Recent Developments in Anthropology, Ethnology and Ethnography in India.

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INDIAN Anthropologists are in deep debt of gratitude to the grand old man of the science in India, Prof. L. K. A. Aiyar, for keeping on record the 'Recent Developments in Anthropology, Ethnology and Ethnography in India' and its publication in *Current Science*, January 1934. When it received the kind notice of the official Anthropologist of the Government of India, it was expected that all lacunæ would be filled up in his communication (published in *Current Science*, May 1934) but as the expectation has not been realised, it was considered desirable to record the following for the sake of completeness of the survey.

Physical Anthropology.—Dr. A. C. G. da Silva Correia, author of at least twenty-seven papers since 1900 on the demography, morphology, anthropometry, ethnography and acclimatisation of the Indo-Portuguese Lusos, has been responsible for a considerable amount of brilliant work in recent years, and thanks to his colleagues, the school of Medicine in New Goa has been fast coming into prominence as the centre of researches in Physical Anthropology. Dr. Fracncisco Correa in his "Recueil de quelques faits anatomiques et teratologiques concernant les habitants de l'Inde Portugaise," records the muscular, vascular and nervous anomalies of several Goanese;[1] Dr. Pegado in his "Anthropological Researches of not bony parts, on the living of 175 natives of Portuguese India" (1931)[2] offers valuable information on certain muscles and forearm veins; and Dr. C. Mascarenhas in his "Contribuiçao para o estudo antropológico de Goa"[3] discusses the measurements of twenty Goanese crania. It is refreshing to find that the medical school at New Goa has not confined its physical anthropological studies to the discussions of whether or not we were originally negroid or australoid or mongoloid.

It is surprising to find that the important work on blood-groups in India has not been mentioned in the previous surveys of both Prof. L.K.A.Aiyar and Dr. B. S. Guha. Pandit's[4] researches have considerably added to our knowledge on 'Blood-groups distribution amongst the Todas'. Chaudhuri has been carrying on valuable researches on blood-groups amongst Bengali Kayasthas parts of his results being published as 'Blood-groups and Heredity'.[5] The publication entitled "The distribution of blood-groups in certain races and castes of India" by Malone and Lahiri,[6] deals with the data for Pathans, Baluches, Rajputs, Jats, Khatris and Dravidians. Krishnan and Vareed have studied the "Basal Metabolism of young College Students, men and women of Madras" with Benedict Roth system with rubber flutter valves and Collin's Kymograph attachment.[7] Mukherjee[8] has published a preliminary note on the Basal Metabolism of Bengalees using Douglas bag and Haldane gas analysis apparatus.

Ethnology.—The well-known ethnological researches of Datta specially his "Eine Untersuchung der Rassenelemente in Belutschistan, Afghanistan und den Nachbarländern des Hindu-Kusch" and the "Das Indische Kastensystem"[9] deserve special mention as also the works of the workers of the sociological school in Bombay under the direction of Ghurye. Special mention may be made of the well-known work on Hindu Exogamy by Karandiker. In the Assam valley J. K. Bose and others have carried out important researches on the Aimols, Kabui Nagas and Marings and on Dual Organisation and Sorabjit Singh on Meithei Ethnography and juridical ethnology. The name of P. C. Biswas who recently proceeded to Berlin as Humboldt Fellow, may also be mentioned in this connection; he has contributed to the International Anthropological Congress, papers dealing with "the Primitive concepts of disease in India" and on Santal Ethnography. J. K. Gan has carried out valuable comparative cultural studies in India and Africa[10] and is now engaged on craniometric and anthropometric studies under Chatterji, who, it may be mentioned, has recently discovered important correlations between the vital capacity, height and weight amongst the data for thousands of Bengalees.

Amongst those that have largely contributed to the growth of Indian Anthropology, mention must be made of Crooke. His book entitled "Tribes and Castes of North-Western Provinces and Oudh" was published in 1896, in four volumes. Thurston's "Tribes and Castes of Southern India" (1909), Russell and Hira Lall's "Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces" (1916), Enthoven's "Tribes and Castes of Bombay" (1920-22), Waddel's "Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley,"[11] Gurdon's "Khasis" (1914), Playfair's "Garos" (1909), Hodson's "Naga Tribes of Manipur" (1911), Shakespeare's "Lushei-Kuki Clans" (1912), Rivers' "Todas" (1906), Shaw's "Thadou Kukis"[12] and Parry's "Lakhers" have always been considered as classical works in the subject. The monumental work of the great European palethnologist Prof. V. Giuffrida-Ruggeri who did pioneer work in "the Systematic Anthropology of Asia" was largely responsible for establishing the conclusions of Rai Bahadur R. P. Chanda's theory of Alpine

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[1-3] *Arq. Esc. Med. Cir. Nova Goa*, Ser. A., No. 7, pp. 1293—1365.

[4] *Ind. J. Med. Res.*, **21**, No. 3, January.

[5] *Ind. Med. Gaz.*, April, 1931, **66**, No. 4, pp. 193—195.

[6] Malone and Lahiri, *Ind. J. Med. Res.*, **16**, pp. 963—968.

[7] *Ind. J. Med. Res.*, 1932, **19**, pp. 831—858.

[8] *Calcutta Med. J.*, **20**, 425; also Mukherji and Gupta, *Ind. J. Med. Res.*, 1931, **18**.

[9] *Anthropos*, 1927, Band **22**, pp. 142—159.

[10] *Man in India*, **13**, No. 1, pp. 17—54.

[11] *J. Asiatic Soc. Bengal*, 1901, **69**, Pt. 3.

[12] *Jour. and Proc. Asia. Soc. Bengal*, N. S. 1928. **24**, No. 1, pp. 1—175.

element in Indian population—a conclusion which we learn is going to be produced anew by the irksome labour in anthropometry in the last census. Sir William Turner and Sir W. H. Flower did pioneer work in Indian Craniometry and Osteology. For the sake of completeness mention may be made of the following :—Sullivan, for his work on "Andamanese Skulls",[13] Duckworth "Note on the Skull of an Andaman Islander", Zuckermann and Elliot Smith, "Researches on the Aditannallur Skulls",[14] Charles, "On Punjab Craniology",[15] and Tildesley, "Burmese Craniology".[16]

[13] *Anthropological Papers of Amer. Museum of Nat. History*, 1921, **23**, Part IV, pp. 175—201.

[14] *Bull. of the Madras Govt. Museum*, 1930.

[15] *J. Anat. and Phys.*, 1907, **27**.

[16] *Biometrika*, 1921, **13**, pp. 176—262.

The Agricultural Basis of Religion in India.*

THE religious beliefs and practices in India have received greater attention than any other branch of Indian Culture. The studies attempted so far have preceded either on a comparative or a philosophical basis. But in the study of the primitive and other forms of religion in India, it would appear that fruitful results may be obtained by approaching it from a different angle : namely, by a study of the influences of environment. It seems to me that an examination of the predisposing influences is bound to throw light on the religious practices and beliefs and enable us to interpret properly the anthropological data with accuracy.

I have taken for the theme of my paper "The Agricultural Basis of Religion". Lest the title mislead the reader, I should explain that the *circumstances under which agriculture is being* carried on in India have exerted an influence on the religious practices of the agricultural castes. The fact that they are widespread and are followed by a large proportion of the people will be evident from the fact that India is essentially an agricultural country and this occupation affords employment to more than three-quarters of the population. As satisfaction of material wants is the chief aim of man, primitive or civilised, the influences which contribute to the success in his efforts also react on his mental outlook. Agricultural operations, whether in Northern or Southern India, are largely determined by the monsoon. The outbreak of the monsoon at the proper time ensures a successful agricultural season, overflowing granaries and provision of sufficient means to the people ; whereas a failure of the monsoon spells economic disaster. As the monsoon is the outcome of the uncertain forces of nature, the agricultural castes find themselves absolutely at the mercy of these influences. It is, therefore, not unnatural that this should produce a spirit of fatalism. Again the fact that land is the chief thing that determines the material welfare of the people is the main reason why so much of ritual, magic and religion is associated with "Mother Earth". The extent to which these two have influenced the religious beliefs, practices and attitude of a large propotion of the agricultural castes in India will be clear from a consideration of the agricultural calendar and ceremonies connected with this occupation.

The agricultural year in South India, especially in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, begins with *Vishu* or Chaitra Sankranti, which is the astronomical New Year's Day on which "the hot weather is supposed to terminate. The sight of the food-stuffs and silver or gold arranged in a bell-metal tray on the morning of the auspicious day is calculated to bring on prosperity during the ensuing year. It is also a day for ancestor worship and worship of the deities in the village temples for the blessings of prosperity. The village astrologer by his calculations announces the agricultural prospects of the year and forecasts the amount of rainfall at regular intervals, the names of the crops that are likely to thrive well, and the famines or epidemics that are likely to break out. Each member of the village consults the astrologer who by the examination of his horoscope predicts his good luck or otherwise during the ensuing year. The same prosperity or ill-luck is determined by the omens arising from the breaking of cocoanuts, and the direction of its rolling on the floor on the morning of the first day of the agricultural year.

The village astrologer next chooses a special day for ploughing and sowing. The seeds are taken in leafy cups, and placed in a basket, and are consecrated. The plough and other agricultural instruments and the oxen are worshipped. They are next taken out in procession to the field. The headman leads by starting to plough and the others follow. Sowing is regarded as a general crisis, a "Rite de passage", and the chief assumes the risk of performing an act full of mystical danger and of uncertain outcome. It is thus a *solemn act and is done with prayers to* ancestors who are invoked for the prosperity of the crop. When the crops are grown up, the Siddi-Devaru is worshipped with offerings to avert insect pests. The fields and crops are placed under the protection of the village deity, after the offerings to the deities and after Hasta Pongalu during the Hasta rains.

When the crops are fully ripe, there is a special ceremony for bringing them to the family. The house is white-washed and decorated with drawings of rice flour mixed in water. The ground in front of the house is purified with cow-dung mixed with water, and decorated with seven kinds of leaves. The God Ganesa is propitiated and adored. The ears of corn are stuck to the wall with cow-dung. This is followed by a formal cooking of rice obtained from the newly cropped

*Summary of a paper by Rao Bahadur L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, read before the First International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, London, 1934.