general sexual intercourse, and after it the woman becomes on many occasions the property of another man.”²³ He points out that among the Trobriand Islanders pre-marital coitus is expected, no birth control methods are known, yet the women rarely bear children before they are married.²⁴

Selection of Mates

The selection of mates is an important affair even in primitive society. The rules of endogamy, exogamy, hypergamy, preferential mating, and prohibited degrees operate simultaneously and thereby considerably restrict the freedom of choice. Thus a Santhal has to marry within his own tribe, but not of his own clan. Among the Purum Kukis of Manipur, marriage between cross-cousins is preferred.²⁵ A Garo man has to marry his mother-in-law as she is the owner of that family property. Marriage between grandparents and grandchildren has also been reported from amongst

²¹ Wilshire, *The Aborigines of Central Asia*, p. 30.

²² Oldfield, *On the Aborigines of Australia*, p. 251.

²³ Malinowshi, *The Family among the Australian Aborigines*, p. 105.

²⁴ Malinowski, *The Father in Primitive Psychology*.

²⁵ T. C. Dass, *The Purums*, p. 241.

the Gonds of M. P. Among the Lakhers of Lushai Hills marriage with the widowed step-mother and with the widow of the son is also found.²⁶ In the Bhils of Bombay and Rajasthan, widow remarriage is commonly practised and if there is no one to look after her children, she takes them with her to the new husband. A younger brother can keep the widow of his elder brother but not vice versa.²⁷

The means of acquiring a mate in tribal society are varied and interesting. In the primitive society payment is the most common way of securing a wife. The amount, of course, varies according to the economic conditions of the tribe. The Santhals, Hos, Mundas, Kharias, Oraons, Gonds, Nagas, Kukis, Bhils and others pay for their brides as a general rule. But even amongst them there are also found other means of getting a wife which may be discussed here briefly.

1. Marriage by service is the only way to secure a bride among the Purums of Manipur. The prospective groom has to serve in the house of his bride's father for 3 years. He may be employed to do any work that the sons of the house may be required to perform. He has board and lodging during this period in the house of his prospective father-in-law.²⁸ This practice is also found among the Rangkhols, Kukis, Aimols, Anals, and Chirus.

²⁶ Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 294.

²⁷ D. N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India*, p. 145.

²⁸ T. C. Das, *Op. Cit.*, p. 242.

2. Marriage by capture is another method found among many of the Chota Nagpur tribes, such as the Hos, Santhals, Mundas, Bhumijas and others. In the negotiated marriages, too, the father of the girl requests the groom to take the bride away by force. The date and time for this is arranged mutually ; the bride shows some resistance but ultimately allows herself to be abducted. Such an abduction-marriage increases the prestige of the bride's parents.²⁹

When a boy falls in love with a girl who does not reciprocate his feelings or when her father is not agreeable to the match, the boy may force their hands by simply putting a vermillion mark on the forehead of the girl, which, constitutes formal marriage. Soon after this the boy leaves the village and remains in hiding till the matter is settled between the guardians of both the parties. This is found among Santhals, Bhumijas, Hos, Mundas and other tribes of Chota Nagpur and Orissa.

3. Marriage by elopement is another method common among these tribes. When a boy and a girl love each other but their parents are not agreeable to the match the parties take resort to this means. After two or three months they come back to the village and are accepted as husband and wife.

4. Intrusion-marriage is another peculiar method of securing a mate which is generally

²⁹ T. C. Dass, *The Bhumijas of Saraikella*, p. 12.

found among the Santhals and other tribes. Here the initiative is taken by the bride. When a boy has intimate relations with a girl whom he promises to marry but postpones the ceremony continually, she stealthily enters his hut one early morning and takes her seat in one corner. The mother of the boy tries to drive out the girl by all means. If the girl sticks to her position to the last, she wins her case. The neighbours assemble in the courtyard, and the boy is forced to marry.

5. Marriage by settlement is usually common among the Bhils.

Forms of Marriage

In India we have all the forms of marital life among the tribes, *viz.* monogamy, polyandry and polygyny. In tribal India, polygamy is widespread. Two forms of polygamy may be differentiated; polygyny is the marriage of one man to several women; and polyandry the marriage of one woman to several men. Both types of marriage are referred to as polygamy in common parlance. Of all these monogamy is the most prevalent form but it is not obligatory for any tribe. The Khasi, the Santhal and Kadar are monogamous.

Polyandry is practised among the Todas and Tiyan of the south and the Jaunsar Bawar of the Himalayas, the Kota, the Khasa and the Ladakhi Bota, where there is either paucity of females as among the Todas, or where poverty is very

rampant as in Jaunsar Bawar so that family property is kept undivided by allowing a common wife to all the brothers in the family. The Nayar were polyandrous and there are many survivals of the custom found among them even today. In India, polyandry is of two types. When several brothers share the same wife, as among the Khasa and the Toda, we have 'adelphic', or 'fraternal polyandry.' In the general type, also found among the Toda, there need not be any close relationship between the husbands and the wife goes to spend some time with each husband. So long as a woman lives with one of her husbands, the others have no claim over her. Nayar polyandry was of this type.

Polyandry is found to lead to fewer children to every woman, more male children, and a high incidence of sterility among women.

Polygyny is almost universally allowed in primitive society but rarely practised by individuals. Economic condition is the limiting factor. Tribal chiefs sometimes indulge in large number of wives for economic reasons like the supply of labour, the desire for children, the lucky inheritance of one or more wives from father or elder brother, and the craving for prestige, etc. Polygyny is found among the Naga tribes, the Gond, the Baigas, the Toda, the Lushai clans and most of other Proto-Austroloid tribes of Middle India.

In every tribe marriage is brought about by a number of rituals which give social recognition to the union. Dancing, feasting, and music

give publicity to, and serve as evidence of, the union. Some of the rituals symbolise the union of two individuals by tying their clothes, hands or bodies, or mixing their blood. Instances of one or other of these rites are found in all the tribes of India.

Divorce, Remarriage and Widowhood

Divorce, remarriage and widowhood are also elements of the marital institution. Divorce is quite common among the tribes. Among the Khasis there are few middle-aged persons who have not changed their mates once or twice for reasons of adultery, barrenness and incompatibility of temperament. Divorce is brought about by a formal ceremony in most of the cases. *Sakam-arach*, which literally means leaf-tearing, is the regular divorce ritual of the Santhals which is performed in the presence of the whole village. The husband and wife tear three sal leaves each and upset a brass pot filled with water with invocations to the Sun-god. The Oraons of Bihar have a very sensible custom which prescribes that a widower must marry a widow or a divorced woman and not a maiden. But human ingenuity has found a way to circumvent this healthy custom by getting the maiden-bride married first to a tree and then to the human bridegroom.³⁰

Among the Lushai, the dissolution of marriage is a much simpler affair. If a husband turns out

³⁰ T. C. Das, *Social Organisation in the Adivasis*, p. 113.

his wife, he must pay the balance of the bride price, if any, is due. However, if his wife deserts him or is caught in adultery, she has to arrange for the return of the bride price her husband paid for her. A second marriage between those once divorced is possible. Among the Kuki also divorce is easily obtained.

The Gonds allow divorce freely on grounds of marital infidelity, carelessness in household work, barrenness and quarrelsome disposition. Either party can take the initiative in obtaining a dissolution. However, the husband a wife chooses after divorce may have to compensate the first husband if the divorce has been obtained against his will or at his request, but on account of a recognized fault in, or a punishable offence of the wife.

The Kharia also permit the right to demand dissolution to either party, on grounds of marital infidelity, sterility of the wife, laziness, refusal of the wife to live with her husband, theft and adjudication by the village 'panchayat' that the wife is a witch. It may be noted that none of these charges, except perhaps the first one is ever preferred against the husband.

Instances of divorce can be cited from all the known tribes of India.

Fertility

The data about the life of the tribes are often quite unreliable because much of the evidence

does not distinguish between fecundity and fertility of the primitive people. There are two opposite views regarding the fecundity of the primitive people. One view holds that the primitive people had not only an unrestricted but a very high fecundity. The other places primitive people at the bottom of the fecundity scale. Prof. Carr-Saunders is of the opinion that "fecundity has increased with civilization." He takes the Indians and the Chinese as intermediate between pre-historic people and the Europeans. Since the time of pre-historic man fecundity is said to have increased, this being apparent in the nature of a modification due to the changed conditions of life. He also traces this increase as biologically determined for the reproductive organs of man have undergone change, those of the more primitive races of mankind being smaller and in all respects less developed than those of civilized races.³¹ In other words, there is a connection between lesser development of the reproductive organs and a lower degree of fecundity.³² This is a statistical conclusion for which sanction has been sought from Biology. It is not possible to prove with our present knowledge of human fecundity, that biological differences account for differential fecundity.

Fecundity is the capacity of a woman to bear children while fertility is the actual number born.

³¹ Other writers claim that the reproductive organs of the Negro group are unusually large.—H. H. Johnson *The Negro in the New World*, 1914, p. 9.

³² Carr-Saunders, *The Population Problem*, p. 97.

According to Duncan, "Fecundity is the actual power of reproduction while fertility is the degree of production."³³ A woman may have the power of giving birth to twenty children but give birth to only four. In that case her fecundity would be twenty children, but her fertility four. Under very exceptional circumstances, rarely enough, fertility of a woman corresponds with her absolute power of reproduction,³⁴ so that the number of children born for which statistics may be available is no measure of fertility, much less of fecundity.

Human species, like all other forms of life, has an excessive fecundity. It is estimated that the normal ejaculation of a man contains 226,000,000 spermatozoa and that the ovaries of a woman contain about 75,000 ova. Not more than 500 of these ova, however, develop to maturity during the fertile period of a woman's life, and not more than 20 or 30 can possibly be used for reproduction. One ovum matures each lunar month between puberty and the menopause, and for each matured ovum the male develops at least 850,000,000 spermatozoa. Since only one ovum and one spermatozoon are needed in each reproduction we

³³ H. G. Duncan, *Race and Population Problems*, 1926, p. 258

³⁴ "It has been observed that civilized man has an excessive fecundity and abundant fertility which is constantly underestimated. The fecundity of man is at least two hundred times as great as is needed to keep up population. Of woman it is at least four times as great as needed."—H. G. Duncan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 272.

gain some idea of the latent reproductive power of human beings.

Ordinarily a woman can give birth to a child every year and a half during her reproductive period (extending from 15 to 45 years of age). If this fecund period extends from 15 to 45 years only, she would be able to give birth to 20 children. Many women have longer fecund periods, and some can have children at intervals of 10 months. Matthews Duncan estimates that a normal woman of civilized races, living in wedlock throughout her fecund period, under favourable circumstances, bears from 10 to 12 children.³⁵ In fact the fecundity of the human beings is very great. A single pair of human beings could have produced the present world population in 1800 years.³⁶

The fertility of woman varies from tribe to tribe, as it does with the different species, with members of the same species, and often with the same member of the same species. Economic conditions are largely responsible for the difference in fertility between tribes. In agricultural years of prosperity, the number of marriages increases and with the couple of years the effect is manifest in the large incidence of birth.

According to Dr. Majumdar the average number of children per family among the Hos is 5.16 per completed fertility, that of Oraon, 6; Kuki, 6.5; Konds, 7.2; and Tharus, 6.5.³⁷ The fertility

³⁵ M. Duncan, *Fecundity, Fertility and Sterility*, p. 112.

³⁶ H. G. Duncan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 271.

³⁷ D. N. Majumdar, *Matrix of Indian Culture*, p. 87-88.

of tribal women in India appears to be higher than that of those outside India. For according to Boas, the average number of children born per mother among the Nass River Indians is 4.8; among the Kwakiutl 3.5; Utambt 5.3; Atlakyapamugnes 5.8.³⁸ The survival rate among the Nass River Indians is 55.5%; 26.6% among the Kwakiutl; 64.6% in Utamk; and 41.4% in Atlakyapamugnes. Compared with these tribes the figures for the Hos are 67%; for Oraons 65%; for Kuki 61%; for the Khonds 41%; for the Tharus 52% and for the Saoras 56 per cent.³⁹ According to Prof. Krzywicki, the fertility of the tribes, except the Australians and the Negro are not correct.

That Indian tribes are more fertile than their colleagues in other parts of the world is a fact true probably because the influence of contacts has not been as disastrous in India as elsewhere. Whereas in most parts where the White people have colonised or settled for exploitation of new lands, the tribal people have become extinct or are tending towards extinction, in India either due to isolation or through non-interference, the tribes have maintained their prolific fertility though the survival rate as found among them can be traced to the widespread prevalence of sexual diseases, syphilis being pretty common among them. Further, the lower survival rate which is traced to high infantile mortality has been brought about by

³⁸ F. Boas, *Fifth Report on the Indians of Br. Columbia and Tenth Report on the N. W. Tribes of Canada*, p. 549-551.

³⁹ D. N. Majumdar, *Op., Cit.*, p. 82

changes in the economic base of the tribes, as many of the tribes, originally in the hunting stage have been absorbed in the agricultural stage and such adjustment has caused discomforts and disintegration of most of their tribal beliefs in the prevention and cure.

It may be pointed out that the fertility is greater among the tribal people than among advanced groups, *e. g.* in Assam in 1931, the average number of children per family among the tea garden coolie castes was 3.4 while that among the hill tribes was 4.7. At every period of marriage duration "hill women" have more children than coolie women and that at the end of her reproductive life a coolie man would normally have 6 children and a hill woman 7 to 8. If Hinduisation is a higher cultural stage, the Hinduised sections of the tribal population show a lower fertility than the tribals. Even the dying tribes have a high fertility. Westermarck refers to some statements made by different investigators where primitive women are stated to be more or less prolific. We may tentatively conclude, though this would go against the assumptions of Prof. Carr-Saunders, that so far as fertility is concerned, the primitive and backward tribes have quite high fertility. Where the tribes have adjusted themselves to the new economic base, the fertility has not slowed down but where there is maladaptation in progress not only the fertility has been lowered but the incidence of sterility and abortion have put limit to the size of the families.

The fertility enquiry made in 1931 reveals the following information regarding the fertility of different religious groups in India.⁴⁰

No. of Children per Family

Communities	Number	Community	Number
Tribals	5.0	Hindus	4.3
Christians	5.0	Jains	4.2
Rajputs	4.8	Depressed Classes	4.1
Parsis	4.6	Sikhs	4.1
Muslims	4.4	Buddhists	3.8

From these figures it will be noticed that the people who are at the top of the social ladder—the rich, the urban and the better educated sects—have a low proportion of children. On the other hand, the Christians and the Sikhs who have recruited large number of members from the lower ranks of Hindu society have higher ranks. The highest of all are the Tribals, who are primitives with presumably the reproductive behaviour of the most aboriginal groups. Both Hindus and Muslims fall in an intermediate group, with the Muslims having a substantially higher ratio than the Hindus.

The following are the figures of Child-woman ratios by religion:⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Census of India 1931*, Vol. I., Pt. I.

⁴¹ Computed from *Census of India*, Vol. I. Pt. 2, 1911, pp. 44-46, 51; 1921, pp. 46-48, 56; and 1931, pp. 121-23

*Child-Woman Ratios by Religion, Average for
1891, 1921, and 1931*

Community	Children 0-4 per 1,000 Women aged 15-39	Children 0-4 per 1,000 married Women aged 15-39
Parsis	338	735
Jains	625	804
Hindus	678	817
Buddhists	698	932
Christians	741	866
Muslims	770	900
Tribals	808	1,023
Sikhs	841	960
All religions	705	844

From this table the same conclusion can be drawn that the Tribals are more fertile than the rest of the religious groups in the country. Those religious groups that permit a great amount of widow remarriage have apparently a higher general fertility than those that permit a small amount.

Similarly when two races both living a similar kind of life under similar conditions, one practises early marriage and the other does not, *e. g.* the Hindus and Muslims in India, fertility is higher among the latter than among the former⁴² because when marriage of young people is consummated at an early age, a fairly large number of wives die of phthisis or other diseases of the respiratory organs or from some ovarian complication within 10 years of the consummation of marriage.⁴³

It may be mentioned here that if some of the primitive tribes are declining in number or are

⁴² Carr-Saunders, *The Population Problem*, p. 104.

⁴³ P. K. Wattal, *The Population Problem in India*, 1916, p. 23.

manifesting a tendency towards it, it is not due to their lower fecundity but the conditions of life which discourage families and make rearing of a large family almost impossible. That the vitality of tribes has not been absolutely impaired will be evident from the proportion of masculinity in the population in different cultural stages. The proportion of masculinity among tribal population is much lower than among the higher castes, *e. g.* Brahmins had 902 females per 1,000 males, and Rajputs, 868, Bhils 981, and Santhals 998 in 1931.

Though the figures for mortality at different age periods are not available, but investigations in specified areas have shown the phenomenal absence of aged people among the tribal people. From the census figures of 1931, we find that the percentages of persons aged 44 and over is higher among the Hindus and Muslims than among the tribes. The Brahmins, *e. g.* had 19 per cent of their total number between the age period 44 and above, but the Saoras 12 per cent; Bhils 12.8 per cent and the tribal Kolis only 10 per cent. While the proportion of aged people is comparatively small among the tribal people, that of children 0-5 years is decidedly higher than it is among the higher castes; among the Hindus it is 15 per cent but among the tribal it is 19 per cent. The high fertility among the tribal people is offset by a high infantile mortality and, therefore, the number of children reared by tribal mothers at any time does not exceed those reared up by caste mothers.

Sterility

There is a small percentage of human family that never experiences a fecund life or fecund cycle, but is sterile. Among the aborigines sterility is often regarded as a curse of the gods and they take every precaution to prevent it, yet it appears to be common among them. Much of the sterility among males is due to gonorrhea, which is thought to be a very old and widespread disease. According to Spencer and Gillin sterility is common among the Australian tribes.

Control of Birth

Fertility in primitive society is checked by celibacy, by restrictions of the age of marriage, by long periods during which mothers nurse their young and by various restrictions about sexual intercourse.

As stated above there is very little celibacy among the aboriginal people. They see no reason for one's remaining unmarried and generally hasten to enter into the married state as soon after puberty as customs will permit.

Any extended delay in marriage limits the possible number of children. Young women are more fecund than older women still in the reproductive period. Dunlop thinks a "year's delay when woman is aged from 20 to 25 averages 0.45 of a child; 0.37 when she is aged from 25 to 30; 0.32 when she is aged from 30 to 35; 0.29 when she is aged from 35 to 40 and 0.19 when she is aged from 40 to 45."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Dunlop, *Fertility of Marriage in Scotland*, quoted by H. G. Duncan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 305.

The nursing period is generally extended to 2 or 3 years and often much longer. Man states that the Andaman Islanders never wean their babies so long as they are able to suckle them."⁴⁵ Although important, the effect of lactation or fecundity is not definitely known. It seems to be agreed that among animals "an early weaning is conducive to a more frequent recurrence of oestrous and an increased number of litters."⁴⁶ Carr-Saunders says, "There is a considerable amount of evidence to the effect that the continuance of lactation some to extent inhibits heat in animals and menstruation in women."⁴⁷

Among certain tribes copulation is absolutely prohibited during the period of lactation. Among the north American Indians, the children are nursed for 3 or 4 years during which time the woman has no relations whatever with her husband. There are other periods such as before crops are planted, preparation for war or for a hunt, when copulation is prohibited. Mills tells that a law of Lhota Nagas requires a woman "to remain chaste while her husband was away on a raid."⁴⁸

Abortion is universal practice among all primitive people, and various methods are known and practised by primitive women. Where pre-marital

⁴⁵ Man, *On the Original Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands*.

⁴⁶ F. H. A. Marshall, *Physiology of Reproduction*, 1910. p. 400,

⁴⁷ Carr-Saunders, *Op. Cit.*, p. 102.

⁴⁸ Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, 1922, p. 108.

licence is allowed, and most primitive tribes do allow it, abortion is a necessary evil, for otherwise, the couple have to marry to remove the stigma of illegitimacy on the child born out of extra-marital intimacy. Some tribes use certain magical rites to procure abortion, others use certain decoctions. Most frequently abortion is procured by various violent physical means which are both harmful and dangerous. Many tribes prohibit parturition during the period of lactation and when this period is extended for 6 or 7 years pregnancies are relieved by abortion. About the Nagas of Assam, Davis says, "It is impossible to resist the conclusion that they are made away with immediately after birth, or that abortion is procured. The Aos have admitted to me that abortion is always procured in such cases.....The custom being one that is approved by Nagas, it is impossible to expect them to give information of the occurrence of such cases."⁴⁹ B. C. Allen speaking of the hill tribes of India living in the hills says, "Amongst the Kukis, where marriage by service is common, a strange custom is in force. Cohabitation is freely permitted during the time the lover is serving in the house of his sweetheart, and pregnancy entails no disgrace, but the girls must not bring forth a living child. About the seventh month after conception an old woman skilled in such matters is called in. This worthy dame locates the position of the baby's head in the womb, and strikes a sharp blow with a flat stone, with the result that premature delivery

⁴⁹ Davis, *Census of Assam*, 1891, p. 249.

takes place, and the child is born dead.”⁵⁰

Abortion is also frequently practised among the Hos of Singhbhum and the Khonds of Ganjam. Abortion is not only common among the Indian tribes but it is also to be found in other parts of the world too. Bancroft says of the Nootka Indians, “Women rarely have more than two or three children, and cease bearing at about 25, frequently preventing the increase of their family by abortion.”⁵¹

Infanticide among the primitive tribes is due to multiple causes; weak children are often exposed to wild animals, strangled or permitted to perish. Sometimes the grandfather or father struck the infant across its mother’s knee and then hit it on the head. Scarcity of food has led hunting groups to put to death children and old people whom they could not feed or who were considered burdens on them in their march for unknown asylums. The constant tribal warfare in NEFA, among the Nagas, have produced unsettled conditions and marriage by capture has made weaker clans kill their women, particularly young ones to escape the attention of stronger clans whose frequent incursions for women or cattle have been a constant source of terror to the weaker clans. But for some time past female infanticide has been much less than before as a result of persuasion and threat by administration.

⁵⁰ B. C. Allen, *Census of India*, 1901, Vol. IV., p. 68

⁵¹ Bancroft, *The Native Races of Pacific States of North America*, p. 197.

7. TRIBES IN INDIA—THE STATE ROLE IN THEIR REHABILITATION

The Government policy regarding the aboriginal population areas was initiated in 1782 following the uprisings of the Paharia and Santhal tribesmen. Several uprisings of tribal people took place beginning from Mal Paharia rising in 1772, the mutiny of the Hos of Singhbhum in 1831, the Khond uprising in 1846, to the Santhal rebellion of 1885. In like manner a punitive expedition was sent to the Jaintia Hills in 1744, to Chin Lushai Hills between 1850-1890, to the Naga Hills in 1878, to the Abors in 1912. The underlying causes of these uprisings were the deep dissatisfaction created among the tribal people against exploitation by their more advanced neighbours. Following the measures taken principally in the U. S. A., after the stage of initial exploitation was over, to segregate the tribes into special areas of reservation to protect their lives and interests, the Government of India passed an Act in 1874 to specify tribal areas into "Scheduled Tracts." These areas were reconstituted under Section 52 A of the Government of India Act of 1919 and finally in 1935 more stringent provisions for special treatment of tribal areas were incorporated by converting them into Total and Partially and Excluded Areas. In the years following and up to 1947 numerous Acts and regulations were promul-

gated and various important reforms introduced,¹ we shall content ourselves with the Government measures taken since Independence.

The Constitution of 1947 includes clauses concerning certain tribal areas in Assam and the tribes and territories to be governed by special regulations (Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas).²

Part X Article 244 of the Constitution makes special provisions for the autonomous administration of the tribal areas of Assam, in particular as regards the allotment of land, taxation, education and the control of moneylending and trading. Other States having Scheduled Areas or Scheduled Tribes are to have Tribes Advisory Councils to advise the authorities on the advancement and welfare of aborigines, as may be referred to it by the Governor or Rajpramukh. Further if the President so directs, such a Council shall also be

¹ For detailed information see G. S. Ghurye : *Aborigines—So-called and their Future*, Chapters, IV, V and VI.

² Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342, to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of Constitution. Scheduled Areas means such areas as the President may by order declare to be scheduled areas. These are : Part A : (i) the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills Dist., ; (ii) Garo Hills Dist ; (iii) The Lushai Hills, (iv) The Naga Hills district ; (v) The North Cachar Hills, (vi) The Mikir Hills. Part B. North-East Frontier Tracting including : (i) Balipara Frontier Tract, (ii) Tirap Frontier Tract, (iii) Abor Hills Districts and (iv) Mishmi Hills District and the (v) Naga Tribal Area.

set up in any State having Scheduled Tribes but no Scheduled Areas therein. Tribes Advisory Councils have so far been set up in Bihar, Bombay, Madhya Pradesh, Madras, Orissa, Punjab, West Bengal, Hyderabad, Rajasthan and Madhya Bharat.

Part XIV of the Constitution defines the tribes that are to enjoy special protection and provides that for 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution seats are to be reserved for them in Parliament and in the State Legislatures in proportion to their numbers, and that their claims are to be considered in making public appointments. Hence, under Articles 330, 332 and 334 of the Constitution, seats, proportionate as far as possible to their population in the States, have been reserved for the Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and the State Vidhan Sabhas. The following table gives a picture of the representation of the tribal people, based on the 1951 census, in the Central and State Legislatures :

Seats Reserved for the Scheduled Tribes

	Total number of Seats	No. of seats reserved for scheduled tribes
Parliament	500	27
State Legislature	3,361	189

Legislative or executive measures have been taken in many States to secure for them representation also in District Boards, Municipal Bodies Local Boards and Village Panchayats.

Out of the six District Councils proposed in Table A, Para 20 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, five (for the United Khasi Jaintia Hills District, Garo Hills District, Lushai Hills District, North Cachar Hills District and Mikir Hills District) have been set up in the tribal areas of Assam. Each District Council is to consist of not more than 24 members, of whom not less than three-fourths should be elected by adult suffrage. These Councils possess wide legislative powers with respect to the allotment, occupation, use or setting apart of land, the management of any forest not being a reserved forest ; the use of any canal or water-course for the purpose of agriculture ; the establishment of village or town committees ; the appointment or succession of Chief and Headmen ; and the inheritance of property, marriage and social customs.

In pursuance of the Articles 335 of the Constitution, posts have been reserved and other measures taken to ensure a larger number of recruits from this class. For the Scheduled Tribes, the Centre has reserved 5 per cent of the posts in both the cases of recruitment by open competition and those to be filled otherwise. Reservation of posts as near to their population ratio as possible, has been fixed for the Scheduled Tribes in all Part A and in all but one Part B states. Saurashtra has decided to reserve all and M. B. 50 per cent of the vacancies for them until the fixed quota is reached. The Government of Bihar has reserved all vacancies in the Class IV services and the

Government of Orissa 50 per cent in Classes III and IV till their quota is filled up. The U. P. Govt., has also instructed certain departments to recruit only Scheduled Tribes till their prescribed strength is reached. The Punjab Government has decided not to retrench employees from these classes as long as their number is less than the fixed quota.

Article 338 further makes provision for the appointment of a special body to investigate the safeguards provided for tribal populations and to report to the President on their working. This body started functioning with effect from 18th November, 1950 under a Commissioner assisted by six Regional Commissioners with jurisdiction over 17 States. The duties of this Commissioner are : (i) to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided under the Constitution, and (ii) to report on the working of these safeguards. The Commissioner has so far submitted four reports to the President, which all have been debated in the Parliament. He is assisted by six Assistant Regional Commissioners for the following regions :

- (i) Assam, Manipur, and Tripura.
- (ii) Bihar and West Bengal.
- (iii) Bombay, Rajasthan and Ajmer.
- (iv) Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh and Bhopal.

(v) Madras, Mysore, Travancore, Coorg and Hyderabad.

(vi) Andhra and Orissa.

Article 275 requires that a special financial grant should be provided for programmes for the social and economic welfare of the tribal population. Under this Article the Central Government has been giving grants for the welfare of ex-Criminal Tribes since 1953. The following table gives the details of expenditures on the welfare of the Tribes in 1953-54 and 1954-55 :

		Total Expenditure (In Rs.)	
		1953-54	1954-55
<i>Part A. States</i>			
Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes		3,53,37,579	8,29,78,780
Ex-Criminal Tribes		30,03,117	43,30,038
<i>Part B. States</i>			
Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes		77,61,021	46,49,280
Ex-Criminal Tribes		3,27,876	9,59,145
<i>Part C. States</i>			
Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes			31,23,715
Ex-Criminal Tribes		29,956	1,52,170

The First Five Year Plan gave a great impetus to such welfare activities. It provided Rs. 39 crores of which Rs. 20 crores were allotted in the plans of States and the balance was provided at the centre. The Second Plan allocates a total of about 91 crores of rupees for the welfare of Backward

classes, of which Rs. 47 crores are for scheduled tribes and scheduled areas; Rs. 27.5 crores for scheduled castes, Rs. 4 crores for the former criminal tribes.

The welfare activities of the tribal people and their area may broadly be divided into four heads, *viz.*, educational, economic, health and housing and other categories.

(i) *Educational*. Educational Extension measures for increasing educational facilities for this section have been taken. Emphasis is laid on vocational and technical training. The concessions include free tuition, stipends, scholarships and the provision of books, hostel fees, stationery and other equipment. In certain cases, the aid extends to clothing and mid-day meals. In predominantly Scheduled Tribes areas primary schools are opened and hostels run. The figures for 1953-54, for thirteen States (for which information is available) were thus:

Basic schools opened, 68; Primary schools opened, 230.

Residential schools, 80 Adult education centres opened, 169.

Stipends and scholarships given, 22,581; Grants for books 30,035.

The central Government supplements the educational efforts of the States. Since 1944-45, the Centre has been awarding scholarships to post-matriculation students belonging to this class. The amounts spent on this account were Rs. 2.2 lakhs

in 1951-52 ; Rs. 5.23 lakhs in 1952-53 ; Rs. 8.19 lakhs in 1953-54; and Rs. 12.65 lakhs in 1954-55.

(ii) *Economic or Reconstruction of Tribal Economics.* Various schemes to protect the economic interests of these people are in progress in all the States. Andhra, Bihar and Bombay, Madras, U. P. Orissa and Saurashtra have been spending a good deal of money on irrigation schemes, the reclamation of wasteland and its distribution among the members of the Scheduled Tribes. In addition, facilities for the purchase of livestock, fertilisers, agricultural implements, better seeds, etc., are also being given to them. Some States have demonstration farms for training them in methods of scientific agriculture.

In many states, small-scale experiments have been carried for evolving improved methods on shifting cultivation and for establishing settled agricultural colonies. In Assam since 1954 9 demonstration centres have been set up, 3 in the Garo Hills district, 3 in Mikir Hills, 2 in Mizo district and 1 in the North Cachar Hill district. At these centres improved patterns of land utilization are demonstrated to tribal people. These involve afforestation of hill tops and slopes with wattle plantation, cultivation of coffee, cashewnuts along the slopes and soil conservation measures.

In Andhra, in the East and West Godawari districts, colonization schemes have been undertaken. Pilot schemes have also been introduced in Bastar and other tribal districts in M. P. In Orissa over 2,000 tribal families have been settled

in 69 agricultural colonies which have so far been established.

In Bombay, Hyderabad, Bihar and M. B. the bulk of the tribal people are already practising settled agriculture.

Cattle-breeding and poultry farming are also being encouraged among these people by certain States. Assam, Bihar, Bombay, U.P., West Bengal, Hyderabad, and Pepsu are encouraging the development of cottage industries by way of loans, subsidies and through training centres. During the First Plan 111 cottage industry centres have been established in tribal areas. Peripatetic demonstrations-cum-training parties have been found useful in Bombay.

Multipurpose co-operative societies for giving credit in cash and in kind to the Scheduled Tribes have been established in Andhra, Bihar, U. P., Madras, Orissa, W. Bengal, Hyderabad, and Mysore. During the First Plan, 312 multipurpose Co-operative Societies, were established in tribal areas and in Orissa, Bihar and M. P. 350 grain 'goles' set up.

Some States such as Bombay and Andhra have also started various forest labour co-operative societies in the interests of tribal labourers. During this First Plan 653 forest labour co-operatives have been established.

Legislation exists in almost all the States to extend relief to indebted persons. Measures for the abolition of debt bondage exist in Orissa, Bihar, etc. In a number of States some relief by

way of reduction on accumulated debts has already been given and laws have been enacted for protecting the rights of the tribal communities in lands occupied by them. Andhra, Assam, Bihar, M.P., Orissa M. B., West Bengal and Bhopal have tenancy laws to ensure security of land tenure to the Scheduled Tribes.

(iii) *Other Welfare Schemes.* Other welfare schemes include the grant of housing sites, free or at nominal costs, and the assistance by way of loans, subsidies and grants-in-aid to local bodies for the construction of houses; construction of roads in the Scheduled Tribes Areas; extension of medical help to the Scheduled Tribes, through dispensaries and mobile medical units.

Progress under the First Five Year Plan

Under the First Plan a provision of Rs. 39 crores was made for meeting the special needs of this section. Of the total estimated expenditure, a sum of over Rs. 11 crores was spent by the State Governments on the provision of educational facilities. Attempts are being made to impart education to the tribal people in their regional languages and primers have been prepared in Hyderabad, Bihar, Assam and NEFA in the tribal dialects. So far 8 tribal dialects have been taken up. By the end of the First Plan about 4,000 schools will have been established in tribal areas of different kinds. This includes more than one thousand Ashram Schools, Seva Ashrams Schools, etc., were opened in the States of Bombay, Bihar, Orissa, and M. P., and about 650 *Sanskar Kendras*,

Balwadis, Community Centres have been established in the States of Bombay, M. B., Rajasthan, Bihar. In NEFA training institutes have been opened to train tribal teachers in Hindi and allied subjects so that they can take over the teaching of tribal boys and girls.

Attention has been given to the improvement of means of communication in tribal and scheduled areas. In addition to their other road development programmes, a sum of about Rs. 6.5 crores has been spent by the State Governments on the construction of small approach roads, hill paths and bridges in the areas inhabited by the tribal people. The Government of Assam was given a special grant of Rs. 2.6 crores for the improvement of communications in the tribal areas of that State. In all, 2,340 miles of bridle roads or hill paths were constructed in the States of Andhra, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, M. B. and V. P.

Steps have also been taken to augment medical and public health facilities in scheduled areas. One of the principal difficulties experienced by tribals concerns the supply of clean drinking water. During the period of the first plan, more than 10,000 wells were provided. In addition to the opening of 3,144 hospitals and dispensaries and mobile health units in the tribal areas, medical aid was given to these classes in the shape of free distribution of medicine, reservation of beds, etc.

Special attention has also been paid to the problem of shifting cultivation practised by tribals in certain parts of the country especially in Assam,

Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Experiments have been tried out in Assam, Andhra, Orissa and Hyderabad with a view to encouraging tribals practising shifting cultivation to take to settled methods of agriculture. Where jhuming continues to be practised care has been taken to avoid indiscriminate cutting down of forests and adequate intervals between the cultivation on the same land is provided for.

One of the major obstacles in the way of implementation of the schemes for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes has been the lack of trained personnel. To meet this problem the Government of India have approved the formation of a new cadre (described as the Indian Frontier Administrative Service), which will provide trained officers for Grade I and Grade II administrative posts in NEFA, Manipur and Tripura. Now institutes have been set up in Bihar, Orissa, M. P. and Saurashtra and NEFA for the training of field workers and the tribal research.

Research Institutes have been set up in Bihar, Orissa and M. P. for doing research on social organisations among the tribals and means of improving their standards of living. These Research Institutes consider a series of problems such as :

- (i) shifting cultivation,
- (ii) relation of the new Panchayat system to the former system of tribal justice and organisation,
- (iii) incidence of diseases and epidemics and study of dietary system,
- (iv) sorcery and suicide,

(v) how far it is practicable and desirable to replace native beverages, and

(vi) collection of literature on culture heroes, local exploits, and moral values with a view to obtaining suitable material for primers and textbooks in local languages.

Under the Second Plan

Under the Second Five Year Plan these problems are to be tackled on a considerably expanded scale, in which a total provision of Rs. 90 crores has been made for the welfare of backward classes. Of this amount nearly two-thirds (*i.e.* Rs. 47 crores) will be devoted to programmes for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and the development of the scheduled areas. Among the programmes on which the greatest emphasis is being placed is the settlement of tribals practising shifting cultivation in agricultural colonies. These colonies will be in the nature of multipurpose projects where, in addition to plough animals, agricultural implements, seeds, manure, etc., programmes such as minor irrigation, demonstration farms, seed stores, terracing of fields, housing, village and hill roads, primary schools, supply of clean drinking water, construction of houses, new roads, medical and public health facilities, opening of new medical and health units to eradicate diseases like V. D. and leprosy, adult education, welfare and community centres, veterinary facilities, co-operative societies will be implemented.

Out of Rs. 47 crores, a little over Rs. 27 crores are provided in the plans of the states and about

Rs. 20 crores in the programme of the Central Government. Of the total outlay on tribal welfare programme, Rs. 11 crores are meant for communication ; Rs. 12 crores for development of tribal economy ; Rs. 8 crores for Education and Culture ; Rs. 8 crores for public health, medical and water supply : Rs. 5 crores for housing and rehabilitation and 3 crores for other purposes.

In the states priority has been given to the development of communication for the construction of 10,200 miles of bridle and hill paths. States have also provided for the development of about 36,000 acres of land, regeneration of 6,570 acres of forest lands, distribution of implements and pedigree bulls, training of about 4,000 persons in various crafts and establishment of 825 cottage industries centres.

Welfare Departments

The proviso to Article 164 (i) of the Constitution requires that in Part A States of Bihar, M. P. and Orissa, Welfare Departments in the charge of a Minister should be set up. There is a similar provision under Article 238 VI for the Part B States of M. B. By now independent Welfare Departments have been set up in all the four States as well as in Assam. Welfare Departments exist in Andhra, Bombay, Madras, Punjab, U. P., West Bengal, Hyderabad, Mysore, PEPSU, Rajasthan, Travancore-Cochin, Ajmer, V. P. and Kutch. In Bhopal, Coorg, Delhi, M. P., Manipur, and Tripura the supervision of welfare activities has been entrusted to existing departments.

8. SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

That there is a vast socio-cultural gulf between the tribal groups, on the one hand, and the highly civilized peoples of the neighbouring plains is fact which can neither be denied nor ignored. Since the attainment of freedom, increasingly greater consideration is being given by all seriously thinking persons to the question as to what should be the place of the tribal peoples in the framework of Indian nation and how they should be developed and brought to a level with the rest of the nationals socially, economically, culturally and politically.

Three Solutions : (i) *Assimilation*

Various means of dealing with the problems of aboriginals have been attempted but none have met with any degree of success. One way of dealing with the problem has been what may be called the 'missionary solution.' This term may be applied to any attempt to deal with aboriginals not by solving their own problems from inside and on the basis of their own life and culture, but by changing them or assimilating them into a new community. Both Christian Missionaries and Hindu social reformers have tried to see the primitives civilized, their 'inferior' social customs and ideas eliminated and their identity assimilated either in Christian Society or into the general framework of Hindu Society.

This does not so much solve the problem as substitute another problem for it. Instead of poor aboriginals we have poor converts. If the aboriginal becomes a Christian, he generally finds himself deprived of the moral and social sanctions under which he has grown up, of the free and natural recreations to which he is accustomed, and in many cases he sinks into moral and economic degradation. Besides most of them have lost what is distinctly tribal and have adopted a semi-western or Hinduised culture. Yet where true religion is introduced and education and reform conducted on sympathetic and scientific principles, good often results, especially if economic improvement has preceded spiritual change.

Besides, the policy of complete assimilation also does not conform to the trends of Indian history. In spite of the millions of years of culture-contact and inter-cultural borrowing, Indian society has not become a homogeneous whole. It is still composed of heterogeneous cultures like those of Bhils, Santhals, Gond, Oriya, Kashmiri, and Telugu. Hence, in this socio-historical context the adoption of the policy of complete assimilation can be regarded as wise.

(ii) *Bringing down Tribesmen to Plains*

The least satisfactory of the various solutions offered is the geographical solution, a policy of bringing the tribesman down to the plains. This is most destructive and cruel of all the ways of dealing with the problem. Economic collapse, moral decadence and psychic despair inevitably

follow when highlanders are forced away from their beloved mountains to the plains. The policy has nothing to commend it and there is reason to suppose that it is only advocated in the interest of certain industrialists who hope that later on the mineral and forest rights of the hills will be available to them without tiresome dispute about the human rights of poor and inconvenient people.

Even apart from the rights of the aborigines, the policy of stripping the hills of their inhabitants is a bad one, for these wild and lonely tracts may well become a 'Dark Continent' the breeding place of ferocious animals and the refuge of dacoits. Besides, there are already signs of land-starvation everywhere and to give good and sufficient land to lakhs of new settlers would only seriously disturb the existing arrangements.

(iii) *Isolation*

Finally, we have the scientific solution. Scientists and anthropologists are desirous to see that a considerable measure of protection is given to the aboriginals and some even like the establishment of 'National Parks' or 'Reserves' where they could live their own lives in unhampered liberty. They all insist that the change must be extremely gradual if it is not to be disastrous; and that nothing should be taken away from primitive people unless something else is ready to be put in its place. The former British Government tended on the whole to leave the tribals alone partly because the task of administration (especially in

the wild border areas) was difficult and unrewarding ; partly from a desire to quarantine the tribes from possible political infection and partly because of the feeling that these people were better and happier as they were.

There is no doubt that these special solutions give aboriginal tribes considerable amount of protection against exploitation and hostility to sudden and large-scale encroachments on their land and disregard for their social and religious institutions. But it must be remembered that a policy of segregation, though essential in early stages, if not enough for complete isolation, has never led to progress and advancement, but always to stagnation and death. In every part of the world such has been the case. From the aborigines of Australia to Aryan-speaking Khalars and Kati tribes of the Rampur Valley of Chitral, it has been amply demonstrated that isolation never leads to progress. Civilization everywhere has been built up by the contact and intercourse of peoples. There are innumerable instances of the borrowing of culture traits by the peoples of different places such as articles of food, use of metals, domestication of animals, methods of agriculture, spread of alphabet, etc. So long as the borrowing is natural and in harmony with the cultural setting and psychological make-up of the people it has been entirely beneficial. The danger of contact lies when it is sudden and indiscriminate and tends to upset the tribal life by forced measures on unwilling people, as the tragic history of the aboriginal

people of Australia, Melanesia and the U. S. A., has shown.

The policy of isolation runs counter to the facts of the Indian situation. No iron-bar can be put up between the 'tribals' and 'non-tribals.' The tribals will be of greatest service to the country if they are able to bring their own peculiar treasures into common life, and "not by becoming second-rate copies of ourselves." What we need is their moral virtues, their self-reliance, their courage, their artistic gifts and above all their cheerfulness. Therefore, the policy of 'segregation' needs be ruled out of consideration.

The Practical Solution

The other solution of the tribal problem in the present situation would, therefore, lie in the integration of the tribal peoples in the national democratic set-up of the country. This integration does not presuppose assimilation and is fully compatible with heterogeneity of cultures of the country. When the Punjabi, the Madrasi, Marathi, Bengali, Oriya and Telugu cultures have not lost their identity through vicissitudes of history and still form integral parts of our society and nation today, there is no reason why the Bhils, the Gond, Kandh and Santhals should not be able to maintain their identity and culture and yet be an integral part of the nation. The Indian nation would not progress if a large section—such as the tribals—of the population is isolated or lags behind. The national plans of the economic development of the country cannot also be formulated and executed if we

ignore the natural resources available in the tribal areas, which fortunately are rich in this respect and need a careful exploitation. Hence, the only acceptable solution to the problem is that of integration of the tribes in the Indian society so that India would thus be a vast mosaic in which the numerous ethnic and cultural groups would constitute the component elements of diverse colours and patterns. It is, therefore, essential that if integration of the tribal people is to be brought about, the economic and educational standards of the tribal groups should be brought on par with the rest of the people. To achieve this object the different tribal cultures will have to be studied thoroughly and scientifically too. Otherwise, the attempted measures for the advancement of the tribes will go to waste, as it will be unrelated to its cultural context.

It is interesting to note what Pandit Nehru has said about these people and about the solution of their problem. He observes, "They possess a variety of culture and are in many ways certainly not backward. There is no point in trying to make them a second-rate copy of ourselves." He emphasized the importance of encouraging the tribal languages, so that they would not only prevail but flourish. He insisted that a measure of protection must be given so that "no outsider can take possession of tribal lands or forests or interfere with them in any way except with their consent and goodwill." He hoped that the high sense of discipline, the power to enjoy life, the love of dance

and song would endure among the tribesmen. Schemes for welfare, education, communications, medical relief were no doubt essential but "one must always remember, however, that we do not mean to interfere with their way of life, but want to help them to live it. The tribal people should be helped to grow according to their genius and tradition."

The same policy has been admirably stated by Shri Jairam Das Daulatram. He has said, "Each section of our large population contributes to the making of the nation, in the same manner as each flower helps to make a garden. Every flower has the right to grow according to its own laws of growth; has the right to enrich and develop its own colour and form and to spread its own fragrance to make up the cumulative beauty and splendour of the garden. I would not like to change my roses into lilies nor my lilies into roses. Nor do I want to sacrifice my lovely orchids or rhododendrons of the hills."¹

Pandit Nehru concludes his speech (delivered at the opening session of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas Conference held in New Delhi in 1952) in these words, "So far we have approached the tribal people in one of the two ways. One might be called the 'anthropological approach' in which we treat them as museum specimens to be observed and written about. To treat them as specimens for anthropological examination and analysis is to insult them. We

¹Quoted in *The Advasis*, 1955, p. 22,

do not think of them as living human beings with whom it is possible to work and play. The other approach is one of ignoring the fact that they are something different requiring special treatment and of attempting forcibly to absorb them into normal pattern of social life. The way of forcible assimilation would be equally wrong."

It would, therefore, be quite clear from the above abstract that the approach to the problem should neither be that of 'isolation' nor of 'assimilation,' but it should be that of developing the synthesis without destroying the rare and precious values of tribal people. "The desired integration of the tribal groups in the national democratic structure of India must be brought about without suddenly uprooting them from their traditional cultural moorings and thereby causing them irreparable physical and psychological damage."

In the end certain suggestions may be offered to improve the lot of the tribal people.

(1) It is recognised by all that it is essential to raise the economically and educationally backward tribal people to the general level of the other sections of our nation. This can be done by making necessary provisions for the education of these people. A syllabus should be drawn up for the primary stages incorporating activities familiar to tribal folk ; and later to activities associated with the culture of the more advanced folk of adjacent regions. The content of the text-books that will deal with such learning through doing should have matter drawn from the tribal culture in the earlier

stages, and later incorporate lessons bearing on the culture of their neighbours. The medium of instruction should naturally be the mother-tongue of the tribes. The regional language should have its place as a subject of study in the upper forms. A few new phonemes, to represent sounds similar to the tribal language, should, however, be added. These should be drawn up bearing in mind the need of new phonemes for the various tribal languages, so that no symbol should have more than one sound, nor should the same sound be indicated by more than one symbol in different areas. The education imparted should be life-centred.

(2) The tribal people in many areas have lost their lands through the undesirable activities of their neighbours. To protect them from losing their land, it is essential that Land legislation should be enacted and land should be redistributed among them on the basis of economic holdings.

(3) Co-operative activities in the field of agriculture should be encouraged through practical instructions in the schools. Training should also be given in schools to improve archaic tools and implements. Modern technological advance should also be introduced among the tribal people.

(4) The reconstruction of tribal economies present a number of challenging problems and it is essential that solutions should be based on a close study of social, economic and technical aspects. Among the more significant of these is the question of 'shifting cultivation' and its

replacement by 'settled agriculture.' It may be remarked, in this connection, that if three basic conditions are fulfilled, there can be no unwillingness on the part of the tribals to give up shifting cultivation. These conditions are :

(i) Provision of fertile land, and wherever possible, of irrigated land ;

(ii) Assistance by way of bullocks, implements, seeds, and finance ;

(iii) Steps to ensure that moneylenders and merchants are not permitted to exploit the tribal people.

Where Jhuming continues to be practised care should be taken to avoid indiscriminate cutting down of forests and adequate intervals between the cultivation on the same land should be provided for.

(5) A considerable portion of the tribal people live in forest areas so that the manner in which forest resources are exploited has a great deal of bearing on their welfare. Care has, therefore, to be taken to ensure that regulations relating to the collection of forest produce, grazing, meeting everyday requirements of firewood, etc., do not cause hardship. In many ways penetration of forest contractors into tribal economy has been harmful. Hence, labour co-operatives should be started. Forest contracts should be given to co-operative societies and they should also be assisted in the collection and processing of minor forest produce. Tribal co-operatives, as far as possible, should be

multipurpose in character, providing for credit, supply of consumer goods, and marketing at the same time. This will relieve the tribal people from the clutches of the rapacious moneylenders, merchants or contractors, who sometimes acquire a stranglehold over tribesmen and take away a large proportion of the current produce.

(6) Although tribesmen live close to Nature, invariably their health and physique are poor. They suffer from various diseases like malaria, yaws, tuberculosis, small-pox, and venereal diseases and skin and eye diseases. In the main, these are due to lack of clean drinking water, nutritive food and of protection against extremes of climate. Hence, dispensaries and mobile health units should be organised on a much larger scale than at present. Drinking water wells should be constructed on a much wider scale. Indigenous systems of medicines must be explored and simple natural remedies used whenever possible. The doctors must reach these tribesmen in a spirit of love, without any desire to impose themselves upon them.

(7) The tribesmen have considerably inherited skill and it is essential that their arts and crafts should receive encouragement and support and they should be given facilities for vocational and technical training. There are large number of subsidiary industries such as bee-keeping, basket making, sericulture, lac and gum collecting, catechu making, spinning and weaving, fruit preservation and the manufacture of palm-gur which can be profitably developed.

(8) The tribal areas are sparsely populated and covered with forests ; they have heavy rainfall ; the communications are difficult and limited and few amenities have reached the people. The major problem in these areas is the provision of means of communication and transport. Efforts should, therefore, be made to construct new paths and roads, with bridges over the rivers and rivulets with the co-operation of the people.

(9) Tribal welfare programmes have to be based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and an appreciation of the social, psychological and economic problems with which they are faced. The welfare and development programmes in tribal areas inevitably involve a measure of disturbance in relation to traditional beliefs and practices. In their implementation, therefore, the confidence of the people and the understanding and goodwill of the elders of the tribal communities are of the highest importance. The anthropologist, the administrator, the specialist and the social worker have to work as a team, approaching the problems of the tribal people with sympathy, understanding and knowledge of the social psychology and the needs of the tribal communities.

Tribal people have to be assisted through their own institutions. Details of development programmes should be formulated in consultation with members of Advisory councils, leaders of tribal opinion and institutions engaged in the study of tribal problems. The tribal people should feel

that these programmes are, in a real sense, a response to their own urge for better standards of living and the development of their culture.

In the words of Pandit Nehru, "The last is no easy one for it involves several ideals that have rarely been found compatible. The first is to preserve, strengthen and develop all that is best in tribal society, culture, art and language. The second is to protect the tribal economic rights. The third is to unite and integrate the tribes in a true heart-unity with India as a whole, so that they may play a full part in their life. And the last is to develop welfare and educational facilities so that every tribesman may have an equal opportunity with the rest of the fellow citizens who work in the field, factories and workshops, in the open country and the plains."

Conclusion

To conclude it may be said that the aborigines are the real "Swadeshi" products or the 'oldest inhabitants' of India, in whose presence every one is a foreigner. These are the ancient people with moral claims and rights thousands of years old. They were here first; they should come first in our regard too. These millions need freedom, prosperity, peace, education, medicines, and new systems of living. Hence, we must fight for three freedoms, at least—freedom from Fear, freedom from Want, and freedom from Interference. We may see that the aborigines get a square deal economically. We may see that they are freed from cheats and imposters, from the aggres-

sive landlords and the moneylenders, from corrupt and rapacious officials. We may see that they get medical aid from the doctors in the same way just as we do. If there must be schools we may see that these teach useful arts and crafts suited to their environment like carpentry and agriculture, and not a useless literacy. We may work to raise the prestige and the honour of the aboriginals. We may guard them against adventurers who would rob them of their songs, their dances, their festivals and their laughter. It cannot be denied that the economy of tribal India is fast changing. The only safeguard required is to assure the tribal people of enough power to prevent them from being converted into helpless elements in a larger economic organisation which they cannot wholly comprehend. The only way to achieve it is through education and organisation, and the preparation to share with equality the the burdens and the glories of the new Indian economy which we all are trying to build up.

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