

Aboriginal Education in Hyderabad

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WHEN in 1941 I began studying the aboriginal tribes in the hill tracts between the Godavari and Penganga River, in the Adilabad District of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions, I soon shared the fate of all anthropologists working in Peninsular India: problems of administration, economic development, land-alienation and the exploitation of aboriginals by more advanced populations overshadowed the purely ethnological aspects of my investigations and the mere task of recording soon seemed a singularly inadequate answer to the obvious and urgent needs of the tribesmen. However, without an intimate knowledge of the people, their customs and the historical background, it would have been unwise to attempt any improvement and it was not until 1943, when my anthropological investigations were far progressed, that constructive work could begin.

The Adilabad District consists of an elongated highland rising sharply from the Godavari valley to just over 2,000 feet above sea-level and falling in rolling, wooded hills and pleasant open valleys to the wide plains where the winding course of the Penganga separates Hyderabad from the Central Provinces and Berar. This highland with its great stretches of unbroken forest has among the more urban minded Hyderabadis the reputation of "wildness and inaccessibility" and I have indeed been to villages which have not been visited by any official for at least a generation. But to those who know the tribal areas of Assam or even Orissa it appears rather tame, a charming friendly country of undulating fields set between ridges clothed in light, deciduous forest, inhabited by gentle and pleasant folks. There is nothing 'wild' in Adilabad hills except some herds of bison, leading an inconspicuous existence in the denser parts of the forests, and many tigers, too many

certainly for the comfort of the villagers or the safety of their cattle.

In the hills Gonds, a few Kolams and Naikpods form the main population, but in the surrounding plains new-comers of Maratha, Telugu and Lambara stock have during the last decades occupied large tracts, ousting many Gonds from their ancestral lands. For centuries Gond Rajas had reigned over the fair lands known as Gondwana; with anachronistic racial ideas and religious toleration they had welcomed in their realms settlers of all beliefs and walks of life, and so it was that when the Gond states collapsed before the onslaughts of Mogul and later Maratha armies, the Gonds, now no longer the ruling race, found to their chagrin that the alien settlers in their midst, quick to turn the situation to their own purposes, usurped most of the land.

It was only in hill tracts with poor communications that the Gonds succeeded in maintaining their position. In Adilabad a feudal system survived until the end of the last century, when the Government began to tighten the reins of administration and, following the policy of raising the revenue of the district, encouraged the influx of new settlers, opened up the plains by building roads and gave the new comers land on easy terms. Ignorant of the laws of the State, in many cases of the language both of the administration and the newcomers, and unfamiliar with revenue procedure, many Gonds lost then their holdings to immigrant cultivators and whole Gond villages fell into the hands of absentee landlords. Gond prosperity and Gond culture began to decline, and ever since the aboriginals have been fighting a losing battle for their rights. The rapaciousness of non-aboriginal land-owners, the influx of land-hungry immigrants from every surrounding district, the reservation of forests and the

machinery of law courts far too complicated for the simple-minded aboriginal—all combined to deprive them of most of their ancestral land. In 1941 I found the Gonds economically exploited and socially oppressed, many leading a precarious existence as tenants and agricultural labourers where their forefathers had lived as free peasants. Only in the interior of the hills, tracts less attractive to outsiders, did Gond culture still flourish; only there had the people retained some of their independent, upright spirit, some of the natural gaiety and artistic feeling that finds expression in their dance and song. But even these highlands were no safe refuge; year by year the advanced populations of the plains would thrust deeper into the valleys, year by year more land would be wrested from the Gonds.

It was evident that the deterioration of the Gonds' position had so far advanced that the administrative measures alone, such as the Act forbidding the alienation of aboriginal land, could have little lasting effect unless the Gonds themselves were enabled to safeguard their own interests. Education could fortify their self-reliance which is so important an element in the struggle for existence; education not only in literacy but in the laws of the State.

But what were the educational facilities open to the Gonds? Those in the hills lived several days' journey from any Government school, and in those few schools within reach of Gond villages the medium of instruction was Marathi or Urdu, languages of which not one out of ten Gond children had any knowledge. It is therefore not surprising that the percentage of literacy among the Gonds was very low, and in this respect they did not differ from the other aboriginals of Hyderabad. In 1941 there were among 678,149 tribals only 4,486 or about six per mille literates, and since the 'tribals' include Lambaras some sections of whom are fairly progressive, the figure for such aboriginal tribes as Gonds or Koyas was no doubt far lower.

Education for Gonds had thus to start from scratch. Improvement of their economic and social position had obviously to be the main aim, but a literacy that divorces the tribesmen from their own cultural heritage can be a doubtful blessing. Among many primitive races school education has disrupted tribal life by causing a conflict between progressive and conservative elements. This had to be avoided, and I argued that, if in higher civilizations writing was the supreme means of expression, it might surely be harnessed to the revival of Gond culture. Education was not to be the imposition of an alien system on tribal life; it was to be firmly anchored in Gond tradition to draw its inspiration from the deep wells of Gond culture.

To achieve this aim two conditions had to be fulfilled: the first, educational steps must be in Gondi, and the teachers must be Gonds. At first sight both conditions seemed equally difficult to fulfil. The Gondi spoken in Hyderabad had never been reduced to writing, and even the related dialects of the Central Provinces were not written languages. True, there existed a few word-lists, Trench's good grammar of Betul Gondi,¹ and a small Gondi Manual of the Chanda dialect by S. B. Patwardhan²; but these were in Roman script, written for the foreign student, and not for Gonds. Similarly, among the few literate Gonds there was none who could teach Gondi writing and reading. So we had to create our own Gondi literature and train our own Gond teachers. Here my anthropological work came in most usefully. The Gonds of Adilabad are rich in myths and historical epics that have been preserved through the centuries by the Pardhans, their hereditary bards, and I had already collected a sufficient number to realize the potentialities of this oral literature which was familiar and fascinating to every Gond. Here obviously was the raw material

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

² *First Gondi Manual*, London 1936,

for our Gondi books both for school children and adults, books which could appeal to the newly literate whose horizon was still bound-
e 1 by the limits of his own culture. With such books in good and often highly poetic Gondi, he could practise reading until the day when he would be sufficiently advanced to switch over to another language and new, unfamiliar subjects.

The great question was in what script should Gondi be recorded? As a Dravidian tongue it could, no doubt, be adequately written in Telugu characters, but many objected to the use of the Telugu script. It is one of the most complicated of Indian scripts, and only the small number of Gonds under Telugu influence would have derived any practical advantage from its study, and no Gond outside Hyderabad could have read the new Gondi books. Roman script, on the other hand, though easy to learn, would have been useless in Hyderabad where it is not employed in official documents. The choice lay thus between the Persian script of the official Urdu, and the Nagari script of Marathi, the most prominent language in Adilabad District and the one most in use for the keeping of village-records. Persian script is not only far more difficult than Nagari, but owing to the dearth of vowels is rather ill-suited to phouetical transcription; my choice fell therefore on Nagari, whose characters can render nearly all the sounds occurring in Gondi. By excluding all combined letters, unnecessary in a language with no traditional orthography, I further simplified Nagari, and 32 letters proved sufficient for a clear and unequivocal transliteration of every Gondi text.

Now we had to secure Gond teachers. In a village, high up in the hills where Gond culture is still vigorously alive, I planned to establish a Training Centre for Gonds who, after a period of instruction, were to return to their own villages there to open schools. H. E. H. the Nizam's Government sanctioned the scheme and work began in May

1943 on an experimental scale. I was fortunate to find an enthusiastic collaborator in Mr. S. B. Jogalekar, a young Marathi high-school teacher, who was to help in the composition of Gondi books and teach Gond students Marathi, elementary "Urdu, Arithmetic and general subjects. We knew, of course, no Gondi, but this we hoped to learn from our students.

Marlavai, the village where I had lived for more than a year lies in the very heart of the Gond country, two days' journey from any motor-road and a day's journey from the nearest post-office. We started with a small nucleus of five young Gonds, who had at least some idea of reading and writing. I offered them a monthly retaining fee as long as their training lasted, and a teacher's post in their own village as soon as they proved capable of teaching children to read and write in Gondi and Marathi; their qualifications ranged from a fair fluency in Marathi and some familiarity with Urdu to most elementary knowledge of the Nagari script; indeed, one of the young men could hardly be described as literate. But they were all keen on the work and fondly imagined that in a very short time they would be competent teachers.

I too hoped for quick results, for what Gonds needed was immediate help and encouragement, if nothing concrete, at least moral support. A long-term policy, based only on the teaching of children seemed too slow. It was the adults and half-grown boys whom we wanted to interest in literacy. Laubach's method lucidly explained in his book *Toward a Literate World*³ seemed the obvious approach and we started at once with the composition of Reading Charts for Adults. Helped by simple pictures the adult student is taught by these charts to read a number of key-words, containing consonants in their various -vowel combinations. Our first line comprised the words *kakar* (crow), *kis* (fire), *kurs* (antelope), *ker* (jungle) and *kor* (fowl), demonstrating the

³ New York, 1938.

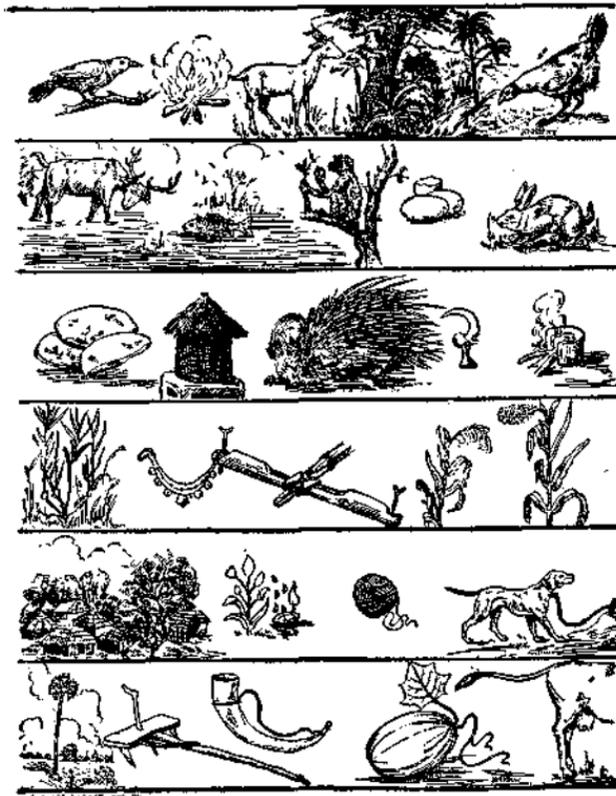
letter *k* in all its forms (seepage 101). After six such lines follow short sentences with a bearing on the picture page, repeating the key-words in various contexts. In three* such charts, each with a picture page and 16 text pages, are introduced all the letters of the alphabet, and as the sentences increase gradually in length, the student becomes familiar with the written form of more and more words. Completing the third chart the student has crossed the first bridge to literacy ; he is now able to read simple texts. But what are the texts which will interest an adult without over-taxing his newly acquired ability to read ? The effort of deciphering is for the newly literate quite great enough; it is too much to expect him to assimilate novel subjects. The more familiar the text is to the student the more encouraging it is to him, who after toiling through the rather boring charts, wants proof that he has really mastered the art of reading. A little self-deception at this stage does no harm. Reading a familiar prayer or song and substituting from memory rather than deciphering the more difficult words gives the newly literate the feeling of competence and achievement, and stimulates him as well as others to further efforts. So I chose for the "First Reader for Adults" a traditional greeting as introduction, short well known songs, a prayer known to every Gond, some riddles and short episodes from myths, and epics and poems often heard from the mouths of Pardhan bards and yet of never fading interest to the Gonds. The book concludes with the only completely unfamiliar piece, the translation of an animal fable of the Chenchus, another aboriginal tribe of Hyderabad.

Adult Education, however, is only one side of the scheme. The main work of the new teachers would be with children, adult Gonds being busy on their fields throughout the day. So we set about writing a Gondi Primer for children and then a First Reader; here the lessons had to be adapted to child mentality and it was not possible to use set

texts from stories or myths. The reading matter had to be newly composed, it had to be instructive without being boring. Now the difficulties of writing even the simplest story in an unwritten language are far greater than one would imagine, even with the most enthusiastic helpers from among the ranks of the tribesmen. One man would suggest a sentence, and all the others would agree, but when the same sentence was read out to another set of Gonds they would object to words, grammatical forms and phonetic rendering. Dialectical differences between villages perhaps not more than 50 miles apart would cause dissension. But the main difficulty is the inability of the speakers of unwritten tongues to spot mistakes or unusual expressions. Through years of school education we have become sensitive to grammatical or phonetic errors; the Gondi speaker will, however, often pass a sentence if only it conveys a clear meaning ; grammatical nuances are ignored by the one Gond and strongly insisted on by the other. It was no easy task to compose the first Gondi Reader, and again and again it had to be checked before the manuscript was read for the press.

Meanwhile the training of our Gond teachers continued. In those first months we laid most emphasis on Marathi, the step from Gondi in Nagari characters to Marathi in Nagari characters being an easy one, but the Gonds themselves clamoured for instruction in Urdu, which, as the official language of the State, is no doubt of even greater practical value. So both languages were taught simultaneously; most of the students had to begin by learning the Persian characters and then, using a children's primer, proceed to the prescribed readers. These readers written for boys whose mother tongue is Urdu are certainly not ideal and are indeed not intended to teach language as well as orthography. Readers in Basic Urdu specially adapted for rural students learning the language, are now under preparation.

Gradually interest for the school grew



काकाड़	कीस	कुरस	केड़ा	कोर
मावु	मीन	मूनज	मेनज	मोलोल
सारी	सीवी	सुइ	सेटेड़	सोदेल
जाड़ी	जीला	जुवा	जेला	जोना
नार	नीइ	नूल	नेय	नोड़े
ताड़ी	तीपून	तुरा	तेरीया	तोकोर

का	की	कु	के	को
मा	मी	मु	मे	मो
सा	सी	सु	से	सो
जा	जी	जु	जे	जो
ना	नी	नू	ने	नो
ता	ती	तु	ते	तो

The Picture Page and the first two Text Pages from the Hyderabad Gondi Reading Charts for Adults

and several of the villagers of Marlavai insisted on their children being taught reading and writing. So, long before we had planned it, a village-school grew up by itself, the children gathered in an empty shed and each day we deputed one of the teacher-candidates to teach them. This served two purposes: it gave the prospective village teachers practical experience, and gave us opportunity to test the value of the Gondi school kboos then only in manuscript. And not only small boys came to be taught but young villagers, some of them married and fathers of children, spent now and then an hour or two in the school.

After three months we felt sufficiently sure of success to increase the number of students under training to ten. Huts had to be built to house them; and we encouraged them to bring their wives to Marlavai. Some came from the plains from areas where Gond culture had already decayed, and for them the awakening of interest and pride in their own folklore was just as important a part of their training as the instruction in Marathi and Urdu. Book-knowledge alone cannot rebuild the Gonds' self-respect, undermined as it is by the contempt that other castes shower on the ways of life of the aboriginals; we had to make them feel that their customs, their religion, and their language were just as good and worth developing as those of other communities. We had to inspire them with an appreciation of the dignity of Gond ritual and the beauty of Gond poetry, music and dance.

Gond songs are to my mind the most enchanting folk-songs of the Deccan, and the great dance festivals of Dandari after the first harvest, when bands of men and women, dressed in all their finery and the most fantastic of head-dresses, move from village to village to sing and dance with their friends, are a glorious revelation of *joie-de-vivre* and sound artistic feeling. But in the plains, where 'advanced' populations have settled among the Gonds, the joy of these festivals is strangled; narrow-minded Hindus and Muslims—as intolerant as rural populations

of backward tracts tend to be—have long ridiculed the dancing of women and there are cases when village officers, abusing their authority, have forbidden dancing altogether. Gradually the Gonds themselves, conforming to their neighbours' prejudices, have begun to believe that dancing and drumming are undignified. A whole world of beauty and an art deeply rooted in Gond culture was dying.

It was amusing to see how at first our students from such 'progressive' areas looked askance at the villagers' dancing, how when we made them join, they moved stiffly and self-consciously, feeling, no doubt, their dignity at stake. But gradually the stiffness and timidity wore off, learning the steps they gained *elan* and soon, though they never achieved the grace of those who had danced since childhood, enjoyed the dancing as much as everyone else.

Similarly, Gond ritual became to them again a living reality; they listened to the Pardhans singing ancient myths which explain and authorize every feast and ceremony, and—what impressed them even more—saw us considering these myths sufficiently important to record them verbally for publication. In many of the areas with mixed populations there has been serious interference with Gond ritual. For the worship of the clan-gods and the great memorial rites in honour of the departed, cow sacrifice is obligatory; but where Hindus are the local power, be it as landlords or village officers, they have exerted pressure on the Gonds to desist from this rite, threatening to treat them as untouchables if they persisted in killing cows. This again gave the Gonds an inferiority complex, and they began half to believe that fulfilment of their religious duties was somehow wrong and lowered their social status.

Marlavai, in the heart of the hills, where no one tampers with Gond ritual, is a good place to combat this feeling. The students see the rites performed in their full form and notice that far from disapproving, we

encourage them to join in the village and clan festivals.

To plant the schools firmly in the soil of Gond culture, we introduced a school opening rite, modelled on the ritual that accompanies such ceremonies as the erecting of a flag in commemoration of an important event. When the children's school at Marlavai was opened, a flag on a huge pole was hoisted on the dance place with the traditional sacrifice of a goat and chickens. And now at the opening of every school similar flag raising ceremony is performed when the villages come together to invoke the blessing of the gods on the new enterprise.

Four months after work had started in Marlavai, the first two school teachers, men who had had some knowledge when they began their training, were sent to open their village schools. They were not finished products, but we wanted experience and also to see the reaction of the villagers. Least education should prove an additional burden on the hard pressed villager, we supplied each master with free slates, school books and stationery, and the response in these first two village schools was so great that, whereas we had catered for 30 pupils in each school, the number of children seeking admission far exceeded this figure, proving that the schools were obviously meeting a felt need.

We did not hurry with the establishing of any more new schools, but waited for the printing of the Gondi book which, owing to the pre-occupation of the Government Press with war-work, was delayed. Thus the next four schools were not open until March 1944, and these were followed by another four in July. By opening yet four more in September 1944, fourteen schools in addition to the Training Centre at Marlavai will be functioning within 16 months of the inauguration of the Scheme. It is hoped that by September 1945, the end of the official Fasli year 1954, 30 Gond schools would be scattered all over the Adilabad District, and that at least a thousand Gond children and a good many adults

would be receiving instruction. Relapse into illiteracy of people, who as children have been several years at school, is one of the great difficulties of education in India. In the Gond Education Scheme it is hoped to avoid this danger; the teachers will live permanently in the localities of their schools, not as outsiders transferred from time to time, but as true members of the village-community and wherever possible they are given land to strengthen the tie between them and the other peasants. Through them reading matter will pass to those no longer at school, and it is unlikely that they will allow any of their pupils with whom they are in daily contact to relapse into illiteracy. They are to be the agency through which progressive methods of husbandry, improved seeds, simple medicines and some ideas of hygiene can reach the villagers. To train them for this function a small agricultural farm is now being attached to the Marlavai centre; there the teachers will learn the value of a modern plough, scientific manuring and high class seeds.

The function of the Centre at Marlavai is not merely to train future village-teachers. Education alone cannot achieve the social and economic rehabilitation of the Gonds. Responsibility must be given to those capable of bearing it, and the Gonds must gradually be enabled to take part in the administration of their villages. In the Adilabad District most village-officers, all *patwari*⁴ and very many *patel*⁵ are non-aboriginals—outsiders who usually do not even reside in the villages which they administer. Anyone familiar with conditions in the backward tracts of rural India, where not all land is settled and the minor Government servants, seldom controlled by touring officers, are a very real power, will realize

⁴ The *patwari* is a Government servant who keeps the village-records and collects the land revenue.

⁵ The *patel* is the village headman recognized and remunerated by Government; keeps the birth and death registers and is responsible for reporting crime.

the grave disadvantage under which this system places the Gonds. Without spokesmen of their own community, they are exposed to many a petty tyranny and exploitation by these non-aboriginals ruling their villages. The ending of this tutelage and the instating of progressive Gonds as village-officers in areas with a predominantly tribal population are as important an aim of the scheme for the rehabilitation of the Adilabad Gonds as the establishment of schools.

Local officials of the Revenue Department have therefore been delegated to instruct the students in Marlavai in revenue matters, the keeping of village-records, the writing of applications and the reading of orders written in the rather high flown Urdu of the Hyderabad administration. The response of the students was excellent ; they understood the vital importance of the revenue laws for the cultivator and the advantage of being able to approach the authorities direct, instead of through the doubtful channels of petition writers. Some of the Gonds proved so quick in grasping the new subjects, that we decided to train them as village-officers. The experiment proved successful. Two of them, Gonds of mature and outstanding personality, who had had some practical experience of village affairs before they came to the Marlavai Training Centre have recently been appointed as *patwari*. This has made a great impression both on the Gonds and on the non-aboriginal settlers. The Gonds saw concrete proof that they were no longer regarded as inferior, as 'junglies', whose interests every one could override with impunity, and the people of other castes began to realize that the Gonds, in many places in overwhelming majority, had ceased to be the inarticulate mass at whose expense any shrewd and not over-scrupulous new-comer could grow rich.

It is therefore not surprising that the scheme met with great local opposition. Affluent landlords, money-lenders, non-aboriginal village officers and many minor

officials feared that educated Gonds would no longer be the pliable, helpless folk whose labour could be bought for a less-than-living wage and whose land could be easily usurped. They were not prepared to relinquish their hold on the aboriginals—the convenient reservoir of cheap labour and easily cheated debtors who seldom put up a fight. We had hardly started work at Marlavai when the wildest rumours spread across the district. First it was whispered that we wanted to educate the Gonds only to recruit them later for the army—whoever came to our school would soon find himself carried off to the war. Hardly had this rumour died out, when there sprang up the utterly baseless allegation that the Gonds were to be christianized. That our policy of encouraging and reviving Gond ritual and mythology stood in glaring contradiction to this rumour was conveniently ignored, and the alleged Christianization of the Gonds caused quite a stir among local officials and even among quite influential people in Hyderabad. Next came the rumour that the schools were my private enterprise and would collapse as soon as I left the district. What then would the school teachers do without employment ? There was a crisis when even some of our students became uneasy, but this too passed away. It is encouraging to note that all these attempts to sabotage the scheme have done no serious damage.⁶

We have been fortunate in receiving the most generous support from Government, and particularly from His Excellency the President, and the Revenue, Finance and Education Members of H. E. H. the Nizam's Executive Council. Indeed, the Education

⁶ Just how strong the opposition is to the raising of the status of the Gonds may be judged from the fact that when the first two Gond *patwari* were appointed all the Hindu *patwari* of the Taluq resigned, refusing to work with "savage" Gonds. Such incidents should serve as an eye-opener to all those who suffer from the illusion that natural contact with progressive populations alone will give the aboriginals a respected position in Indian society.

Scheme had been running barely six months, when Government initiated other far-reaching reforms for the benefit of the aboriginals. Mir Moazam Husain, a member of the Hyderabad Civil Service, was appointed Special Tribes Officer in Adilabad District, charged with the protection of the aboriginals and a Notification passed in May 1944 provided for grants of land, free of cost, to landless aboriginals. When in February 1944 urgent work called me to Assam, the supervision of the Education Scheme was taken over by the Special Tribes Officer and the technical work fell entirely to Mr. S. B. Jogalekar. The best proof of their ability and of the soundness of the scheme's basic principles is that on my return after five months I found the Training Centre flourishing, with eighteen students under training, and that the opening of new village schools had been according to schedule.

For the anthropologist the developments of the Gond Education Scheme are not without interest. They tend to show that the so-called 'primitive' tribes, races who have persisted longer than the rest of humanity in ancient modes of life, are by no means inferior in intellectual power. The progress made by some of the adult students is truly amazing. To quote only one example: sixteen months ago a young Gond of Marlavai who, until then, had led the ordinary peasant's life, ploughing and harvesting with the village folk, began his training as a teacher-candidate. He had never before been to school, but a literate Gond had taught him how to read and write a few words of Marathi. For all practical purposes he was illiterate ; he could make himself understood in the usual bazaar Urdu, but had only the most superficial knowledge of colloquial Marathi. Today he has read up to the fourth standard in Marathi and writes a good and literary style, besides speaking the language fluently ; in Urdu he has reached the third standard and vastly enlarged his vocabulary. Moreover, he has

learnt how to teach Gond both to children and to adults and will in September 1944 take charge of the children's school of Marlavai.

Before such achievements all theories of racial inferiority crumble. It is not lack of intelligence which causes the Indian aboriginal to remain illiterate and unable to defend his interests ; it is lack of opportunity to learn and the determination of the privileged classes of rural society to keep him in a simplicity which is all to their advantage. To hope for a betterment of his position by unguided assimilation to the 'advanced' populations is futile and unrealistic ; assimilated the aboriginals may become, but only to the lowest classes of society which, far more wretched and exploited than he, are yet without the joy of a vital culture, which brightens even the poorest Gond's existence. Help must come from outside, from social workers uninfluenced by vested interests and supported both morally and financially by progressive Governments.

The primary conditions of success are certainly enthusiasm for and sympathetic understanding of the aboriginals. You cannot help a people whom you do not understand, whose culture you do not respect, and I would not advise anyone to start educational work among aboriginals without first having spent many months in studying their culture and ideals. The proletarian of the towns may be led to education merely by the desire to improve his economic position ; the aboriginal, though not insensible to the material advantages of learning, must be inspired by the emphasis on his own culture, pride in which is deeply, if unconsciously, ingrained in his soul ; tell him that his myths and epics will be written down so that he and his children will have sacred books just as the Hindus and the Mussalmans have their scriptures, and he will be more thrilled than if you explain that the knowledge of reading will prevent the money-lender from cheating him. There is a great appreciation

of the beautiful in the Indian aboriginal, and his deep reverence for his ancestors, divine and human, expresses itself in a vivid interest for the myths and epics recounting their feats. Give this sentiment and the love of his native tongue a place in education and you have won the first round in the battle of literacy.

But knowledge and devotion are not enough ; funds are an indispensable factor. The Hyderabad Gond Education Scheme is only in its infancy, but the expenditure in the first sixteen months was just over Rs. 13,000 and in the Fasli year 1354, when a whole-time Urdu teacher will be employed and the number of students raised to twenty, it will exceed Rs. 22,000. All credit goes to H. E. H. the Nizam's Government for meeting these bills, and for harnessing the Government Central Press to the service of the scheme. The basic educational literature is nearly completed and it is hoped that within the next twelve months a substantial Gondi literature of sacred myths, epic poems, historical legends and songs would be available in print. This literature will spread through the villages of the Adilabad District, and the day is perhaps not far off when it will be read also in other parts of Gondwana, inspiring Gonds with pride in their history and love for their own culture.

There may be some who wonder why Gond culture should be regarded as so valuable, why an admittedly ancient way of life should be perpetuated in a world of progress and change. To the social worker, striving for a regeneration of Indian society, the merits of Gond culture—and many other aboriginal cultures—are obvious. In the social life of the Gonds much is

retained in the shape of human values which the most progressive minds in India and in the world consider to be the proudest achievements of man. The Gond is fundamentally convinced of the equality of man ; in his own society there are no classes; the poorest peasant converses with a Gond Raja as an equal. The Gond village is an utterly democratic community ; untouchability is foreign to Gond tradition ; there is not a single allusion to it in all the Gond epics, and it is only under the pressure of Hindu opinion that Gonds refuse certain depressed castes admittance to their houses. The position of women is excellent ; to all practical purposes they are the equals of men ; they are unrestricted in their movements, and free to marry the man of their choice. Pre-puberty marriage is gradually gaining ground, but it does not yet seriously threaten the freedom of the individual, an unconsummated marriage being easily dissolved. Freedom of the individual is indeed the key-note of the Gonds' social order, and in their regard for personal liberty they have nothing to learn from the most advanced nations. It is these principles, the ancient though often blurred and betrayed heritage of man, which should be upheld and protected ; here among the aboriginals we have a society free of class-distinction, of sex inequality, of social evils such as untouchability and the ban on widow-remarriage. In the social sphere progressive and aboriginal India share fundamental ideals ; it is the responsibility of progressive India to save the aboriginals from infection by evils that persist in rural society, and which in the centres of national life are now being slowly and painfully eradicated.

SOCIAL DISORGANISATION IN INDIA

An Address given by Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee, M.A., Ph.D., at the first Convocation of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 1938.

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