

## A FEW NOTES ON THE TODÂS OF THE NILGIRIS.\*

*Read on 24th February 1904.*

*President—MR. JAMES MACDONALD.*

THE paper which I am going to submit to-day, is the third of its kind, read by me before this Society. It is prepared on the line of the ethnographical questions prepared by Mr. H. H. Risley, at the direction of the Government of India, and circulated by our Society among the district officers, in 1894. My first paper was on the Dhangars and Dhâvars of Mahableshwar,<sup>1</sup> and the second, on the Thâkurs of Matheran.<sup>2</sup> I must say in the very beginning, that this paper does not claim to be the result of any long and elaborate inquiries. I had the pleasure of a short visit to Ootacamund last Christmas. During that short visit, I took special care to visit the clusters of huts or villages,—if these clusters can be called villages—of the Todâs. I could see only two villages. One was that near the Marlimand Lake. I had visited this village on the morning of 28th December, in company with my kind host Lt.-Col. D. B. Spencer, I.M.S. This visit was a very short one, and was taken at a time when all the men of the village had left their huts for their outdoor work. The second village that I visited, was that on the top of the hill near the Public Gardens. It had five huts, besides the one known as the hut for religious purposes. My visit to this village on the morning of 29th December was very long. It lasted for about two

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\* Journal Vol. VII, No. 1 pp. 68-82.

<sup>1</sup> Read on 28th November 1894. *Vide* Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol. III, No. 8, p. 471.

<sup>2</sup> Read on 30th January 1901. *Vide* Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol. No. 8, p. 458.



hours, during which I had the pleasure of having the assistance of a Parsee gentleman, a resident of the place, who kindly acted as an interpreter.

My informant in this village, which the villagers called Manjekalmand, was one Potal, the son of Keniâvan, the son of Ânmand (reported to have died at the age of 100); the son of Kotêri. My visit to the village<sup>1</sup> collected round me and my informant six persons of both sex. So, my information, though received from the lips of one informant, was the information, as it were, of more than one, because when Potal did not answer my questions properly or clearly, others around him modified or corrected his answers. I had adopted the same way of collecting information in the case of the tribes at Mahableshwar and Matheran. My informant was aged 28, and his father, Keniâvan, who was standing before me at the time of my inquiries, was 56. Potal had a wife, named Sindevi, and a small child.

I must say, that this paper, though prepared in the line of my former papers on some of the tribes of Mahableshwar and Matheran, is not complete, as far as Mr. Risley's set of questions are concerned, because, unfortunately, I had forgotten this time to take the set of questions with me. Again, my visit of the hills was a very short one. For a fuller description of the tribe, I would refer my readers to other more elaborate attempts by several visitors of the hills. Among these I would recommend my readers to read especially—(1) "An Account of the Tribes on the Neilgherries" by Dr. J. Short (1868); (2) An article in the Madras Journal of Literature and Science (1847, Vol. XIV), entitled "The Antiquities of the Neilgherry Hills, including an Inquiry into the Descent of the Thantawars or Todás" by Captain Congreve; (3) "Goa, and the Blue Mountains" by Richard

<sup>1</sup> For the view of a Todda village, *vide* "Narrative of a Journey to the Falls of the Cavery with an Historical and Descriptive Account of the Neilgherry Hills" by L. Jervis (1834), p. 33.

F. Burton (1851)<sup>1</sup>. I beg to submit my paper, as simply that of a few notes of a flying visit by one, taking some interest in the tribes from an anthropological point of view, and making his inquiries in the line of Mr. Risley's questions, as far as he remembered them, having followed them in his previous inquiries about other tribes. In this iconoclastic age, every thing changes so rapidly. Even the tribes in the remotest corners of Indian mountains are expected to come into some contact with Western civilization and Western ideas. So, my few notes may serve and help a student to compare notes in some points, with the remarks of previous writers, who wrote about thirty to fifty years ago.

My informant lived with his family in a small hut, about  $9 \times 7\frac{1}{2}$  feet. At the other end, another hut was attached to it, with an entrance from the other side. In fact, it was a joint hut, wherein two families lived. So if we take it as one hut, its length was 15 feet. Like most of the Todâ huts,

<sup>1</sup> (The following papers in the Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society may be read with advantage, as they treat of the Todâs, and of the so-called Scythic cairns, &c., supposed to have belonged to them.

- (1). "Remarks on the Origin and Languages of the Aborigines of the Nilgiris, suggested by the papers of Captain Congreve and the Rev. W. Taylor on the supposed Celto-Scythic antiquities in the south of India (published in the Madras Journal of Literature and Science, Nos. 32 and 33 of 1847)." By the Rev. B. Schmid (Journal, B. B. R. A. S., Vol. III, pp. 50 to 53.
- (2). "Ancient remains at the village of Jiwaji near Ferozabad on the Bhima." By Captain Meadows Taylor (Journal, B. B. R. A. S., Vol. III, No. XIV, p. 179).
- (3). "A collection of words from the language of the Todâs, the chief tribe in the Nilgiri Hills." By Rev. Dr. H. Stevenson (Journal, B. B. R. A. S., I, Art. III, p. 155).
- (4). "A letter by Captain Taylor to Mr. C. J. Erskine on "The Druidical or Scytho-Druidical remains in the Sholapoor Districts." (Journal, B. B. R. A. S., IV, pp. 144 to 46).
- (5) "Notices of Cromlechs, Cairns and other ancient Scytho-Druidical remains in the Principality of Sorapur." By Captain Meadows Taylor (Journal, B. B. R. A. S., IV, p. 380.)
- (6). "A letter on Scythian tombs near Gulburgah." By Mr. R. M. Brereton. (Journal, B. B. R. A. S., VIII, Abstract of Proceedings, p. CLIII—IV.)

it had an oval form of the roof, similar to the roofed tops of bullock carts of most of the villages of Gujarât. The great peculiarity of the Todâ huts, which strikes us at once, and which even surprises us, is the extreme smallness of their entrance, which may rather be called an aperture than a door. The entrance to the hut of Potal was about  $2\frac{1}{4}$  feet in height and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet in breadth. This door, or, to speak more correctly, this aperture of the entrance was just on the ground, and, owing to the smallness of its size, one had to enter it on his hands and feet. A small platform of earth-work which serves as the bedstead of the family, is on one side. It occupies a little more than one-third of the total space of the hut. The remaining space is occupied by a fireplace and some household articles of the most simple kind. These consist of small boxes of rough canework. Out of the three houses that I entered, I saw into one only a small partly-broken crockery cup.

The Todâs have two divisions among them: (1) the Tertal, and (2) the Târtal. The Todâs of the village, which I saw near the Marlimand Lake, are Tertals, and those of the Manjekalmand village, where I collected most of my information, are Târtals. It is not known, when this division took place. They do not intermarry, but eat with each other. They do not eat from the same pot. Even those of the same subdivision generally eat from separate pots, but a father and son can eat from the same pot. Males and females eat separately. There are no distinguishing marks of distinction between the Tertals and the Târtals, but they have separate villages. The Târtals have about 70 *mands* or villages, and the Tertals about 50.

There is hardly a tribe in India, about whose origin and rise there has been so much of speculation and variety of theories, as that for the Todâs of the Nilgiris or the Blue Mountains. These speculations and theories are not of recent date. They were in the air about half a century ago, and are

so even now, though not to such an extent, because, as the proverb goes, "familiarity breeds contempt," and the visitors to the hills get a little indifferent about these people, and because the tribe is naturally undergoing many changes as the result of its greater and greater contact with civilized people. We find an interesting list of such speculations about their origin in Lieutenant Burton's "Goa, and the Blue Mountains," written about half a century ago (1851). He says:—

"As the Todâ race is, in every way, the most remarkable of the Neilgherry inhabitants, so it has been its fate to be the most remarked. Abundant observation has been showered upon it; from observation sprang theories, theories grew into systems. The earliest observer, remarking the Roman noses, fine eyes, and stalwart frames of the savages, drew their origin from Italy, . . . Another gentleman argued from their high Arab features, that they are probably immigrants from the Shatel Arab, . . . Captain Harkness discovered that they were aborigines. Captain Congreve determined to prove that the Todâs are the remnants of the Celto-Scythian race, which *selon lui*, inhabited the plains, and were driven up to the hills before the invading Hindoo; . . . The metaphysical German traced in the irreverent traditions<sup>1</sup> of the barbarians concerning the Deity, a metaphorical allusion to the creature's rebellion against his Creator; the enthusiastic Freemason warped their savage mystifications into a semblance of his pet mysteries.<sup>2</sup> And the

<sup>1</sup> "In many parts of the Neilgherries there is a large species of solitary bee which the Todâs declared incurred the displeasure of the Great Spirit by stinging him, and was therefore condemned to eternal separation from its kind. But as huge combs and excellent honey abound on these hills, their savage inhabitants of course superstitionize upon the subject of the bees. The Creator, they say, desirous of knowing how honey is made, caught the animal, and she proving obstinate and refractory, confined her by means of a string tied round the middle; hence her peculiar shape!"

<sup>2</sup> That the Todâs of yore had perhaps some mystic rites of their own appears from the fact that Tipoo Sultan suspected them of being magicians and sent his troops to invade their districts. (Burton, p. 351.)

grammar-composing Anglo-Indian discovered unknown niceties in their language.”<sup>1</sup> In this list of theories, Burton has omitted one which considers the Todâs “ a portion of the last Hebrew tribe.” Having described, a little facetiously, the different theories about the Todâs, advanced by several writers before his time, Burton adds the following theory of his own:—“ The Todâs are merely a remnant of the old Tamulian tribes originally inhabiting the plains and subsequently driven up to the mountains by some event,<sup>2</sup> respecting which history is silent. Our opinion is built upon the rock of language. It has been proved that the Todâ tongue is an old and obsolete dialect of the Tamul, containing many vocables directly derived from Sanscrit.” (Burton, pp. 342-43).

Out of the different theories, referred to by Lieutenant Burton in the above passage, the theory of Scythic origin, started by Captain H. Congreve in his very learned and elaborate

<sup>1</sup> “Goa, and the Blue Mountains or Six Months of Sick leave” by Richard F. Burton (1851), pp. 339-342.

<sup>2</sup> Some think that this event was “the victory of Brahamanism over Buddhism.” According to Burton, “This Buddhistic theory rests upon the slender foundation that the Todâs call Wednesday Buddh-aum (Buddha’s day.)” This error seems to have arisen from a similarity of names, because we know that Budhwâr, बुधवार, the Indian word for Wednesday, is derived from (Budh), बुध *i. e.*, the planet Mercury, as all the other names of the week-days like (शनि) Śôm, (मंगल) Mangal, &c., have come from the names of the heavenly bodies. Lieut. Burton sees the name of Buddha, the Indian reformer, in Wednesday, the English word for Indian (बुधवार) Budhwâr. He says. “Bût the celebrated Eastern reformer’s name has extended as far as the good old island in the West. It became Fo-e and Xa-ca (Shakya) in China; But in Cochin China, Pout in Siam, Pott or Poti in Thibet; perhaps the Wadd of Pagan Arabia, Totk in Egypt, Woden in Scandinavia; and thus reaching our remote shores, left traces in Wednesday” \* (*i. e.*, the day of Woden, the highest God of the Germans and the Scandinavians). Whatever may be the case with the origin of the English word Wednesday, there is no doubt that its Indian equivalent (बुधवार) Budhwar does not come from Buddha, the Indian reformer, but comes from Budh, *i. e.*, the planet Mercury.

\* Burton, p. 343, note.

article in the *Madras Journal*<sup>1</sup>, entitled "The Antiquities of the Neilgherry Hills, including an Inquiry into the Descent of the Dhantawars or Todâs," deserves some notice. Captain Congreve says :—

"Wholly differing in religion, character, usages, appearance, language, in short, in every respect from the Hindoos around them, they are regarded by the Bergers of the Hills with a mixture of admiration and respect bordering on veneration ; at the same time they excite in us a degree of curiosity and surprise providing us to wonder whence they came, as well as to which of the great families of the human race their ancestors belonged.

"History informs us that irruptions of the ancient Scythians frequently took place upon the country of the south of Asia, in the course of which they penetrated as far as India.

"It is possible that a remnant of one of the Scythian tribes, driven from place to place by the hostility of the inhabitants of the country they invaded, at length found shelter and tranquility in the mountain fastnesses of the Neilgherries."

Captain Congreve assigns the following reasons for considering the Todâs to be of Scythian origin:—

1. The identity in the religions of the respective people, *viz.*, Thantawars (Todâs) and Scythians.
2. The physiological position of the Thantawars in the great family of the human race is the same as that of the Scythians.
3. The pastoral mode of life of the Thantawars and their migrations from place to place, driving before them herds of the buffaloes, as the Scythians, under similar circumstances did their horses.
4. The food of the Thantawars, which consisted originally of milk and butter, was that of the Scythians.

<sup>1</sup> The Madras Journal of Literature and Science, Vol. XIV. (1847), pp. 77-146.



5. Their architecture,<sup>1</sup> religious, military and domestic is the same; the yards of the houses of the Thantawars, their temples, their sacred enclosures, their places for cattle are circular as those of the Celts, and indeed of most ancient people whose divinity was Sun, Light, Fire, Apollo, Mithra, etc., or the same power under any other appellation.

6. Their marriage customs and funeral rites are nearly identical.

7. Their ornaments and dress closely approximate.

8. Their customs are generally similar.

9. The authority, of Sir William Jones, that the ancient Scythians did people a mountainous district of India.

10. History mentions that India has been invaded by Scythian hordes from the remotest times.

11. Their utter separation in every respect from the races around them.

In this connection, Congreve draws special attention to the fact that "the Parthians, governed for a time by the celebrated Arsacidæ, and whose territories laid between Media and India were a Celtic tribe." He says that "the proximity of a people of Celtic origin to the Indian Peninsula lends much countenance to my views."

As a flying visitor of the hills, I cannot claim to give an opinion on the vexed question of the origin of this very attractive and interesting tribe. From Congreve's statement to the effect, that the Todâs may be an offshoot of the Parthian Celts, and from the similarity of some customs, though few and far between, with Iranian customs, a Parsee may be

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<sup>1</sup> As regards this point Captain Congreve dwells at some length upon the similarity of the rings of stone found in Toda Tumuli and Cairns in the Neilgherries and those of the Britons or Celtic Scythians and of the Danes or Scandinavian Scythians found in Great Britain. He specially refers to the monuments in Denbighshire, Montgomeryshire, Cornwall and Oxford referred to by Camden in his *Brittania*. He then refers to the contents of the monuments of both these tribes and points to their similarity. For example in both were found sacred bells and knives.

tempted to claim the Todâs as his own, *i. e.*, as an offshoot of the Iranian Parthians, but one cannot say anything authoritatively on the subject. But, from what I saw of them, their peculiar physiognomy, their well-formed, well-proportioned features, the looks of their women, and from what I learnt—however little it was—of some of their customs and habits, I am led to say that they are not, as asserted by Burton, “a remnant of the old Tamulian tribe originally inhabiting the plains.” To me they undoubtedly appeared to belong to a foreign stock.

We have said above, that among the various theories hitherto speculated upon, about the origin, of the Todâs, one was, that the tribe was, as it were, a Masonic body. According to Lieutenant Richard Burton, it is the fact of their temple-hut being always at a little distance from the ordinary huts of the village, and some in the depth of woods, that has led to that speculation. He says: “Others declare that it (*i. e.*, Lactarium or dairy of the Todâs, which is always held in veneration as a temple by the Todâs) is a Masonic Lodge, the strong ground for such opinion being, that females are never allowed to enter it, and that sundry mystic symbols, such as circles, squares, and others of the same kind, are roughly cut into the side-wall where the monolith stands.” Burton adds in a foot-note: “A brother mason informs us,” that ‘the Todâs use a sign of recognition similar to ours, and they have discovered that Europeans have an institution corresponding with their own.’ Hence, he remarks, ‘A Todâ initiated will bow to a gentleman, never to a lady.’”<sup>1</sup>

In the two villages of the Todâs, which I visited, I tried my best to enter into the temple-hut, but was neither allowed to go in, nor to have a look into it from near. In the case of the temple-hut at the Todâ village on the top of the hill near the Public Gardens, it is surrounded by a compound wall of rough stones, and I was not allowed to enter even into the

<sup>1</sup> Burton, pp. 348-349.

compound. The Census Officers had, during the last census, put their house numbers not on the wall of the hut, but on the compound wall, and that was pointed out to me as showing, that not even the *Sircar* had any access to it. It is only when the hut is being repaired and the gold-gilt idol or stone removed to another hut that outsiders may have an access to it. With reference to the monolith stands and circles, etc., referred to above, Burton says: "We entered several of these huts when in a half-ruinous state, but were not fortunate or imaginative enough to find either stone or symbols. The former might have been removed, the latter could not; so we must believe that many of our wonder-living compatriots have been deceived by the artistic attempts made in by some tasteful savage, to decorate his dairy in an unusual style of splendour."

The features of the women are well formed and symmetrical. Among the different castes and tribes of India, that I have come across—I speak of the poor classes among them, and not of the rich—I have come across none whose women are so particular about arranging their hair. They are always well combed and divided in two orderly directions in the form of what we Parsees call ( *सॅना* ) *seno*. Their faces are long and look pretty and comely. They talk very freely with us through interpreters and seem to be very sociable.

The males carry beards. They get the beard and the head shaved off on the death of their near male relations. They do not do so on the death of any female relative, however close the relationship may be. The death of a father, or elder brother, or uncle, is an occasion when they shave off their beard and head as a sign of mourning. The women adopt no such similar symbol of mourning. The males are well formed and robust.

It is the physiognomy of the Todâs that attracts the attention of travellers. What Dr. Shortt said in 1868, is felt and seen even now. "In physique, the Todâs are by far

the most prepossessing as a tribe, and it is this superiority in personal appearance, . . . peculiar mode of wearing their hair, their bold and self-possessed deportment, . . . that have at all times attracted for them the greatest share of attention and interest, . . . The Todâs are tall in stature, well-proportioned, and in features partake of the Caucasian type. . . . The women of this tribe are generally tall and stalwart; good-looking both in features and person, with a smooth, clear and delicate skin; fresh and rather fair in complexion. . . . The hair is of a lighter color than in the male, parted in the centre, and carefully combed around and thrown behind the ears, and left hanging free over the shoulders and back, in a mass of flowing curls in some, and in others, wavy."<sup>1</sup>

I beg to submit for the inspection of members a few photographs of Todâ men and women and of their huts.

They live on vegetable diet and abstain from meat, fowl or fish. They drink liquors. They eat *kachhi* from other castes as the Burgâs, but not *pakki*, i.e., food cooked by others. If one of the Burgâs, who form another tribe in the Neilgherries were to cook for them in altogether new utensils, they would eat such cooked food. They do not make such an exception in the case of any other tribe. They smoke and eat tobacco. They smoke a cigarette smoked by a person of their own caste, but not that smoked by a person of another caste. Among their own tribesmen, they would smoke the *biddi* half-smoked by an elder or superior person, but not that by a younger or inferior person.

On the religion of the Todâs, Burton says: "The religion of the Todâ is still *sub judice*, the general opinion being that they are imperfect Monotheists, who respect, but do not adore, the sun and fire that warm them, the rocks and hills over which they roam, and the trees and spots which they connect

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Shortt's 'Account of the Tribes of the Neilgherries,' pp. 4-5.

with their various superstitions.”<sup>1</sup> My inquiries on the subject led to the following information.

They know their God by the name of Hendevea or Hirdeva, which Dr. Shortt translates by the word “bell-God.” Each *mand* or village has a separate hut which serves as a temple. It is apart, at a short distance, from the other huts. The temple has no images or stones but has a golden, or rather gold-gilt, idol. A lamp is burnt in the temple-hut on sacrificial occasions. They call the temple *palth*. It is only the tribe priest, known as *palgar*<sup>2</sup>, that can live in the temple. No others, not even the ordinary Todâs, are allowed to enter into the temple-hut, which is generally in the midst of a compound enclosed by a kutchra wall of stones. They do not permit us even into the compounds.

The gold-gilt idol in the temple, they say, is there from very old times. When the temple-hut is repaired, it is removed to another hut, and it is then only, that the tribesmen have an opportunity to look at it. The priest is supplied by the tribesmen with rice for his maintenance.

The women are not even allowed to approach the compound of the temple-hut. They offer their worship from a great distance. At a short distance from the temple-hut, I was shown a small platform of earth-work, as the place, where they offered their young calves of buffaloes as sacrifices. The offering in the temple itself mostly consisted of milk.

Captain Congreve, who considered the Todâs to be of the Scythic origin, saw the following points of similarity between the religions of these two tribes.

1. “The worship of the deity in groves of the profoundest gloom.
2. The use of sacred trees and hallowed bunches of leaves, on the part of the Thantawars, compared with the sacred oaks and bunches of mistletoe among the Druids.

<sup>1</sup> Burton, pp. 347-348.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Shortt gives the name as *palal*.

3. Sacrifices of female children, now happily abolished.
4. The sacrifice of bulls and calves.
5. The affected inspiration of the priests and their mode of life.
6. The adoration of the sun.
7. The reverence for fire.
8. The funeral rites. The sacrifice of buffaloes compared with the sacrifice of horses amongst the Scythians on similar occasions.
9. Their notion of a future state."

Infant-marriages do take place but they are not general. My informant Potal was married when he was fourteen years of age. There was before me a boy, named Nâs, of five years of age, who was married. His wife is named Tes. The age after which they generally marry is twelve. Their marriage festivities last for three days. The bridegroom pays a number of buffaloes, according to his circumstances, to his father-in-law. My informant Potal had paid ten buffaloes to his father-in-law. He had lost two wives and his present wife Sindevi is the third one. Polygamy is permitted when the first wife bears no children. The marriage customs are simple. There is very little of what can be called religious ceremony. As Dr. Shortt points out, the husband takes his wife before her parents and asks their permission for marrying her. "Permission being granted, on the appointed day the girl is led by her parents to the homestead of her future husband, before whom she makes a graceful genuflexion, bowing her head at the same time, and he then places his foot on the fore-part of her forehead." <sup>1</sup> This custom reminds us of the ancient custom once prevalent in the West, wherein the bridegroom gently whipped his bride, to show, as a symbol, that he had now acquired power and control upon her and that she had to be obedient to him.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Shortt, p. 11.

Their wealth consists of their cattle, and a person is considered rich or poor according to the number of his cattle, especially buffaloes. Keniâvan, the father of my informant, was the proud possessor of seventy buffaloes, and he was supposed to be a man of pretty good means. The average price of his buffaloes he counted to be Rs. 30. The marriage gifts or dowries also consisted of a number of buffaloes. On his marriage, my informant Potal had to give ten buffaloes to his father-in-law. That means, that Keniâvan had to spend nearly one-eighth of his wealth over the marriage of his only son Potal.

In 1868 Dr. Shortt wrote that: "If there be one feature more than another that has contributed to invest the Todâwar tribe with the great share of interest, or rather curiosity evinced towards them at all times by Europeans, it is their practice of polyandry, which, as long as they have been known, has been maintained, and is still perpetuated, as a social system among them. Their practice is this: all brothers of one family, be they many or few, live in mixed and incestuous co-habitation with one or more wives. If there be four or five brothers, and one of them, being old enough, gets married, his wife claims all the other brothers as her husbands, and as they successively attain manhood, she consorts with them; or if the wife has one or more younger sisters, they in turn, on attaining a marriageable age, become the wives of their sister's husband or husbands, and thus in a family of several brothers, there may be, according to circumstances, only one wife for them all, or many; but, one or more, they all live under one roof, and co-habit promiscuously, just as fancy or taste inclines. Owing, however, to the great scarcity of woman in this tribe, it more frequently happens that a single woman is wife to several husbands, sometimes as many as six. When any one of the brothers or husbands enters the hut, he leaves his wand and mantle at the door, and this sign of his presence within

prevents the intrusion of the others. . . . . In keeping with this peculiar marriage system, they adopt a method of affiliation all their own: that is, the first-born child is fathered upon the eldest brother, the next born on the second, and so on throughout the series." <sup>1</sup>

Several other writers on the Todâs say that polyandry is the principal feature of this tribe. But from the information I acquired, I found the custom to have been long since dead. My informant's father, Keniâvan, had six brothers and all of them had separate wives. Keniâvan does not know, of his own knowledge, several brothers marrying one wife. On my asking him, in which village I can find at present a family, wherein one wife had several brothers as her husbands, I was told, they knew of no such village. Perhaps, one may say, that it is the ignorance of the customs of other villages, that made my informant and his co-villagers affirm, that they had not heard of any case of polyandry, but it seems, that it is natural, that the custom should be well nigh dead. This old custom of polyandry seems to have been the result of the custom of female infanticide once prevalent amongst them. Dr. Shortt says: "There is no doubt that, anterior to the reclamation of these Hills and their occupants from their original state of rude; barbarism, female infanticide was practised amongst them, but this hateful crime, it is gratifying to record, has long since become extinct through the active operations of the British Government."<sup>2</sup>

Now, it is clear, that the dearth of marriageable girls, which was the result of female infanticide, led to the custom of having one wife for several brothers. The new state of affairs, which put an end to that dearth, has naturally put an end to this custom of polyandry.

It appears from the book of Lieutenant Richard Burton, who wrote in 1851, *i. e.*, about seventeen years before

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Shortt, pp. 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Shortt, p. 9.



Dr. Shortt (1868), that even in his time, polyandry was on the decline. We read in the book that "polyandry practised of yore seems at present on the decline."<sup>1</sup> If that was so in 1851, no wonder that my informant Potal and his father Keniâvan (aged fifty-six) told me, that they have seen no case of polyandry in their or adjoining Todâ villages.

Lieutenant Burton attributes the customs of polyandry and infanticide among the Todâs to their rather indolent habits. They liked the light work of dairymen and lived upon the produce of their cattle. They disdained the harder work of agriculture, and so "it is their object to limit the number of the tribe," and to have few months to look for corn.

Another peculiar custom of the Todâs is, as Burton points out, this: "Ladies are not allowed to become mothers in the huts; they are taken to the nearest wood, and a few bushes are heaped up around them, as a protection against rain and wind."<sup>2</sup> I think this custom is due to the notion common among many Asiatic communities, and we find it among Zoroastrian and Hebrew books also, that ladies in accouchement are considered to be in a state of uncleanness during the first few days after delivery. Now the Todâ huts being too small to allow special arrangements to keep the women apart during this delicate state, they seem to have resorted to the next best plan of having a temporary small hut for them, which can be easily destroyed after the period of accouchement.

The women sing in a nasal tone, which prevents us from catching their words clearly. Their cradle song is of a very primitive order, repeating in a nasal tone, words to the effect—"O child, do not weep and go to sleep."

They burn their dead. At first, they place the corpse in a temporarily built hut, where the women mourn for about

<sup>1</sup> Burton, p. 346 note.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

three days. On the fourth day they burn the hut together with the corpse. As a part of the funeral ceremony in honour of the dead, they must build at any time, within one year after death, a new hut. They kill before it a buffalo as an offering and then burn the hut.

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