THE PRIMITIVE CULTURE OF TRAVANCORE.*

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I

Introduction.

Travancore forms the southwestern-most part of the Deccan and bears the impact of all the racial migrations in the Deccan. It presents a remarkable diversity of physical conditions and may be broadly divided into three distinct belts, each having its own characteristic soil, rainfall, vegetation, and cultivation. They are the Highlands, the Midlands, and the Lowlands. The Highland Division contains a long range of mountains with rich fertile lands at the foot covered mostly with rich evergreen forests. Most of the reserved forests are in this division, and the portions thrown out for cultivation are covered with rubber, tea, and cardamoms. The rainfall ranges from 100 inches in the south and more than 200 inches in the north. This region is most sparsely populated and forms the abode of the primitive tribes, the Malapantârams, the Mannans, the Muthuvans, the Paliyans, the Ûrâli, the Vishavans, the Malapulayans, the Malankuravans, the Kânikkâr and the Malavêtans. The Midland Division is higher in elevation than the Lowland. The soil is fertile and the rainfall varies from 55 to 140 inches per annum. Here are found the Malayarayans, the Ullâtans, the Pulayans, the Parayans, and the Nayadis. In the Lowland region, where the rainfall varies from 35 inches in the south to 110 inches in the north, are found the Thantapulayans in the Sherthala Taluq. It is my purpose to describe the culture of the above primitive tribes.

It has been said that differences of geographical features are attended by differences in their customs and manners, and these again by differences in the supply of water, game, and fish, in fact, of all the necessaries and conveniences of life. The truth of the statement may be observed from the life of the Kânikkâr. The average rainfall to the south of Nedumangad is about 85 inches, while it is 107 inches to the north in the vicinity of Kula-thupuzha. In the south the forests are of a deciduous character, while to the north they are more evergreen and better watered. The supply of food

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is here more stable and abundant, as they have taken to wet cultivation. They therefore enjoy greater advantages in the struggle for existence over those to the south of Nedumangad, as they have abundance of water, game, and fish, and of the fruits of the earth. These favourable conditions have reacted on their life. In the vicinity of Kulathupuzha, they have taken to wearing clothing, but to the south of Pâlođe, they wear very scanty clothing and their habitations are ruder in type.

*Clothing and Decoration.*

Primitive man was in a state of nudity, but in the course of progressive evolution, he became subject to a sense of shame which was not in him. This sense of shame which is a by-product of modern civilization became more and more a simple manifestation of the male. Clothing seems to have originated in the decorative impulse. The first and most primitive form of clothing was to cover exposure. As typical of the level which has been classified as the fig-leaf state of society, there are several tribes in Travancore who have only recently advanced beyond that state. The Malapantârams are a tribe in the hunting stage of civilization. "The barks of trees are their clothing, and rocks, caves, and hollows of trees, their homes. Mr. Evans observed the Malavêtâns 'wearing dresses of leaves'. The Kânikkâr call them 'Tôlvêtâns,' which is reminiscent of the leafy garment they wore in former times. Jacob Canter Visscher has recorded that the Ullâtâns wore no clothing and regarded the tiger as their uncle. The Kânikkârs were as nature made them nude with only a semblance of dress. Rev. Mateer says that 'men almost go naked, having only a few inches of cloth round their loins, and a small cloth on the head. The Thantapulaya women formerly wore a thanta garment which covered their front and back. The garment is made of the leaves of a kind of sedge called thanta (Isolopes) which are cut into lengths, woven at one end and tied round the waist so that they hang below the knees and cover the front and the back. The thanta garment has now vanished. The Vêtîtuvâns of North Malabar, the Juangs of Chota Nagpur, the Sakai and the Jakuns of the Malay Peninsula wore dresses of leaves. Owing to frequent contact with the people of the plains and the influence of missionaries and work in the plantations, the leafy garment has been discarded.

A German scholar propounded the theory according to which he divided clothing into two types, tropical and arctic.

The first of these is based on the waist cloth or girdle which varies between the string of beads and the cloak as two extremes. The Kânikkâr of Neduvangad even now wear the scantiest of clothing. It consists of an
undercloth held in position by a string tied round the loins. Over this is suspended in front an apron 2½ feet broad a loose end of which is tucked up into the girdle tightly round the loins. They are better clad when they are in contact with the people of the plains.

Closely connected with clothing are the mutilations and deformations which are intended to serve the purpose of adornment. Among the Malavêtans of Travancore is found the most interesting custom of chipping the upper incisor teeth in the form of short serrated cones. On being asked whether they have any tradition about the custom of tooth-filing, they replied that "it is to distinguish our caste. Our God Chathan will be angry if we neglect the custom." The operation is done by men for men. Before chipping, the outer edges of the teeth are smeared with chunnam. It is supposed to make chipping easier. The chipping is done with a small knife or bill-hook. The girl to be operated rests her head on the lap of a woman who holds it firmly. A third woman takes a small knife and chips away the teeth. The custom is found among the Kâdars of the Cochin State, the Malays, and among several tribes in Africa and Australia.

The Kânikkâr of Kallar also tattoo to enhance their personal beauty and it is done by a female member of the community, single-handed.

With males, tattoo assumes the circular form, while it is half-moon in the case of women. Lamp-black or charcoal powder of cocoanut shell is mixed up with breast milk of the woman. She pricks the skin on the forehead with needles and it is painted over the pricked part every alternate day for early healing. Tattooing is found among the Kâdars and Malcers of the Cochin State and the Todas of the Nilgiris.

The women have dilated ear-lobes among the Mannans, the Vēttuvans, the Malankuravans, the Malayarayans, the Ullâtans, the Thantapulayans, and the Vishavans and the Malapantârâms. Ear-tubes of reed or brass are worn. String beads adorn the neck of women.

Food-quest.

Food is the urgent and recurrent need of individuals. It dictates their activities in relation to their land at every stage of their economic development, fixes their locality for residence, and determines the extent from which maintenance may be drawn, and the duration thereon depends on the food supply. The South Indian hills have still evergreen forests yielding abundance of fruits and tubers, and streamlets, abundance of fish. There are animals for game. The Malapantârâms are a small tribe in the hunting stage of civilization. They are found in high forests where the average rainfall is about 180 inches per annum. Owing to luxuriance of vegetation,
they are still within the tyranny of the jungle. They live in families of two or three in a locality. The smaller the number, the easier is the supply of food obtained. They remain for one week in a locality and then move on to another, when the food supply is exhausted. Each pack has its own jurisdiction for its wandering and food supply. They do not allow another of their tribe to encroach on their domain. If any one dares to do so, it shall be at the risk of his life. They may average one per square mile, and they live on *Arennga Wightii, Caryota urens*, and on *Curcuma Augustifolia*. The Pambu Pulayans of Anjanad live on snakes. The Kâdars and Malisirs of the Cochin State and the Malavêtans live on various edible roots, bamboo seeds, and others. The Kheriyas, the Birhors of Hazaribagh, and the Irulans, of the Nilgiris, wander through jungles, and subsist on yams, honey, and tubers of various kinds. Slender are the ties which fasten them to agriculture.

The Kânikkâr, the Malayarayans, the Ullâtans, the Úrâlis, the Mannans and the Muthuvans are nomadic agriculturists owing to diminution of edible roots and game. They have a clear conception of tribal lands. Agriculture is adopted as an adjunct to the chase. It enables them to live in one place and accumulate necessaries of life. The tribes on lower elevations have rice as their staple food, while the Malapulayans, the Mannans, the Muthuvans, and the Paliyans live on ragi and rice. All of them eat the flesh of sambhar, jungle squirrel, black monkey, and wild fowl. They also eat crabs, rats and fish.

The Úrâlis do not drink cow products. As William Crooke says, it may be that they regard it as an excrement like the Dravidian tribes of Central India. The Ullâtans do not drink buffalo milk, as they fear that their gods would get annoyed and would not respond to their appeals. There is no taboo against cow’s milk. Among the Kânikkâr, there has been an age-long taboo against the use of milk. A Kânikkâran used to vomit and get headache, if he drank milk. The Muthuvans, the Mannans, and the Kânikkâr have taken to the use of coffee, while tea has become indispensable to the Úrâlis. Living as the Úrâlis, the Muthuvans, and the Mannans are on high elevation, they are fond of arrack. In the words of Montesque, the prevalence of intoxication in different parts of the earth is proportionate to the cold and humidity of the air. It may be that a gloomy temperament and cheerless life may induce people to artificial pleasures produced by drink.

**II**

*The Production of Fire.*

The production of food is connected with the production of fire for which the savages exercise their ingenuity in a variety of ways. Like the Andamanese, the Malapantârams were ignorant of the art of making fire. Tradition
has it among the Kānikkār that Sage Narada it was who taught them how to make fire by means of hand-drill. Sticks of Unnam (*Grewia tiliacifolia*) and *Ixora Coryfrilia* are used. A slot $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep is made in the centre of one stick. A man keeps it in position under his big toe, takes a round stick of hard wood 18 inches long, holds it in a vertical position keeping one end of it in the slot, and turns it quickly backwards and forwards with both his hands. A portion of the wood dust produced in the process remains in the slot and the heat generated by friction ignites it. This process was in vogue among the Malavētans and the Ullātans.

The Kānikkār also make fire by the flint and steel method. Pieces of flint and steel and some floss of *Careyota urens* are the materials required. The floss is held near the flint and the latter is struck with the steel. The friction produces sparks which ignite the floss. This process is resorted to in cold weather. The method of making fire with flint and steel is in vogue among the Muthuvans, the Mannans, the Malayarayans, and the Vishavans. It has almost died out among the Malapulayans, the Paliyans, the Malavētans, and the Ullātans. The apparatus is commonly known as chakmuk, and is so known among the ‘Kādars’ of the Cochin State, and the Badagas of Nilgiris. Safety matches have now taken its place.

*Habitations.*

Natural shelters, namely caverns, overhanging rocks, holes on the ground, and hollow trunks may have been the abode of primitive man. The Malapantārams and the Kānikkār may once have occupied them. The Thantapulayans are also called Kuzhi Pulayans in memory of their having taken shelter in burrows in former times.

The Malapantārams make the simplest of dwellings. They live together in rock shelters or under breakwinds made of junglewood posts and thatched with plantain leaves which will accommodate 2 persons. The hut is circular and conical, and the floor is on a level with the ground, and has hardly room for a husband, wife and child. Boys and girls are housed for the night in separate sheds close to the parental roof. The Chenchus live in caves and the Birhors put up leaf sheds in the form of a low Kumbas or raw shelters.

The Kānikkār have a better type of dwelling. The huts are wide apart in some places. Bamboo forms the chief building material. The floor of the hut is on a level with the ground. Tree-houses are found where wild elephants roam about in parts of Klamala Reserve. A single bamboo with shoots on the sides, cut short, serves as a ladder. According to Lord Avebury, many savage tribes live in lake dwellings, and the Garos of Assam and the Kānikkār of Travancore are reckoned by him to live in dwellings 8 to 10 feet from the
ground, the object being protection from man and wild animals. A survival of this custom was found among the Kānakkār of Mothiramala, where two dwellings were seen by me. Dr. Keane does not attach much importance to pile dwellings. He does not agree that this custom was peculiar to the backward races. They are more sanitary than other huts in which they dwell. One feature of the domestic architecture of the lower culture is the institution of the bachelor-hall, where the young men of the community sleep and live. It is an important means of preserving social life. It is found to be in a conspicuous building among the Kānkkār in Mothiramala, Chembikunnu and Kottur. Unmarried girls remain in a hut vacated for them.

The Muthuvan, the Mannan, and the Paliyan huts are formed together in a group, as they are living on higher elevations. The idea of defence is the first motive, in the grouping of huts into villages. Each village has a common place of worship, a chavadi for visitors, and separate dormitories for the unmarried boys and girls. The Ūrāli huts are isolated. Each man has a tree-house which is about 50 feet above ground. They spend their nights in it for fear of elephants. Each hamlet has a common tree-house reserved for women in menses. There is a common tree-house as granary. The huts of the Malayarayans, the Ullātans, and the Malapulayans are of an improved type, as the floor is reised from the ground, and as they also have mud walling. The Vētans, the Malankuravans, and the Thantapulayans live in miserable huts. The institution of bachelor-hall is found among the Porojas of Vizagapatam agency, the Nagas, the Lusheis, the Andamanese, and others.

Furniture and Utensils.

The primitive tribes of Travancore live in the region of the bamboo and the reed. These materials are used for a variety of purposes. There is a family likeness among all articles made by tropical peoples and this is accounted for by the uniformity of climate and environment. Mats made of reeds form their only furniture among the Malayarayans, the Muthuvsans, and the Ūrālis. The domestic utensils consist of a few bamboo tubes whose internodes provide them with necessary bottom, a few cane baskets for keeping grain, and some brass vessels.

Weapons and Tools.

Primitive man ransacked his own environment and got the best out of it which his grade of culture was capable of extracting. His prime necessity was quest for food, and he was more a gatherer than a hunter. This necessitated the use of some weapon. The digging stick is still used by the Mala-pantāram, the Malavētan, the Vishavan, and others to collect wild roots and
tubers. The Kānikkār who have been using the wooden hoe for hoeing up the soil and the digging spud for digging up wild roots and tubers have taken to the use of the axe, bill-hook, and the mammatty.

How primitive man acquired the bow and arrow is not easily imaginable. It is just possible that it is the invention of the Negrito, as it is found in the Andamans among them, where they are in a state of hostile isolation. The bow is still used by the Kānikkār, the Ürāli, the Muthuvan, and the Ullātan to kill animals which do damage to their crops. The bow is made of a single stave. It is made of Nara (Polyalthia fragrans) or bamboo. The string is made of the fibre of the adventitious roots of Ficus and is tied to notches at the end of the stave. The arrow is made of reed. To steady the flight of the arrow, three rows of fowl's feather are stuck into it with gum. They say that their ancestors were a stronger people and that they used to kill bigger animals. They have grown weak since they took to the use of the gun.

The Kānikkār also use the pellet-bow. They use pellets of stone which are flung with great force. The stave is made of bamboo. It is wider at the centre. It is used for killing small game and for driving away monkeys.

The Muthuvans and the Vishavans kill birds by means of the blow-gun. It is made of reed, and is 50 inches long with a diameter of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. The dart is 5 inches long pointed at one end and winged at the other. The dart is propelled by the breath of the person and covers a distance of 50 to 75 feet. It is found among the Muthuvans of the Palni Hills and the Malays. Dr. Hutton thinks that there is no possibility at all of these blow-guns having come from the Malay Peninsula, though Mr. Foulke said that he had seen on the Madras coast blow-guns which were admittedly imported from Malay Peninsula. Dr. Hutton is of opinion that the presence of the blow-gun may possibly be credited to the Proto-Australoid. One thing is evident. It is found wherever large reeds grow.

The Vishavans use the Muppalli or three-pronged iron for spearing fish. The modern hill-tribes are aware of the use of iron.

Exogamy.

Sir James Frazer calls Southern India the classic home of exogamy. The social organisation of the hill tribes of Travancore is built on the foundation of exogamy. Primitive people attached the greatest importance to the rules of exogamy, and the punishments inflicted for any breach thereof were very severe. It is a common rule among them never to marry a woman of their own tribal group, but always to marry a woman of a group different from their own. This means that there must be at least two sub-divisions
within a tribe. The clan may be defined as a unilateral kinship group, and traces kinship through either parent to the total exclusion of the other. The Malapantārams live in groups of two or three families on each hill. Each local group is exogamous. The Kānikkār who inhabit the interior regions of Aryanad, Kallar, and Kottur are so backward that their conditions of life have had the effect of keeping down numbers and retarding social progress. They possess the most highly developed types of exogamy. In the vicinity of Kulathupuzha, where they have been under more civilizing influences, there are only two clans. The men of each half (Mūttillom) are obliged to take their wives from the other half (Mēnilom). The effect of the division of the tribe into two exogamous classes with all the children of the same mother assigned to the same half is obviously to prevent the marriage of brothers and sisters. With a two clan system and matrilineal descent, a man's mother-in-law belongs to the clan of women who are marriageable to him, since she belongs to the same clan as her daughter, and Frazer suggested that the custom of avoidance of mother-in-law grew up in order to prevent sexual intercourse between them which the system could not bar. In less developed areas, the Kānikkār are divided into two phratries in Neyyathunkara and Villavancode taluks, each phratriy having three to five clans (illoms). The partial breakdown of the exogamous classes is seen among the Ūrālis, the Ullātans, and the Malayarayans. Interesting stories are current among the Kānikkār as to the origin of the clan system. The Kānikkār of Mothiramalā say that their ancestors felt an abhorrence to the promiscuous life that they had in the past. With a view to evolve order out of this chaotic social condition, Illampalli Muthan and Thiruvampalli Muthan decided that there should be a dual organisation of the Kānikkār, the Annanthambi phratriy and Machamby phratriy. Each phratriy has five clans.

Risley classified the names of exogamous clans as eponymous, territorial, and titular or totemistic. Territorial names are given among the Vishavans and the Mannans, and the names are after some village. All the tribes but the Vishavans are characterised by cross-cousin marriage. Among the Vishavans, the division of the tribe into 8 clans is said to bar the marriage of cross-cousins. They say that the prohibition of cross-cousin marriage is due to the fact that cousinsanguinous marriages are fraught with danger.

The system of tracing kinship through the mother is characteristic of all the hill-tribes except the Malapantārams and the Malapulayans. No man is allowed to marry a woman of his own clan. The reason for prohibition is to be found in the legal fiction that all members of the same clan are of one blood. According to Driberg, "blood cannot mate with related blood."
As a woman’s children always belong to the clan different from that of her brother’s children, it follows that these children who are cross-cousins can marry according to the rules of exogamy. It is significant that a child is named after a member of the mother’s clan. Under the system of female descent, there was no transfer of clanship. The children belonged to the mother’s clan.

III

Sex and Marriage.

Marriage, both in theory and practice, is in the melting pot. It has been built up on a system of human needs and conditions, which have hitherto been static. There are everywhere three motives which lead to marriage, mutual sympathy, the desire for progeny, and the necessity for mutual aid in the struggle for existence. Primitive marriage was dictated by the inexorable population need. Travancore is one of the ideal places for the study of primitive marriage institutions. Marriage is the joining together of a man and a woman. Before marriage, the sexes were separated by sexual taboo. At marriage, they are joined together by the same ideas worked to their logical conclusion in reciprocity of relations. Those who are mutually taboo now break the taboo. Speaking generally, marriage is the source of the family, the safeguard of public morals, the strength of the nation.

Cross-Cousin Marriage.

Exogamy is found among most of the primitive tribes of Travancore. The division of a tribe into exogamous clans is a well recognised phenomenon. A man may marry the daughter of his mother’s brother or his father’s sister. The practice of cross-cousin marriage may have had its origin on economic grounds. It serves the purpose of keeping together related families. Briffault thinks that the idea of distance and ignorance of the tribes in other localities with whom they can enter into conjugal relations must also be another reason. In his opinion, girls are never given in marriage to young men who live in distant places. Among matriarchal and patriarchal families cross-cousin marriage keeps not only the families together, but also prevents disposal of property. In a society where inheritance runs through females, a father wishes to provide for his son, and generally marries him to his sister’s daughter. Outside Travancore, it is found among the Irulans, the Kurubas, and other tribes.

Forms of Marriage.

The form of marriage varied from time to time and from society to society. The earliest form of marriage is marriage by capture. A relic of this custom is found among the Muthuvans and Mannans. A peculiar
practice among the Muthuvans is that, after the marriage is settled, the
bridegroom forcibly takes away the maiden from her mother’s house when
she goes out for water or firewood and lives with her separately for a few
days in some secluded part of the forest. They then return home, unless
they are, in the meanwhile, searched for and brought back by their relatives.
Among the Mannans also, it sometimes happens that a woman, if she refuses
to return the love of a man, is forcibly taken away by him. They then live
together in the forest for ten or twelve days, and are searched for and taken
to the hamlet. The offence is generally condoned, and they are allowed to
live as husband and wife. Elopement is also a recognised institution among
this tribe, and is resorted to, if parents object to the union of man and woman.
Marriage by capture is found among the Malayalis of North Arcot and the
Mullu Kurumbans of Waynad, and the Gonds of Central India.

Marriage by service is an earlier form of marriage by purchase. It is
prevalent among the Paliyans and the Mannans. Among them, the bride-
groom lives with his future father-in-law for six months to one year, and
renders service to him before the marriage is consummated. It is found
among the Esquimo, North and South American Indians, and Siberian
peoples. It is a substitute for marriage by purchase, where the purchaser
is too poor to pay the bride-price.

Marriage by purchase is the recognised form of marriage not only among
the least civilised races, but also among the peoples who have reached the
higher degree of culture. The bride-price which is generally given to the
father goes to meet either wholly or partly the expenses of the marriage.
It is found among the Malavêtans, the Malankuravans, the Thantapulayans,
and the Malapulayans. A portion of it goes to the mother and the maternal
uncle and aunt among the Thantapulayans. Sometimes marriage by purchase
may not be really so, for the bridal gift may be an expression of good-will
or ability to keep a wife and may serve as a protection to the wife against
ill-usage, and to the husband against misbehaviour on the part of the wife.
This is the case among the Malavêtans and Malankuravans.

Marriage by exchange of sisters is found among the Úrâlis, and the
Ullâtans. No man can have a wife unless he has a sister whom he can give
in exchange. He cannot purchase a wife from her parent by giving the
equivalent in property of some kind. The age of the girl to be given in
exchange is of no consideration. Any Úrâlí who has no sister to offer in
exchange has to lead a life of single blessedness. This custom prevails among
the Madigas of Nilgiris, the Bhotias of Almora and some tribes in
Baluchistan.
Most of the primitive tribes are monogamous and the family is regarded as the corner stone of society. Weddings are generally at dusk among most of them. The custom is due to a desire to protect the bride and bridegroom from dangers. The maternal uncle plays an important part in the settlement of marriage among the matriarchal tribes. Polygamy is in vogue among the Ürālis, the Kānikkār, the Malayarayans, the Paliyans, and the Malapulayans. Polyandry in its fraternal form is found among the Malayarayans, the Ullātans, the Paliyans, and the Ürālis. All the tribes prohibit pre-marital intercourse between the sexes. Pre-puberty coition is permitted among the Vishavans, the Kānikkār, and the Chīngannivētans. Early intercourse is injurious to health. The chastity of women is highly valued, and any breach of it is severely punished.

The Family.

The family is the institution charged with the duty of racial perpetuation and includes wife, husband, and their offspring as also other relatives who are charged with the rights and duties towards parents and offspring. The family is the basis of the whole structure, economic, ethical, moral, and religious. Among the Malapantārans, the family consists of father, mother, and children. The union is founded on the enjoyment of such bodily functions as copulation, gestation, and lactation. The family bonds are loose and domestic affection is wanting between husband and wife. They quarrel in no time, and the husband deserts the wife. The difficulty of living is said to be the cause of want of attachment. Just for a measure of rice, a Malapantāram is said to have given away one of his children. Instances of desertion of children are not wanting even now. Family bonds are stronger among all the tribes who have taken to agriculture.

Property.

Closely connected with marriage and family is property, the three kinds of which are personal, family, and tribal. Where agriculture is practised, the lands belong to the Community. This in due course leads to the evolution of private property as a result of effective occupation. According to Westermarck, the ordinary custom of savages is that the dead man's property is inherited by his own children, if kinship is reckoned through the father and by his sister's children, if kinship is through the female. The right to inherit a dead man's property was certainly co-extensive with the duty of performing his obsequies and offering sacrifices to his spirit. Among the Ürālis, the nephew is the chief mourner. This indicates the former prevalence of matriarchate among the Ürālis. Now the children of the dead man inherit property, because they have been previously in joint possession of it, for possession leads to ownership. It is interesting to observe that the nephew
is the chief mourner among the Thantapulayans and he observes pollution for 16 days. The wife and children do not observe any pollution. Inheritance is in the female line among them. The nephew is the chief mourner among the Muthuvans and the Vishavans, and inheritance is in the female line among them. Among the Kānikkār, the nephew washes the corpse above the waist, and below this, the son. It is therefore a mixture of matriarchy and patriarchy among them, as it is among the Malavētans, the Paliyans. Inheritance is in the male line among the Malapantārams, among whom property devolves on sons in common. Where they are under civilizing influences, it is a mixture of matriarchy and patriarchy.

**Group Solidarity.**

It is a characteristic feature of primitive society that a member of a tribe considers that he forms part and parcel of the tribe and never regards himself as a separate unit. The Malapantārams are in the hunting stage of civilization. Their low economic condition is reflected in their simple organisation, which has little cohesion, because it must be prepared to break up when its food supplies decrease even little. The larger the amount of territory necessary for the support of a given community the looser the connection between land and people, and the lower the type of social organisation. In Pathanapuram, where they are under more civilizing influences, they have a headman called "Mūppan".

The Kānikkār are knit together by social, religious, and political ties. The village is the unit in all matters and there is no room for the play of individualistic tendencies. Villagers work jointly in clearing jungle, burning debris, and in all magico-religious ceremonies performed for securing a bountiful harvest. The headman used to wield considerable power in the past and settle all their disputes. He is the final authority in all matters, social, religious, and agricultural.

The Muthuvans have the Mēlvāka as their supreme lord and Kiliparambu forms his headquarters. Inferior to him is the Mūthākka. On the Cardamon Hills, each village has its own headman and village affairs were regulated by a council of elders. Their supreme lord is Mēlvāka. References are made to a dignitory lower in rank. Under him comes the Thalayari who has jurisdiction over two or three villages. Then follow the Kularan and Sundarapandi who are equivalents of village chiefs.

The Malavētans, the Malankuruvans, the Pulayans, and the Thantapulayans were slaves of the soil till 1854, when they were emancipated. Even now, their condition has not undergone any material improvement. Their masters settle their disputes.
Taboo.

Taboo forms the basis of the society among the primitive tribes of Travancore. The primitive conception of danger appears in two forms, the prediction of evil influences and the imposition of taboos. These appear with greater force at their sexual crisis, that is, at puberty, during menstrual periods, pregnancy, and after child-birth. All contacts are contagious. The avoidance of contact is the most prominent feature attached to cases of taboo.

At puberty, it is a widespread custom that neither sex may see each other. With the onset of puberty, the sexual question appears, which emphasises the separation, both natural and taboo, and at the ceremonies of initiation, boys are taken away from the mother’s sphere and female associations. A common form of this custom is the institution of public buildings which combine the features of a dormitory and a club for the use of youngmen, so that they may not see nor have any association with females. Such dormitories are found among the Muthuvans and Mannans. Contact with women is dangerous, causing weakness and effeminacy.

The motive for the restrictions commonly imposed on girls at puberty is the deeply engrained dread which the primitive man entertains of menstrual blood. He fears it at all times, but especially on its first appearance. To obviate this danger, a Malapantāram girl at puberty is lodged in a seclusion-shed about 100 yards from the main hut for sixteen days. Among the Urbālis, when a girl attains puberty, she is lodged in a remote tree-house reserved for the purpose from seven to twelve days. She bathes on the eighth day, moves on to a second tree-house in the vicinity and remains there for two days in seclusion. On the third day, she bathes and returns home, when seven jack spoonfuls of cowdung mixed with water and oil are poured over her head by her uncle and brothers in front of the hut.

According to Pliny, the touch of a menstrual woman turned wine into vinegar, blighted crops, killed seedlings, blasted gardens, brought down the fruit from the tree. The object of secluding women at menstruation is to neutralise the dangerous influences which are supposed to emanate from them at such times. A Malapantāram woman in menstruation remains in a seclusion-shed for seven days. It is about 100 yards from the hut. During the period, the husband is forbidden to ascend a hill or climb a tree for gathering honey. Woe befalls him, if he acts differently. The mode of removing contagion is purification by bath at the end of the period of pollution. The separation of the sexes during menstruation is a characteristic feature of all the hill-tribes of Travancore. Among the Urbālis, a woman remains secluded in a remote tree-house until discharge ceases. She then bathes and goes to a
second tree-house in the vicinity. She remains there for two days and returns home after bath on the third day. Great harm is feared for crops, if she goes before discharge.

The phenomenon of child-birth partakes of the mysterious and supernatural. The Malapantārams regard the pollution of child-birth as much more dangerous than that of menstruation, and a woman is confined to a shed about two or three hundred yards away from the hut. Pollution lasts for sixteen days. During this period, the husband cannot do any work. He cannot go out for hunting or for gathering honey. Among the Īrālis, child-birth takes place in a tree-house remote from the habitation. One of the reasons why the actual birth of a child and menstruation are considered dangerous is that blood is regarded as the life force, it being held that the soul or the spirit is in the blood, and a woman because of her fertility is more highly charged with this mystical force than man. The slightest contact with feminine blood is regarded with the utmost horror. It may be observed that the main line of development of ritual is from insulation of evil influences to the conciliation of beneficent powers. The dangers feared are insulated during the process of the function, the expulsion of the danger is performed for the last time, and is of a purificatory character.

During the period of agricultural operations, the Ullātans lead a celibate life. Since they live in the domain of Sāṣa and other hill deities, they abstain from all sexual intercourse. It is said that a woman in menses was touched by her husband, who then went to hoe up the soil. He lost his eyes. It is said that the shadow of such a man falling on a crop in the field will not only blight the crop, but is detrimental to his life. It is said that sexual cleanliness is demanded of those who have anything to do with corn. It seems that sexual intercourse and menstruation discharges are looked upon as polluting on account of the mysterious propensities of such matter. The defiling effects are connected with the notion that woman is an unclean being.

IV

Religion.

The primary needs of primitive man are to secure the increase and multiplication of the resources of food, animal and vegetable. It has been said that the more varied the course of nature throughout the year, the more persistent probably will be man's efforts to regulate it for his benefit and the firmer will be his faith in his power to do so. In other words, the more marked the change of seasons, the greater will tend to be the volume of magic and the belief in its efficacy. Where nature is bounteous and her course is uniform or varies little from year's end to year's end, man will
neither need nor desire to alter it by magic or otherwise to suit his convenience. In the vicinity of Kulathupuzha, where there is heavier rainfall and permanent paddy cultivation, the Kānikkār have given up their magico-religious ceremonies at the time of the jungle-clearing, the breaking of soil, and the sowing of seed, as they have given up their primitive methods of cultivation, and as their harvest is more assured. To the south of Pālode, the Kānikkār are nomadic agriculturists. Since their food-supply is left to the uncertainties of the weather, they make their offerings at every stage. Their magico-religious ceremonies consist of two orders of procedure, the one extended to please, attract, and conciliate, and the other to avert and exercise the harm which the gods have the power to inflict. They make offerings from start to finish in their agricultural operations to deities and spirits. Their propitiation is very exacting and leaves hardly anything for the votaries to lead a life free from want. Agriculture in the lower culture is no simple business, but is a complex of many elements, sacrifices, taboos, and dances. It is the association of these elements that for the lower culture produces the results. It sees the hand of God in the changing aspects of nature and propitiates him in all stages of agricultural operations.

The primitive tribes are animists. Their attitude to the supernatural is one of reverential fear in the presence of certain supernatural powers and beings and their propitiation or conciliation to arrest ill-will. The worship of spirits on particular crests of hills is seen among the Muthuvans, the Ullātans, the Malayarayans, the Paliyans, and others. A Malapantāram dreads jungle deities so much that, if he gets polluted on the way, he bathes before he enters the jungle. Failure brings on him the wrath of the gods who punish him with illness. The Konga Malayans of Cochin worship the two demoniacal deities named after the rocks in which they reside. The village priest is generally the headman, but in some tribes, there is a medicine-man or plāthi among the Kānikkār and the Ūrālis, who cures all ailments and practises black art. Propitiation is congregational and is intended to restore men's confidence when shaken by crisis.

Ancestor-Worship.

Ancestor-worship is one of the great branches of the religion of mankind. It is prevalent among most of the primitive tribes of Travancore. The Malayarayans make miniature dolmens, the whole forming a box a few inches square, and on the death of a member of the family, the spirit is supposed to pass, as the body is being buried, into a brass or similar image which is shut in the vault. A few offerings of milk, rice, and toddy, and ghee are made, a torch is lighted, the figure is placed inside the cell, and the cover-stone hastily placed on. All then leave. On the anniversary day, similar offerings
are made. The stone is lifted off and hastily closed. The spirit is supposed to be enclosed. None venture to touch the cell at any other time. Ancestor-spirits go by legion among the Kānikkār.

The Muthuvans, the Mannans, the Malayarayans, and the Kānikkār show signs of the influence of Hinduism on their religion. Among the Muthuvans, a raised thatti is put up in a thatched shed away from the habitations. A cane and a bundle of peacock feathers are placed over it. These are emblematic of God Subramania. The function of primitive religion is much more direct, concrete, and practical. It is not to interpret life, but to obtain those things which are reckoned needful to its existence.

Occupation.

It has been said that social and religious progress has spread or is spreading from the sea, inland, and not in the reverse direction. The interior is less open to foreign influences and is more tenacious of old ways. This is true of the primitive tribes of Travancore. Along highway communications, the Kānikkār are more under civilizing influences and have adopted a stabler mode of wet cultivation in the vicinity of Kulathupuzha. In less accessible areas in Neduvangad and Vilavancode, they are less open to foreign influence and more tenacious of their old ways. They are here nomadic agriculturists and their whole energy is consumed in an ever-increasing struggle for bare existence. In the uplands, cultivation is migratory. In the lowlands, it is permanent. On the hills, rice is grown on the dry system. The coincidence of the dry system with the migratory cultivation is not accidental. This method of cultivation occupies the greater part of their time and leaves hardly any time for the satisfaction of their other needs. The Vishavans, the Mannans, the Muthuvans, the Īrālis, and the Paliyans are nomadic agriculturists. The Muthuvans have also terraced cultivation in Anjanad valley. Ward and Conner speak of numberless little glades, some adapted to rice cultivation. A mountain environment often occasions a forced development of this form of agriculture among people who otherwise linger on the outskirts of cultivation. The Malapantārams are alone in the hunting stage of civilisation. Their simple and monotonous savage economy permits of no concentration of population. The smaller the number, the easier is the supply of food assured. Professor Carl Bucher calls the first-stage as the individual search for food. Where food-supply was abundant, little effort was required to secure a livelihood. A very effective bar to progress was caused by the migratory character of the hunting community which depended on the seasonal movements of the game or scarcity. The Thantapulayans, the Karavazhi Pulayans, the Vētans, and the Malankuruvans live by
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the sweat of their brows. Most of the tribes evoke the admiration of the people of the plains by the manner in which they climb trees and collect honey. They also collect minor forest produce and give it to the contractor who supplies them with rice and other articles of food. They also take part in the capture of elephants on the hills.

Dr. Hutton suggests that there are many elements which suggest the Indonesian area—seclusion at puberty, tree-houses, bark cloth (maraviri) which however is apparently not treated after being stripped from the tree, the scissor's snare for small game, and the use of Acacia intisia as soap. The matrilineal system is prevalent at any rate as a survival, and a very strong one, though inheritance in the hill-tribes is usually on the Makkathayam system. Inheritance is even now matrilineal among the Muthuvans, the Mannans, the Vishavans, the Pulayans, the Thantapulayans, while it is a mixture of matriarchy and patriarchy among others. It is interesting to observe that the hill-tribes feel that the forests were theirs and that the white man and the people of the plains encroached on their rights to such an extent that they have no place to procure their food. The advent of the European planters created a new situation. "The fate of the hill-kings" says Mr. Honiss "is rather sad. For ages past, they have boasted of being the undisputed lords of the primeval forests. The elephant and the tiger were their only foes, but with snares and traps they could hold their own against their enemies. But they could not resist the onward march of a superior race. The planter approaches them in a peaceable way offering wages for their hire; but demanding as his right the land he has purchased. The proud men of the woods decline to herd themselves with coolies and work like common people. As soon as the planter's axe is heard, the hill-kings pack all their traps and desert their homes to establish themselves in another valley. In this way they have been driven from hill to hill and valley to valley, until some have found a safe resting place in the jungles of the low-lands of Travancore."

The fate of the hill-kings continues to be sad. They are still in a state of chronic want. They are still nomadic agriculturists driven to more uncongenial lands which yield them hardly enough to run their home for the whole year. The level of their economic life is very low. They are perpetually in debt with low countrymen.

Importance of Anthropology.

The primitive culture of Travancore has been described so far. The practical value of this culture lies in the fact that it has a relation upon the intellectual, industrial, and social state of the cultured peoples. It explains
how our forebears passed from savagery to civilization. Every custom now in vogue among advanced society of men has its history, short or long, and can be traced back to primitive times. In the interest of posterity, the preservation of this culture is of vital importance. Anthropologists lay stress on the dangers inherent in primitives being taught by missionaries and others to despise themselves and their own religion and tribal custom. Cases of a large number of tribes who are dying out are coming into prominence. The Korwas, the Gonds, and Bhils are some instances in point. The operation of stringent forest laws is said to be one cause. The fertility of primitive tribes in Travancore is declining. Most of the tribes have but small families, the number of children ranging from one to three per family.

In attempting to improve the condition of primitive tribes, we must build on the tribal past through the agency of the tribes themselves. The attempt to aid and foster them should be the concern of the Government and should not be delegated to other agencies, though the legislature is insistent on its control of ‘Backward Tracts’. The province of Assam affords the only illustration of a provincial administration carried on in the best interests of the primitive population, and this has been possible by the anthropological knowledge and foresight possessed by its talented administrators, Dr. Hutton and Mr. Mills. Assam serves as a model to other provincial administrations and Indian States for the treatment of backward tracts. It behoves them to consider the feasibility of having a trained anthropologist in charge of primitive areas. In that case, missionary work could be carefully watched and kept in control. The economic cycle of the primitive area could be carefully observed and economic development fostered and guided in keeping with this cycle. The tribes could be protected against unscrupulous money lenders and land-lords by special legislation. Thus the material and moral well-being of the tribes can be fostered in harmony with the times.

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A Malavētan digging out roots and tubers with the digging spud.

A Kānakkāran making fire by the Flint and Steel method.
A Muthuva woman making mat.

A Malayarayan group among whom polyandry prevails.

A Malapulaya shrine.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

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