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THE PROBLEM OF ABORIGINES
IN INDIA

BY

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Few people, I believe, have a comprehensive idea of the magnitude of the problem of the aboriginals, who inhabit all the provinces of this sub-continent of ours, of their vast numbers, of their ignorance, their poverty, their subjection to drink, their aloofness from the general population and isolation in hills and forests. Still fewer people have any idea of the great responsibility of the social worker, who has not yet directed his attention to this problem to any appreciable extent.

The population of the aborigines of our country is not a negligible figure. It is nearly two crores and a quarter and thus forms a substantial part, $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., of the total population of India. It is about half that of the Harijan population, which is five crores. To put it in a little more graphic way, if we can imagine the great city of Bombay inhabited purely by aboriginal and hill people like the illiterate, ill-clad and poverty-stricken Bhils, Gonds and Santals, we can have nineteen of such aboriginal cities. If we can transplant the whole aboriginal population of India to a compact area removing all non-aborigines from the same, we can have a big province of aborigines, having a greater population than the present C. P. and Berar together with the State of Baroda. The aborigines are more than twice the population of Assam, or of all the Indian States in the Bombay Presidency excluding Baroda. In the Bombay Presidency their number bears a larger proportion to the total population than in most other provinces i. e. over 7 per cent. You will find them by thousands and lakhs in Khandesh, Thana, Kolaba, Panchmahals, North Gujerat and Nasik, and the famine of 1900 has driven them in thousands even to the desert region of Thar and Parkar in Sind. Of course you will not find them in towns and railway trains but if you care to travel through their villages,

their hills and forests, away from the railway line, the telegraph wire and even the postal runner's track, you will find them in thousands, roaming in Nature's garb and subsisting on the scanty meal, provided by their indifferent cultivation of cleared forest-land and roots and herbs.

These people were the original sons of the soil and were in possession of our country before the Aryans poured in from the North-West and North-East passes, conquered them with their superior powers and talents and drove them from the plains to the hills and forests. They are older and more ancient children of the soil than Hindus and still more so of course than Muslims, and Anglo-Indians. But they are steeped in ignorance and poverty and do not know their rights and privileges, much less their collective and national responsibilities. If we can bestow a little serious thought, we will realise what a great and pressing problem it is to improve the social and economic or moral and material condition of aborigines. We can ill afford to allow such a huge population as that of the Adivasis to remain any longer illiterate, ignorant and labouring under great hardships like abject poverty, unsympathetic administration, serfdom to sowcars and landlords and unkind exploitation by more advanced sections of the general population.

As per the Census of 1931 the primitive people are distributed in the various Provinces and States as follows:—

<i>Province :</i>	<i>Population :</i>
1. Assam	16,78,419
2. Bengal	19,27,299
3. Bihar & Orissa (as before 1935)	66,81,228
4. Bombay (with Sind)	28,41,080
5. C. P. and Berar	40,65,277
6. Madras (with Ganjam and Koraput dts., now in Orissa)	12,62,369
7. Others 4,30,582
	Total ... 1,88,86,254

<i>State</i>	<i>Population</i>
1. Central India Agency	13,42,081
2. Rajputana Agency	8,02,178
3. Western India Agency (Kathiawad & Gujerat States)	4,95,834
4. Baroda	3,13,273
5. Gwalior	2,81,033
6. Hyderabad	2,22,806
7. Others	64,033
Total ...	<u>35,21,238</u>
Total for Provinces	<u>1,88,86,254</u>
Total for States	<u>35,21,238</u>
Grand Total ...	<u>2,24,07,492</u>

The above table has been taken from Vol. 1, Part 1, of the All-India Census. The figures in this table slightly vary from the figures given in table XVIII of the respective Provincial and States' Censuses, due to the elimination of certain tribes from and the addition of certain others to the list. But as the difference is slight the above figures may be taken as accurate and final for all practical purposes.

The hills bordering both sides of the Brahmaputra valley and other hills of Assam, the hilly tracts in northern and eastern Bengal, Chhota Nagpur plateau in the south of Bihar, the extensive forests of the Central Provinces, the uplands of South Orissa, and the jungles of Western Orissa, the Satpura Range and the neighbouring areas in Bombay and Rajputana, these form the chief habitat of the aborigines.

I give below a list by Provinces of the chief tribes, each of which numbers a lakh or more. Districts in which each tribe has a population of at least about 25,000 are also mentioned in the 3rd column of the table :—

Name of Tribe	Population (1931)	Chief habitat
<i>Assam</i>		
1. Garo	1,93,473	Garo Hills & Goalpara dts.
2. Kachari	3,42,297	Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur & Cachar dts.
3. Khasi	1,71,957	Khasi States and Khasi & Jaintia Hills dt.
4. Lushai	1,14,158	Lushai Hills dt.
5. Mikir	1,29,797	Nowgong, Sibsagar and Khasi & Jaintia Hills dts.
6. Naga	2,68,303	Naga Hills dt. and Manipur State
<i>Bengal</i>		
7. Chakma	1,35,508	Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong dt.
8. Munda	1,08,686	24 Parganas and Jalpaiguri dts.
9. Oraon	2,28,161	Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur dts.
10. Santal	7,96,656	Burdwan, Birbhum, Bankura, Midnapore, Hughly, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Malda dts.
11. Tipara	2,03,069	Chittagong Hill Tracts and Tri- pura State.
<i>Bihar and Orissa</i>		
12. Bhuiya	6,25,824	Gaya, Bhagalpur, Santal Parganas, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Man- bhum dts. and Orissa States.
13. Bhumij	2,74,058	Manbhum and Singhbhum dts. and Orissa States.
14. Gond	2,55,752	Sambalpur dt. and Orissa States.
15. Ho	5,23,158	Singhbhum dt., Chhota Nagpur States and Orissa States.
16. Kharia	1,46,037	Ranchi dt. and Orissa States.
17. Kandha or Khond	3,15,709	Angul district (including Khond- mals) and Orissa States.
.... Munda	5,49,764	Ranchi and Singhbhum dts. and Orissa States.
.... Oraon	6,37,111	Ranchi and Palamau dts. and Orissa States.

Name of Tribe	Population (1931)	Chief habitat
<i>Bihar and Orissa</i>		
.... Santal	17,12,133	Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Purnea, Santal Parganas, Hazaribagh, Manbhum and Singhbhum dts., Chhota Nagpur States and Orissa States.
18. Savara	2,44,678	Cuttack, Puri and Sambalpur dts. and Orissa States.
<i>Madras</i>		
.... Kandha or Khond (Including Jatapu)	4,25,369	Ganjam and Vizag. dts. including Koraput Agency (i. e. mostly the areas now in Orissa).
19. Paraja (Bondo Porojo)	1,23,100	Vizag. Agency (or the present Koraput dt. of Orissa).
.... Savara	2,11,781	Vizag. and Ganjam Dts. (or the present Koraput and Ganjam dts. of Orissa).
<i>C. P. & Berar</i>		
.... Gond	22,61,138	Saugor, Damoh, Jubbulpore, Mandla, Seoni, Narsinghpur, Hoshangabad, Betul, Chhindwara, Wardha, Nagpur, Chanda, Bhandara, Balaghat, Raipur, Bilaspur, Drug, Amraoti and Yeotmal dts., Bastar & Kanker sts.
20. Kawar	2,87,156	Raipur and Bilaspur dts., Raigarh & Surguja sts.
21. Korku	1,76,616	Hoshangabad, Nimar, Betul and Amraoti dts.
22. Pardhan	1,19,555	Mandla, Seoni, Chanda and Yeotmal dts.
<i>Bombay (including Sind)</i>		
23. Bhil	7,76,975	Panchmahals, Ahmednagar, East, and West Khandesh dts., Nasik Thar & Parkar dts. and Mahikantha and Revakantha Agencies.

Name of Tribe	Population (1931)	Chief habitat
<i>Bombay (including Sind)</i>		
24. Dhodia	1,39,309	Surat dt. and Agency
25. Dubla & Talvia	1,44,644	Surat dt.
26. Naikda	1,01,954	Panchmahals and Surat dts. and Revakantha Agency.
27. Thakurs	1,16,591	Thana, Nasik and Kolaba dts.
28. Varlis	2,06,551	Thana and Nasik dts., Surat Agency and Jawhar State.
<i>U. P.</i>		
.... Gond	1,21,579	Ballia and Gorakhpur dts.
<i>Rajputana States</i>		
.... Bhil	6,55,647	Banswara, Dungarpur, Marwar and Mewar States.
<i>Central India States</i>		
.... Bhil	3,63,124	Indore, Ratlam, Dhar & Jhabua sts.
.... Gond	2,82,397	Rewa and Bhopal sts.
29. Kol	2,00,249	Rewa St.

The above list includes only such tribes as have got a population of not less than one lakh. But there are a few important tribes each of which has a population of more than 85,000 but below one lac and they are :—

1. Miri	85,038	Assam : (Sibsagar and Lakhimpur)
2. Kuki	91,690	Assam : (Manipur State)
3. Halba	92,275	C. P. (Bastar)
4. Katkari	87,784	Bombay : (Thana and Kolaba)
5. Konda-Dora	85,952	Madras : (Vizag. Plains & Agency)
6. Koya	95,818	Madras : (Vizag. Dt. and East including Koraput Agency and Godavari Agency.)

The problem of the aborigines may be analysed into (1) Poverty, (2) Illiteracy, (3) Ill-health, (4) Inaccessibility of the areas inhabited by tribals, (5) Defects in administration and (6) Lack of leadership.

I. Poverty

It is no exaggeration if I say that the Adivasis are the poorest section of the Indian population, not excepting the Harijans. The so-called untouchables, though suffering under many social disabilities, always lived with us, either in towns or villages; they are part and parcel of our town and village life; they are always in our sight, if not in our touch and we cannot afford to forget them by their presence amidst us and by the unpleasant service we exact from them. But we hardly feel the existence of our aborigines. They never see the towns and cities, and rarely villages. The urban people, the intelligentsia and those that minister to the religious wants of the people rarely come in contact with those whom we have called in contempt the 'Kali Praja' or the dark race. They live as if in a water-tight compartment of their own, which we in our pride of birth and possession never care even to peep into. From time immemorial they have been neglected by the rulers—be they Hindu, Muslim or the British—with the result that they are still labouring under very hard primitive conditions of life, waging an unequal fight against disease and exploitation by the advanced sections of our people. Since the Aryan invaders drove them to mountain-fastnesses, they have remained there in almost pre-historic civilisation.

Most of the aborigines pursue agriculture in a very crude form. Even the ordinary wooden plough is rarely used. What is called 'shifting cultivation' is practised by these people. This consists of hacking and burning forests on the hill slopes and sowing seeds broadcast on the ashes of the forest thus burnt, without ploughing the land. This is a wasteful method resulting in serious loss of forests,

less rainfall and soil erosion. The aboriginal is proverbially lazy and this form of cultivation encourages his laziness.

Shifting cultivation, called 'Jhum' in Assam, 'Podu' in South Orissa and 'Bewar' in C. P., presents one of the greatest difficulties in the administration of tribal areas. The Provincial Governments have made some attempts to eradicate this evil practice, but have not met with success except in a few cases. This problem of shifting cultivation taxes the brains of the forest departments of the provinces and is not confined to our country. It forms a feature of the life of the African and Burmese aboriginal too. The tribals, most probably due to traditional habit, have almost a passion for this method of cultivation, and illiterate as they are, they do not easily realise the harmfulness of the practice. Governmental measures prohibiting it have not and cannot by themselves put an end to it. Propaganda must be carried on against it in addition to such measures. The aboriginals must be taught the use of the plough, plots must be allotted on the lower slopes of the hills and in the valleys for cultivation and aboriginal children must be instructed in the art of good cultivation in special vocational schools as well as in ordinary schools. In the meantime, shifting cultivation must be limited by law to two years and not more on each plot of land to enable the regrowth of forest wherever possible. Taccavi loans and loans from co-operative societies must be advanced to the aboriginal cultivator who gives up shifting cultivation in favour of the plough to enable him to purchase bullocks and agricultural implements. The State should render some financial aid to such aborigines. By such means it is quite possible to wean the Adivasi from the harmful habit of shifting cultivation.

It has been noted in the 1931 Census Report of Bengal that the tribe of Chakmas have mostly taken kindly to the imported plough cultivation in place of the indigenous

'Jhum'. So it seems quite possible to introduce plough cultivation amongst all Adivasis if the Governments concerned are bent upon it. For example, the paddy-cultivation of the Savaras of South Orissa is marvellous and bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the aboriginal can bestow great labour and skill in the cultivation of his land. The terraced cultivation of the Savaras of Orissa and Nagas of Assam is not only a pleasant sight to see, but also a great asset to the tribes. My own observations as well as the observations of my assistants during our tours in the Savara hills confirm to the very letter the following description of the Savara terraced cultivation by Mr. F. Fawcett (in the Journal of Anthropological Society, Bombay, 1901):-

"Many a time have I tried to find a place for an extra paddy field (in the Savara area), but never with success. It is not too much to say that paddy is grown on every available foot of arable ground, all the hill streams being utilised for this purpose. From almost the very top of the hills, in fact from wherever the springs arise, there are paddy fields; at the top of every small area there are a few square yards, the front perpendicular revetment (of large masses of stones) sometimes as large in area as the area of the field; and larger and larger down the hill-side, taking every advantage of every available foot of ground, there are fields below fields to the bottom of the valleys. The Savaras show remarkable engineering skill in constructing paddy fields on hill slopes. They seem to construct them in the most impossible places and certainly at the expense of great labour."

So here is an example of the aboriginal interest in good cultivation, and if only he is initiated into it, he will surely stick to it. In the two districts of Nowgong and Kamrup, in Assam, some Mikirs have settled down in the plains and taken to plough cultivation. They have also established settlements of the same kind north of the

Brahmaputra in Darrang District. I recently read about the efforts of the Government of Tripura State in East Bengal to settle some aboriginal families on reclaimed land. It was mentioned that "the idea of His Highness the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur was to bring all his old hill subjects to give up their nomadic habits and Jhum cultivation and take to plough cultivation and settle down permanently. Steps taken are already bearing fruit. His Highness the Maharaja Manikya Bahadur is not unkind to the needs of the children of the soil and accordingly a vast area of 11,000 drones (or 110 sq. miles) was reserved for the hill people of the State." If Provincial and States' Governments concerned take some such action and extend a generous and helpful hand to the ignorant Adivasi, it is quite possible to root out the evil of shifting cultivation in a comparatively short time.

Mr. Verrier Elwin has discussed the subject of shifting cultivation at great length in his book on the Baigas. But his views seem to incline towards the policy of allowing this kind of cultivation with certain alterations and restrictions. I cannot agree with the opinion that Bewar or Podu is almost a religious necessity to some of the tribes. The argument of the Baigas that they do not plough the land because they consider it a sin to "lacerate the womb of Dharti Mata" (Mother Earth) does not justify the practice, though surely that sentiment of the Baigas may be borne in mind when we have to deal with the problem in order to avoid hasty action, which will estrange the feelings of the aborigines, who generally are easily irritable.

Many thousands of aborigines are found working in coal mines of C. P. and Bihar and on tea gardens of Assam and North Bengal. The aboriginals on the tea gardens seem to be economically better off than their compatriots at home and they can be quite prosperous but for the drink evil and other wasteful habits they cultivate on the gardens.

The Zamindari system of land-tenure exists in many of the tribal areas. When we know that there are innumerable grievances even in the Zamindari areas of the plains where a more advanced section of our people lives, it is not difficult to imagine the lot of the illiterate and ignorant aboriginal tenants under their landlords, who are mostly non-aboriginal. Writing about land-tenure in the backward areas, Dr. Hutton observes that "the tribal custom is normally superseded by a code which is neither valued nor understood by the tribe and in the application of which the tribe is deprived of its property, generally in the nature of law, either by alienation to foreigners or by transforming the trusteeship of tribal chief into absolute ownership of a kind quite foreign to the custom of the tribe. This has befallen both the Mundas and the hill tribes of Chittagong, to mention only two instances, while even in Rajputana a somewhat similar process has been at work". The unscrupulous methods employed generally by the agents of the Zamindars in collecting rents from the tenants are a standing grievance and owing to them sometimes aboriginal tribes have had to "revolt", the only solution for an ignorant people, as in the case of the tribals of South Orissa and Madras. Of course, these "Phituris" often hit the aborigines harder than the Zamindar, but what else can they do? Rent-collectors very rarely issue receipts to the tenants for payment of the rent and as such there can be no supervision and check from above over them. Of course even if receipts are issued, the aboriginal tenant cannot read them and so there is every scope for the rent-collector to extract more money than the dues. But at least the administration of the Zamindari would have done its duty and it can to some extent protect the poor tenant from exploitation by the minor officials.

System of Bethi and bonded labour :--Many aborigines are reduced to the position of serfs. Bethi or forced labour is exacted from them without any payment or with only a nominal payment by the Zamindars. The report of Mr. D.

Symington, I. C. S., of Bombay Province who was appointed in 1937 to enquire into the conditions of the Aboriginal and Hill tribes of the province, reveals that “all jungle tract tenants (in the Presidency of Bombay) 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. If they refuse or procrastinate, they are liable to assault or beatings. I was told, on creditable authority, of men being tied up to posts and whipped. There are also rumours of men in the past having been killed. The maximum remuneration of forced labour is one anna per diem. More often rice is given, barely 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. Landlords will not scruple to use their power in fulfilment of their purposes; for instance the use of their tenants’ womenfolk for the gratification of their lust.” When such a strong indictment is made by a responsible officer, we can imagine how wretched the life of the aboriginal tenant must be.

The System of bonded agricultural labour called “Gothi” in South Orissa and “Kamiauti” in Chhota Nagpur districts is another of the grievances of the aboriginal. “Kamias are bound servants of their masters; in return for a loan received they bind themselves to perform whatever menial services are required of them in lieu of the interest due on the loan. In practice the system leads to absolute degradation of Kamias . . .”

Organisation and running of a number of co-operative credit societies, purchase and sale societies and grain-golas will go a long way towards improving the economic condition of the Adivasis. First they will be freed from the clutches of the usurious and unscrupulous money-lenders and that is a blessing of no small consequence. Mr. Symington recommended the organisation of Purchase and Sale Societies in the Bhil and other aboriginal areas of Bombay. For the

Bhil area of West Khandesh, he recommended the organisation of these societies at an annual cost of Rs. 94,000, or nearly one lakh. He mentions that such a scheme will not only be self-supporting, but that it would, like the grain banks in Thana District and Peint Taluka, earn large profits, which should be utilised, as a contribution to the cost of compulsory primary education in the four Bhil talukas of West Khandesh. It may be difficult if not absolutely impossible to make the aboriginal understand the "Ten Main Points of Co-operation" but it is quite practicable to get into working order a C. C. Society in an aboriginal village if only the Supervisors, Inspectors and higher officials of the Department take a real interest in the matter, as in the case of Mandla District in C. P. and in Panch Mahals in Gujerat.

The drink evil is another cause for the poverty of the Adivasi. "They drink as a race; their children are brought up to it, and no man or woman can avoid the habit." (Mr. Symington). In certain aboriginal areas excise rules do not operate. The Adivasi prepares and consumes liquor by himself. But in most of the areas, excise rules do operate and the liquor contractor, usually a non-aboriginal, is almost a master of the aboriginal village, as he has at his beck and call all the men-folk, if not women too, by advancing loans and also supplying them with liquor on loan, whenever possible. What little is left after the payment of land-revenue goes to the liquor-seller, who thus is able to have a powerful grip on the aborigines.

Generally the Government officials—particularly the English I. C. S. officers—and the anthropologists do not favour the introduction of prohibition in aboriginal areas. But it is quite interesting and good that Mr. Symington writes in his report thus: "I cannot avoid stating the opinion that, if prohibition is justifiable at all, it is particularly justifiable in the case of people like the Bhils and allied tribes." Of course it is true that prohibition cannot

be introduced in aboriginal areas abruptly. People must be made to understand the benefits they would derive if prohibition is introduced. Temperance propaganda must be carried on for some time before attempting to introduce prohibition. I am in favour of gradual introduction of prohibition even amongst the aborigines as I fully believe that prohibition of liquor and intoxicating drugs confirms a great and everlasting benefit on the people; the aboriginal does not differ from the non-aboriginal so far as fundamental human qualities are concerned. Only due to his poverty and ignorance, his problems assume a slightly different garb from those of the non-aboriginal.

II. Illiteracy

Literacy figures with regard to the aborigines reveal a gloomy picture and send out a piteous cry to the educational authorities and philanthropists. In the 1931 Census, for a tribal population of 76,11,803 (for which the literacy figures have been extracted), only 44,351 were literate. That means a literacy of 0.58% or one in 172 persons was literate.

(Literacy by Religion)

(1931 Census)

<i>Province</i>	<i>Tribals</i>	<i>Tribal literates</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Assam	9,92,390	14,094	1.4
Bengal	5,28,037	3,874	0.7
Bihar and Orissa	20,48,809	11,834	0.5
C. P.	13,51,615	6,769	0.5

The figures of 1921 Census revealed that there were only 3 literate males per thousand among the Katkaris and 4 among the Bhiils as against 10 of Bharwad or Shepherd, 23 of Mahar, 28 of Bhangi and 65 of Dhed. Thus in the art of letters they are seven times more depressed than the

most depressed Bhangi and sixteen times more than the weaving Dhed. In a State in South Central India, wholly populated by aboriginal tribes, I found to my great surprise and pain (in 1924) that the literacy among the Bhils was only *one per thirteen thousand or next to zero* !

A large number of schools have to be organised in order to teach even the three R's to the aboriginal children. The efforts of the Provincial Governments and the Local Boards must be supplemented by philanthropic work. Spreading of primary education will help the Adivasi to a great extent and give him a little self-confidence, which he lacks now. He will then be able to understand the causes for his present backwardness and work for his improvement. The organisation of primary schools amongst aborigines presents no doubt some special difficulties, besides the big problem of finance. Due to the inaccessibility of the areas and the bad climatic conditions prevalent there, very few teachers would go there willingly or stick to those places if they go. Persons must be inspired to take up this work as missionaries and look upon it as a labour of love. Of course attempts must be made to train tribal candidates wherever possible. But for some years to come, people from the plains have to be recruited to a great extent, for teaching in the aboriginal schools.

The aboriginal children should be taught through the medium of the provincial language pertaining to their area and in the script of that particular language. Generally all tribals are conversant to some extent with the provincial language, besides their various tribal dialects. Only young children may find it difficult to follow the provincial language, in which case they should be taught the provincial language through the medium of the tribal dialect in the lowest classes. For this purpose the teachers must be conversant with tribal dialects. The introduction of Roman script in the aboriginal schools, as has been the

case among the Khasis of Assam, should be discouraged as it presents innumerable complexities and estranges the feelings of the major communities, besides having many technical disadvantages.

Equally important, if not more, is the need for vocational residential schools here and there amidst the Adivasis. The Adivasi is proverbially lazy in addition to his being illiterate. Probably that is why he is so much attached or addicted to "shifting cultivation", which requires much less labour than the more useful plough cultivation. If it is desired to make him a hard-working citizen, we have to tackle the Adivasi child first. Hence the necessity of residential vocational schools, where the child can be moulded into a useful and industrious citizen. Such education must be made absolutely free in most cases. Otherwise the aboriginal will not send his child to such a school. Agriculture and some handicrafts suitable to local conditions like carpentry, smithy and weaving must be taught to the Adivasi children in these schools, besides a knowledge of the three R's. Three or four years' residence in hostels will teach regular habits to these children and they would be immensely benefitted by cultivation of regular habits. Teaching of good and regular habits is the primary duty of the teacher in the aboriginal school.

A knowledge of even merely the three R's gives the Adivasi a little self-confidence and thus benefits him very much though of course there is a likelihood of his forgetting the little that he has learnt in the school in the course of a few years.

Educational grants to aboriginal areas have been meagre and inadequate hitherto. For example, in Orissa, though schools have increased in number in these areas, during the last few years, grants to private schools are paid on the basis of distribution by districts, fixed some years ago, without taking into consideration the need

for greater sums on account of the increase in the number of schools. The result is that the same amount has to be distributed among a larger number of schools and the teachers get poorer grants—hardly fifty rupees per annum per head. The Simon Commission, recognising that the progress made in education amongst the aborigines was decidedly less than even amongst the Harijans, observed that “it is clear from the Committee’s review that the main reason for this is the adoption by provincial governments of a scheme of grants to local authorities *proportionate to the sums set aside for education by the local authorities themselves*, without any provision, except in Bihar and Orissa, for the grading of districts according to their financial resources. Thus, backward areas, which might be supposed to need most assistance from their provincial governments, *receive in most cases, owing to their own poverty less help* from this quarter than wealthier districts.” Even in Bihar and Orissa, where the system of grading was adopted, the Government admitted in a memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission that in the matter of education the aboriginals of that province “as a whole are relatively to the general population in a worse position than they were in 1921. They have got a little less than their general share of the big advance made in primary education and decidedly less of the advance in High and Middle education.”

Middle School, High School and College education among the Adivasis is of course negligible, if not altogether a zero. We can find a few aborigines who have received or are now receiving University education, among the Khasis of Assam and the Mundas and Oraons of Chhota Nagpur. In June 1940 when I learnt that a Bhil girl who was educated by the efforts of the Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad, had passed the Bombay Matriculation examination, I felt extremely happy. Probably she is the first non-Christian Bhil girl to enter an Arts College.

At present many Christian Mission organisations and a few non-Christian Indian bodies are conducting schools

for aborigines, with Government aid in most cases. Their work, commendable as it is, appears to be only a drop in the ocean. Much greater efforts by such bodies and progressive and generous help by the authorities are urgently needed in order to lift the aborigines from the slough of despond and ignorance.

III. III-Health

The aboriginal areas are notoriously malarial. Besides malaria which takes a heavy toll, there are some contagious diseases also prevalent there. Yaws or Koya disease is one such and is prevalent among the aborigines of South Orissa and Madras. The person affected by this disease gets ulcers all over the body, even in the most delicate parts like the tongue and the anus. It affects men and women, young and old, and greatly reduces their capacity for work and slowly saps away their energy. Also it is found that due to crude marital relations and promiscuity in sexual matters, venereal diseases are common among them.

Disease ravages aboriginal life mercilessly because of the ignorance of the people and their crude treatment as well as lack of sufficient medical aid organised by the State. The primitive's fight against disease consists mainly of exorcism, and now and then recourse to some herbs administered by quacks.

Hence organisation of medical relief work is the most important welfare activity that should be conducted among the Adivasis. Supply of quinine and other medicines must be provided and distributed free among them by itinerant rural workers and teachers. In the beginning good propaganda has to be carried on to persuade the aborigines to take Ayurvedic or allopathic medicines, because they strongly believe that disease is directly due to some evil spirit and that it can be got rid of only by offering animal sacrifices. Their traditional ideas should not be disturbed

hastily. Persuasion and patient propaganda must be the only weapons of the social welfare worker to fight the superstitious ideas of the Adivasi.

IV. Inaccessibility of the areas inhabited by Adivasis

Communications are very bad in aboriginal regions. There are very few motorable and all-weather roads. For example, in the district of Lushai Hills in Assam and the district of Garhwal in U. P., there are practically no motorable roads, but only bridle paths of a width of only five feet. The hilly nature of the regions is the main cause of such bad communications. But it is quite possible to make these regions more accessible than at present, by bestowing attention on and allotting large funds to the construction and improvement of roads. Innumerable hill-streams, which make even cart-traffic impossible during the rainy season, have to be bridged.

Good roads will open up the country, encourage trade and attract industrialists to these regions, which are rich in minerals and other natural resources. Also the aborigines will come into greater contact with the advanced people of the plains. The fear that such contact is dangerous to the tribals is held by some anthropologists and British administrators. But I do not share that belief. I shall explain at a later stage my views on this aspect of the aboriginal problem.

V. Defects in administration

The areas inhabited predominantly by Adivasis are classed as Excluded and Partially Excluded areas under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Montford reforms treated these areas as "Backward Areas" and made provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919 inapplicable to them. Before the Montford reforms they were "Scheduled Districts" as per the India Act XIV of 1874.

Under the present constitution there are eight Excluded areas and twenty-eight Partially Excluded areas, having in all a population of about 150 lakhs. The administration of the Excluded areas is controlled and directed exclusively by the Governor of the province concerned, while that of the Partially Excluded areas is controlled largely by the Governor who has been given "special responsibilities" in this case. No legislative enactment will apply to either of these unless the Governor so directs by a notification.

The Governor has complete authority to make any laws and regulations for Excluded areas and also to repeal or amend any law which may be for the time being applicable to these areas. The expenditure on these areas cannot be sanctioned by the legislatures. In all matters concerning these areas, the Governor can act entirely in his discretion and the validity of anything done by him shall not be called in question on any ground whatever by the ministers or the legislature.

With regard to the Partially Excluded areas, the constitution is not so hopeless and authoritative, though even here there is much to be undone or repaired.

The administration obtained in these areas is highly authoritative and autocratic. All powers are concentrated in the hands of a few officials. Executive and judicial powers are vested in one and the same officer. Even education is entrusted to him. Besides, such officers are the Chairmen of Union, Taluk and District Boards, wherever these exist. When so many functions are allotted to one and the same officer, can administration be efficient and popular?

Local self-government, where it does exist, is only nominal. The Boards are constituted with cent. per cent. nominated members and official presidents. These Boards work only as another branch of the government machinery and there is very little scope for expression of popular feeling within them.

Administration of justice :—Due to the fact that judicial powers are vested in executive officers, who are overburdened with executive functions and whose legal knowledge cannot be of a very high standard if not altogether questionable, administration of justice in tribal areas has drawn upon itself much justified criticism. The aboriginal is rarely satisfied by the present method of meting out justice and often he is afraid of the inhuman delay and cost involved in seeking justice in government courts. The first difficulty lies in the long distances to be covered in order to be present at the court. There are very few all-weather roads in these areas and so one has to walk scores of miles over hills and dales. In the rainy season, even walking becomes extremely difficult on these forest tracks, which are cut up by innumerable mountain streams flowing at great velocity. Mr. W. V. Grigson, I. C. S., of C. P., writes as follows in his recent booklet on Mandla aborigines : “On arrival at Court, it often happens that the Gond may be kept waiting for a day or two or find that the Tahsildar is away or too busy to take his case, and he is then told to go away and return a week or ten days later, perhaps for another abortive visit. ...” This represents the state of things in most of the tribal areas.

Oftentimes, the officer, in addition to his being not well-conversant with legal matters, is ignorant of tribal law and customs, a knowledge of which is essential to mete out justice to the aborigines. Sometimes tribal law is at variance with the law obtaining in plains districts and magistrates, who are generally from the plains, cannot easily realise that what is considered illegal amongst non-aborigines may be perfectly legal according to tribal custom, e. g. marriage by capture. Rao Bahadur S. C. Roy writes :

“The British system of law and administration has further tended to impair the social solidarity of these tribes and has weakened the authority of the social heads or Panchas and the respect they formerly commanded. Until

be introduced in aboriginal areas abruptly. People must be made to understand the benefits they would derive if prohibition is introduced. Temperance propaganda must be carried on for some time before attempting to introduce prohibition. I am in favour of gradual introduction of prohibition even amongst the aborigines as I fully believe that prohibition of liquor and intoxicating drugs confirms a great and everlasting benefit on the people; the aboriginal does not differ from the non-aboriginal so far as fundamental human qualities are concerned. Only due to his poverty and ignorance, his problems assume a slightly different garb from those of the non-aboriginal.

II. Illiteracy

Literacy figures with regard to the aborigines reveal a gloomy picture and send out a piteous cry to the educational authorities and philanthropists. In the 1931 Census, for a tribal population of 76,11,803 (for which the literacy figures have been extracted), only 44,351 were literate. That means a literacy of 0.58% or one in 172 persons was literate.

(Literacy by Religion)

(1931 Census)

<i>Province</i>	<i>Tribals</i>	<i>Tribal literates</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Assam	9,92,390	14,094	1.4
Bengal	5,28,037	3,874	0.7
Bihar and Orissa	20,48,809	11,834	0.5
C. P.	13,51,615	6,769	0.5

The figures of 1921 Census revealed that there were only 3 literate males per thousand among the Katkaris and 4 among the Bheels as against 10 of Bharwad or Shepherd, 23 of Mahar, 28 of Bhangi and 65 of Dhed. Thus in the art of letters they are seven times more depressed than the

most depressed Bhangi and sixteen times more than the weaving Dhed. In a State in South Central India, wholly populated by aboriginal tribes, I found to my great surprise and pain (in 1924) that the literacy among the Bhils was only *one per thirteen thousand or next to zero* !

A large number of schools have to be organised in order to teach even the three R's to the aboriginal children. The efforts of the Provincial Governments and the Local Boards must be supplemented by philanthropic work. Spreading of primary education will help the Adivasi to a great extent and give him a little self-confidence, which he lacks now. He will then be able to understand the causes for his present backwardness and work for his improvement. The organisation of primary schools amongst aborigines presents no doubt some special difficulties, besides the big problem of finance. Due to the inaccessibility of the areas and the bad climatic conditions prevalent there, very few teachers would go there willingly or stick to those places if they go. Persons must be inspired to take up this work as missionaries and look upon it as a labour of love. Of course attempts must be made to train tribal candidates wherever possible. But for some years to come, people from the plains have to be recruited to a great extent, for teaching in the aboriginal schools.

The aboriginal children should be taught through the medium of the provincial language pertaining to their area and in the script of that particular language. Generally all tribals are conversant to some extent with the provincial language, besides their various tribal dialects. Only young children may find it difficult to follow the provincial language, in which case they should be taught the provincial language through the medium of the tribal dialect in the lowest classes. For this purpose the teachers must be conversant with tribal dialects. The introduction of Roman script in the aboriginal schools, as has been the

case among the Khasis of Assam, should be discouraged as it presents innumerable complexities and estranges the feelings of the major communities, besides having many technical disadvantages.

Equally important, if not more, is the need for vocational residential schools here and there amidst the Adivasis. The Adivasi is proverbially lazy in addition to his being illiterate. Probably that is why he is so much attached or addicted to "shifting cultivation", which requires much less labour than the more useful plough cultivation. If it is desired to make him a hard-working citizen, we have to tackle the Adivasi child first. Hence the necessity of residential vocational schools, where the child can be moulded into a useful and industrious citizen. Such education must be made absolutely free in most cases. Otherwise the aboriginal will not send his child to such a school. Agriculture and some handicrafts suitable to local conditions like carpentry, smithy and weaving must be taught to the Adivasi children in these schools, besides a knowledge of the three R's. Three or four years' residence in hostels will teach regular habits to these children and they would be immensely benefitted by cultivation of regular habits. Teaching of good and regular habits is the primary duty of the teacher in the aboriginal school.

A knowledge of even merely the three R's gives the Adivasi a little self-confidence and thus benefits him very much though of course there is a likelihood of his forgetting the little that he has learnt in the school in the course of a few years.

Educational grants to aboriginal areas have been meagre and inadequate hitherto. For example, in Orissa, though schools have increased in number in these areas, during the last few years, grants to private schools are paid on the basis of distribution by districts, fixed some years ago, without taking into consideration the need

for greater sums on account of the increase in the number of schools. The result is that the same amount has to be distributed among a larger number of schools and the teachers get poorer grants—hardly fifty rupees per annum per head. The Simon Commission, recognising that the progress made in education amongst the aborigines was decidedly less than even amongst the Harijans, observed that “it is clear from the Committee’s review that the main reason for this is the adoption by provincial governments of a scheme of grants to local authorities *proportionate to the sums set aside for education by the local authorities themselves*, without any provision, except in Bihar and Orissa, for the grading of districts according to their financial resources. Thus, backward areas, which might be supposed to need most assistance from their provincial governments, *receive* in most cases, *owing to their own poverty less help* from this quarter than wealthier districts.” Even in Bihar and Orissa, where the system of grading was adopted, the Government admitted in a memorandum submitted to the Statutory Commission that in the matter of education the aboriginals of that province “as a whole are relatively to the general population in a worse position than they were in 1921. They have got a little less than their general share of the big advance made in primary education and decidedly less of the advance in High and Middle education.”

Middle School, High School and College education among the Adivasis is of course negligible, if not altogether a zero. We can find a few aborigines who have received or are now receiving University education, among the Khasis of Assam and the Mundas and Oraons of Chhota Nagpur. In June 1940 when I learnt that a Bhil girl who was educated by the efforts of the Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad, had passed the Bombay Matriculation examination, I felt extremely happy. Probably she is the first non-Christian Bhil girl to enter an Arts College.

At present many Christian Mission organisations and a few non-Christian Indian bodies are conducting schools

for aborigines, with Government aid in most cases. Their work, commendable as it is, appears to be only a drop in the ocean. Much greater efforts by such bodies and progressive and generous help by the authorities are urgently needed in order to lift the aborigines from the slough of despond and ignorance.

III. III-Health

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Good roads will open up the country, encourage trade and attract industrialists to these regions, which are rich in minerals and other natural resources. Also the aborigines will come into greater contact with the advanced people of the plains. The fear that such contact is dangerous to the tribals is held by some anthropologists and British administrators. But I do not share that belief. I shall explain at a later stage my views on this aspect of the aboriginal problem.

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“The British system of law and administration has further tended to impair the social solidarity of these tribes and has weakened the authority of the social heads or Panchas and the respect they formerly commanded. Until

recently, when Government orders validating tribal customary law regarding succession and inheritance were promulgated, the Courts often disregarded the custom against inheritance by daughters and applied to them a Succession Act quite inconsistent with the fundamental social structure and ideas of kinship of the tribes. Until recently, when rules against alienation of ancestral lands were promulgated by Government, the ancient tribal custom against such alienation was utterly disregarded."

The remedy for all this lies not only in the appointment of independent judges, but also in studying carefully tribal customs and laws and taking these into consideration in the administration of justice.

The principles of tribal Panchayats are quite sound and the Government should avoid encroaching upon the powers of these ancient and indigenous organisations of the people. A great help will be rendered to the aborigines if these Panchayats are allowed to function without encumbrances, of course within certain limits.

Representation in Legislatures and Local Boards.

The seats reserved by separate electorates for aboriginal people in the provincial legislatures under the 1935 Constitution are twenty-four in all and they are distributed as follows:—

Assam 9; Bihar 7; Orissa 5; and Bombay, Madras and C. P. 1 in each of the three; total 24.

* In C. P. where the aboriginal population is very nearly equal to the Harijan population, and one-fifth of the total population, only one seat has been reserved for the aborigines, while twenty are for Harijans. In the province of Orissa, out of the five seats reserved, four are filled up by nomination, a feature peculiar to Orissa, as nomination to Provincial legislatures has been discarded in all other provinces.

In Local Boards hardly any representation to the aborigines is generally given, except very recently by the Bombay Government.

VI. Lack of Leadership

Lack of leadership in the tribal communities is a great handicap. Amongst the Christianized aborigines, e. g. of Chhota Nagpur, there are a few educated people, but they generally seem to be interested chiefly in Christian aborigines rather than in their non-Christian brethren. Amongst the latter, leaders are fewer still. This is one of the reasons why aboriginal interests fail to receive proper attention from the authorities and the general public. So, till such time to come when the aborigines can stand on their own legs and safeguard their rights and interests, non-aboriginal politicians and social workers have to espouse the cause of these dumb millions and work disinterestedly for their economic and educational advancement.

"Isolationism" and "Intervention"

Among those interested in the welfare of the aborigines there are two schools favouring two different policies, which are generally called "Isolationism" and "Intervention." Generally anthropologists and British members of the I. C. S. and other government officers favour Isolationism, which may be briefly explained as 'keeping the aborigines in their areas untouched by the civilisation of the plains.' They fear that contact with the Hindus of the plains breaks the solidarity of the tribal society and brings many social evils into tribal areas, hitherto unknown there, like, for example, untouchability, early marriage and purdah. They are of opinion that the aborigines will try to imitate only the lower strata of the Hindu community of the plains and thus get demoralised and form another depressed community like the various Hindu Scheduled castes. For example, Dr. Hutton writes that "the opening up of the communications, involving contact at many points and often

practical settlement of tribal country, alters the aspect of any agricultural changes that may have been taking place. Generally speaking it substitutes *conflict* for *contact*—not necessarily a conflict of arms, but of cultures and of material interests. Attempts to develop minerals, forests or land for intensive cultivation can only be made at the expense of the tribe whose isolation is thus invaded. ...Again the exploitation of minerals not only involves the tribal land but generally the introduction of an alien population usually of an extremely mixed character and not infrequently exceptionally dissolute." These words of Dr. Hutton represent the views generally held by all isolationists.

It is difficult for me to understand why these persons fear the contact with the Hindus and Muslims of the plains. It may be that in a few cases some social evils of the people of the plains are likely to be copied by the unsophisticated aboriginals. But it is not right to consider that the contact will bring only bad customs into tribal life and that the aborigines will suffer more than they benefit. Safeguards may be instituted to protect the aborigines from exploitation by the more advanced people of the plains, as has been done with regard to non-alienation of land. But to keep these people confined to and isolated in their inaccessible hills and jungles is something like keeping them in glass cases of a museum for the curiosity of purely academic persons. Thereby I do not underrate the great service that is rendered and that can be rendered in the future also by anthropologists in the cause of the poor aborigines. In fact vast fields, concerning aboriginal life, still remain to be explored and there is plenty of work for anthropologists and other scholars.

But how can the aborigines realise their present backwardness and work for their own economic, social and political progress if there is no contact with people more

advanced than themselves? When contact is advocated, I do not for a moment suggest that large populations of the plains should be transplanted to aboriginal regions and made to live amidst and dominate the Adivasis. Also I do not discountenance the need for protection of aboriginal interests against any possible exploitation by some sections of the advanced people of the plains. What I mean to say is that a healthy comradeship should develop between the aborigines and the non-aborigines and each should profit culturally from the other and in course of time work hand in hand for the welfare of India as a whole. I am one of those who strongly advocate reservation of seats, but in a general electorate, for the Adivasis in the legislatures and Local Boards for some time to come. All the same, I feel that there is no cause for getting alarmed over imaginary evils resulting out of the contact with non-aborigines and their civilisation.

Another charge levelled by some isolationists against indigenous social workers and nationalist politicians is that they are interventionists, that they approach the aborigines with the feelings of a morally and socially superior person approaching a degraded individual, and that these social workers more often bring with them social evils like untouchability, purdah, early marriage and many taboos with regard to food (e. g. beef-eating). Of course we should take care that the contagion of social evils like untouchability does not spread in aboriginal areas. Moreover when these evils are dying in the plains and when well-educated persons take up social welfare work among the tribals, there is no likelihood of their being carried to the aboriginal society. At the same time it is curious to note that these friends do not object to the Christian Missionaries' close and uncontrolled contact with them. Not only that, but they actively encourage them to spread Christian propaganda and even Roman script for tribal dialects. They also remain perfectly silent over the removal by law of thousands of aborigines from provinces like Bihar, Orissa and North Madras

from their natural surroundings to the tea estates of Assam and North Bengal on low wages.

In fact it is unjust and wrong to call the indigenous social workers 'interventionists'. It would be proper to call them advocates of the policy of *assimilation*. The aborigines should form part of the civilized communities of our country not for the purpose of swelling the figures of the followers of this religion or that, but to share with the advanced communities the privileges and duties on equal terms in the general social and political life of the country. Separatism and isolation seem to be dangerous theories and they strike at the root of national solidarity. We have already enough communal troubles and should we add to them instead of extinguishing the existing ones and seeing that we are all one and indivisible? Safety lies in union and not in isolation. Nationalists cannot but view with concern and regret statements like the following one of Dr. Hutton:

"Education in itself is a doubtful blessing in so far as it is apt to unfit them (aborigines) for their environment," but it is probably a necessary weapon of defence for them in the circumstances in which they are placed, perhaps the only one of any permanent value, *though the real solution of the problem would appear to be to create self-governing tribal areas with free power to self-determination in regard to surrounding or adjacent provincial units*". (Italics mine). It is clear from the above that isolationists seem to doubt even the value of education so far as the aborigines are concerned. But at the same time it is encouraging to note that education is recognized at least as a weapon of defence against exploitation, if not as a means for achieving their moral and material progress.

Short Notes on some of the important Aboriginal Tribes of India

1. *Baigas*:—The Baigas are more backward than their neighbours, the Gonds. In the villages the Baiga quarters are apart from the Gond quarters and are not even as clean and comfortable as the latter. Their belief in magic and their love for “Bewar” or shifting cultivation are said to be especially strong.

2. *Bhils*:—The Bhils are one of the three major aboriginal tribes of our country, the other two being the Gonds and the Santals. They are the largest tribe in the presidency of Bombay and in Rajputana States. I have had the fortune of coming into close touch with them and their problems since two decades. The Bhil Seva Mandal of Dohad has been carrying on welfare work for the Bhils of Panchmahals since the year 1921. The Bhil Seva Mandal of West Khandesh, though of recent growth, has started well and is taking keen interest in the education of the Bhil children. In the State of Durgapur in Rajputana one High School teacher, Sjt. Bhogilal Pandya by name, who is also a good social worker runs a hostel and a number of schools for the Bhils, and carries on other welfare work and is encouraged by the State.

In 1938 a big social reform movement was started among the Bhils of West Khandesh, by a saintly Bhil named Gula Maharaj. This movement had a wonderful moral effect. Thousands of Bhils gave up the evil habit of drink, they began taking the daily bath observing clean habits in everyday life, and they co-operated enthusiastically with the workers of the Bhil Seva Mandal of West Khandesh in organising schools in their villages.

The Report of Mr. D. Symington, I. C. S., on the Aboriginal and Hill Tribes of the Partially Excluded Areas in

the Province of Bombay, published in 1939, deals with the various problems of the Bhils with thoroughness and sympathy and serves as a land-mark in the administration of the Bhils and other tribes of the province. One of his important recommendations was that "a policy of prohibition should be attempted in these areas, preferably by means of obtaining increased Government control of mhowa flower crops." Equally important if not more is his scheme of Purchase and Sale societies for the four Bhil talukas of West Khandesh.

3. *Bhuiya*:—Bhuiyas are found mostly in the northern tributary States of Orissa in various stages of civilisation and cultural development, from the almost primitive Hill Bhuiyas of Keonjhar State to the thoroughly Hinduised Bhuiya Zamindars of Gangpur and other States. Rai Bahadur S. C. Roy writes thus about the hill Bhuiyas:—

"With their activities almost wholly confined to the collection and production of food in their inhospitable hill fastnesses, they are still in a very low state of material culture."

4. *Chakmas*:—Chakmas are a tribe living in Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong district. It is reported by Mr. J. C. Mills, I. C. S., in the 1931 Census of Bengal, Part I, that the Chakmas have taken most kindly to the imported plough cultivation in place of the indigenous system of jhuming or shifting cultivation.

5. *Gadabas*:—They reside mostly in Koraput district of Orissa and Vizag. district of Madras. Some of them have migrated to Assam tea gardens. Gadaba women wear immense ear-rings of a diameter of about 8 inches, made of brass wire, which reach the shoulders. These women wear cloth made of cotton thread and fibre, a bustle or dress improver, which has always big stripes of white and red.

By custom they are prohibited from using purely cotton cloth but their menfolk are not. The home-spun and woven cloth seems to be still holding the field amongst the Gadabas as against the mill-cloth.

6. *Garos*:—A noteworthy feature of the Garos of Assam is their social organisation, which is based on democratic principles. Whenever a dispute arises, all concerned, including women, assemble and discuss the matter.

7. *Gonds*:—This is one of the three major aboriginal tribes of India with a total population of about 25 lakhs, of which nearly 19 lakhs are found in the province of C. P. In ancient days there were a number of Gond Kingdoms and even today some small States in C. P. are ruled by Gond Chiefs. The Gond country is still known as Gondwana, as in ancient days. We cannot forget the brave Gond Queen, Rani Durgavati, who fought heroically against Akbar. The small State of Bastar in C.P., hedged in between the borders of Hyderabad State, and Madras and Orissa Provinces, contains the Maria and Muria Gonds and Halbas, who are said to be some of the most primitive peoples of the world. Mr. Verrier Elwin is just now engaged in anthropological research work in Bastar State.

8. *Kacharis*:—They are the biggest of all the aboriginal tribes of Assam, with a population of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs. Tradition ascribes their descent from the non-Aryan hero of Mahabharata, Ghatotkacha, the son of Hedamba and Bhima. Since 1935 welfare work is being conducted amongst these people under the auspices of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Sjt. Rupnath Brahma, who is a member of this tribe, is a minister in the Assam Government since 1938.

9. *Katkaris*:—They are probably of Bhil origin. They are also called Kathodis and Kathodias. They are found chiefly in that part of the Western Ghats which runs through Thana and Kolaba districts. Their original occu-

pation was catechu-making. Some of them still pursue the same. But the majority of them now engage themselves in burning charcoal, gathering and selling of firewood and as agricultural labourers. The Adivasi Seva Mandal of Thana Dt. was formed in May 1940 by ex-Premier Mr. B. G. Kher with the object of improving the lot of the Katakaris, Varlis and Thakurs of the district.

10. *Khasis*:—They are one of the numerous tribes of Assam and tradition ascribes their descent from Babhrughavan, the son of Arjun. Christianisation goes on at great speed amidst them and a visitor to Shillong, the capital of Assam, will find most of the Khasi men and women dressed in western clothes. Spread of education among the Khasis is quite encouraging. The present Cabinet of Assam includes one Khasi lady, Miss Dunn.

In many schools in Khasi area, Khasi language is taught in Roman script instead of in the Assamese script.

The Khasi States are limited monarchies, the Chief's powers being much circumscribed by a Darbar of Mantris. Manipur is the biggest of the Khasi States.

11. *Khonds*:—They are a big aboriginal tribe of Orissa, with a population of about 7½ lakhs including 80,000 Jatapus, who are a bit advanced section of the same tribe. They used to offer human sacrifice, called the Meriah sacrifice, in the belief that such a sacrifice satisfies the unknown powers and gives them in return a bumper crop. This was put down only in the middle of the last century by British administrators. "The last recorded Meriah sacrifice in Ganjam hills occurred in 1852 and there were still (in 1909) Khonds alive who were present at it. 25 descendants of persons, who were reserved for sacrifice but were rescued by Government officers, returned themselves as Meriah at the 1901 Census. The Khonds have now

substituted a buffalo for a human being". (Thurston). But it is mentioned in the Gazetteer of Vizagapatam district that as recently as 1880 two persons were convicted of attempting a Meriah sacrifice near Ambadola in the present Koraput district; in 1883 a man was found at daybreak murdered in one of the temples of Jeypore (Koraput Dt.) in circumstances which pointed to his having been slain as a Meriah, and that as late as 1886 a formal enquiry showed that there were ample grounds for suspicion that kidnapping of victims still went on in Bastar State. As recently as 1902 a petition was presented to the District Magistrate of Ganjam to sanction the performance of a human sacrifice!

The following is a translation of a Khond song dealing with this subject:—

"At the time of the great Kaibon (Campbell) Sahib's coming, the country was in darkness; it was enveloped in mist.

"Having sent "Paiks" (Sepoys) to collect the people of the land, they, having surrounded them, caught the Meriah sacrificers.

"Having caught the Meriah sacrificers, they brought them, and again went and seized the evil councillors.

"Having seen the chains and shackles, the people were afraid; murder and blood-shed were quelled.

"The land became beautiful and a certain Mokodella Sahib (Macpherson) came.

"He destroyed the lairs of the tigers and bears in the hills and rocks and taught wisdom to the people....."
(Quoted by Thurston).

The credit of putting down this dreadful and inhuman practice goes to British administrators, Campbell and Macpherson topping the list.

The Servants of India Society has been running some schools and an ashram amongst the Khonds and other aboriginal tribes of Koraput district since Nov. 1939. Mr. L. N. Sahu, a member of the Society, is in charge of this work.

The Khonds of Ganjam hills do not pay any land tax to the Government and it is claimed that they were exempted by the Government (in the middle of the last century) as a sign of friendship and good-will and fair treatment, on the Khonds promising to give up Meriah sacrifice.

12. *Konda-Doras*:—These people of the East Godavari District have been Telugu-ised to a great extent. They are considered by some scholars to be a section of the Kandhas or Khonds and their dialect (now mostly discarded in favour of Telugu) is said to be a dialect of Kui, the language of the Kandhas. They are hill-cultivators.

13. *Koyas*:—These people also have been Telugu-ised like the Konda-Doras. They are considered to be a branch of the Gond family. One Sjt. Kodanda Ramiah conducts some welfare work among the Koyas of East Godavari Agency.

14. *Kukis*:—Kukis are another tribe of Assam. Head hunting used to exist among the Biete Kukis as among the Nagas. Enemies' heads used to be stuck on poles in the village. A man had to bring in a head of a man of an enemy village slain by himself before he could marry.

15. *Lushais*:—Their home, the Lushai Hills Dt., lies in the extreme south-east of Assam, bordering on Burma. There are no motorable roads but only bridle paths in this district and as such it is accessible only with great difficulty. Head-hunting used to exist among the Lushais also. A young man who had taken a head was known as a "Man of Valour" ('Huaisen' or 'Pasaltha').

16. *Mikirs*:—Mikirs are addicted to opium. As among the Khasis, pottery is made without the help of the wheel. Mikirs grow cotton and rice. They practise Jhuming as other Assam tribes do.

17. *Nagas*:—The Nagas of Assam are $2\frac{3}{4}$ lakhs in population. Head hunting existed among them till very recent days. It is suspected that some of the Nagas in the hills still practise it occasionally in very remote and inaccessible places.

In the last decade there was arising amidst the Nagas, headed by a Naga maiden and a Naga youth. The youth was sentenced to death and executed and the maiden is still in internment.

18. *Oraons*:—They are one of the important tribes of Chhota Nagpur. One Rai Saheb Bandi Ram is a leading non-Christian Oraon and he takes keen interest in the educational and social uplift of his tribe. There are also a few well educated persons among the Christian Oraons. There is a free Hostel at Ranchi for the convenience of Oraon and Munda students, and several more have sprung up in the district of Ranchi.

19. *Parajas (or Bonda Porojas)*:—The Paraja women wear probably the "irreducible minimum of cloth", i. e. a small thick cloth of fibre, measuring only 2 ft. in girth by 8 inches wide and tied round the loins. They wear innumerable necklaces of beads, which almost conceal their breast. They shave their heads and use a tiara round them. Thus the Paraja women have a distinct dress of their own.

Parajas live by cultivation, keep cattle and pigs. Social welfare work on a very small scale is being conducted in a Paraja village of Malkangiri taluk of Koraput district by the Servants of India Society.

20. *Santals* :—This tribe is one of the three major tribes of our country, with a population of nearly 30 lakhs. The Santals are the largest of the primitive tribes of Bihar Province and they are most numerous in the district of Santal Parganas. There are many collieries in this district which provide work for a number of Santal coolies. The great industrial town of Jamshedpur situated in Singhbhum district has a considerable working population of Santals, Mundas and Bhumijis. Many thousands of Santals are found on the tea gardens of Assam and Bengal. “ In the work of reclaiming land and clearing jungles the Santals have few equals in India, but as a rule they care little for flat low land tracts. As regards the quality of their cultivation, a few, and those who live in the vicinity of Hindu villages, have learnt to take proper care of their lands. ”

21. *Savaras* :—They are a feature of South Orissa. Tradition connects this tribe with the life of Shri Ramchandra of the Great Hindu Epic, Ramayana. Shabari from whom the Hero-God accepted tasted fruits, is said to have belonged to this tribe. The Savaras practise what is called terraced cultivation, which is one of the best forms of cultivation.

22. *Tipperas* :—They are Bengal-ised to a great extent. A more primitive section of the tribe is found in the south of Chittagong Hill Tracts.

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