

Village Study—Portraiture or Analysis?

An Indian Village by S C Dube. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London. 1955, pp 248.

IF description is cultural anthropology then this is an excellent treatise on the subject. The description, never uninteresting, frequently rises to the beautiful and is everywhere detailed, objective and seemingly accurate. Dr Dube has given an excellent portrait of Shamirpet, the Telugu village located about 20 miles from Hyderabad city. Its setting, the composition of its population by caste and economic groups, the customs and rituals of the people, their family and home life, inter-group and inter-personal relations are described in detail, and the description always has a warm and human touch about it. The book gives an excellent idea of who the villagers in this central part of the Indian Peninsula are, how they live, what ceremonies and festivals they perform as they go through life or pass through the different seasons of the year; what food they eat for tell others what they eat), and how they cook it. Similarly, relations between man and wife, father and son, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, among brothers or between brothers and sisters are described at length. Considerable space has been given to describing how the ways of the villagers are changing—in food dress, mannerisms, means of recreation—with the coming of education and increasing contact with life in the city of Hyderabad.

As the study largely derives from a survey conducted by a team of specialists from the Osmania University, one would have expected it would contain a lot of statistics. But it is interesting that very little of the quantitative data collected in the survey has been presented in the book. Most of the description of village life can be considered general, at times casual, observation with which the average Indian reader is already familiar.

Important though description is to any science, no science can make much progress if it does not go beyond description and does not seek to bring out the factors which lead to the situations described. This need for analysis is as vital to cultural anthropology as to any other science, in spite of the current fashion in India of describing in great detail readily observable phenomena but without much attention

to bringing out the causes which brought these about or the inter-relationship between the various factors or phenomena observed. It is in such analysis that this book is really deficient. For instance, where did all these people come from; how long ago; how have the different groups inter-acted upon one another through the centuries; what are the reasons for many of the customs which are found in the village; which are the cultural values which are really abiding and which are changing, and why; what have been the social, economic and especially historical factors which make Shamirpet what it is, and its inhabitants think and act in the way they do. These questions which are vital to understanding the 'Culture' of the village are left unanswered. Even a systematic treatment of the past history of the village has been omitted.

In the reviewer's view, description concerned in the large part is with the fairly obvious, although it may be of great value to foreigners and urbanised educated Indians who have lost contact with villages, will not do much towards gaining the kind of understanding about Indian village life which the country needs as aids to the programmes of development and reform, which are being carried out. From an Indian author, we expect much deeper insight into the life and culture of the village people and the answers to some of the 'whys' and 'hows' mentioned above. It is to be hoped that Dr Dube and others who are doing similar work will not be content with description alone and will analyse the data emerging from village studies on questions of the type posed above in some of their later contributions.

— V N

Government of India

3¼ per cent Bonds 1962. Issue Price Rs 98 per Rs. 100 (Nominal). Repayable on the 16th of July 1962.

3½ per cent National Plan Bonds—Third Series (3½ per cent 1967). Issue Price Rs 98-8 per Rs 100 (Nominal). Repayable on the 16th of July 1967.

3¾ per cent Loan 1974. Issue Price Rs 98-8 per Rs 100 (Nominal). Repayable on the 16th of July 1974.

Subscriptions to the above bonds and loan will be received simultaneously and will be limited to a total of Rs 150 crores (approximately). Subscriptions may be in the form of (i) Cash/Cheque or (ii) Securities of the 3 per cent Victory Loan 1957 which will be accepted at Rs 99-13 for every Rs 100 (Nominal) tendered for conversion. Interest will be paid on the 3 per cent Victory Loan 1957 tendered for conversion upto the 15th of July 1956 inclusive.

Interest on the new bonds and loan will be payable half-yearly on the 16th of January and the 16th of July.

Subscription lists will open on the 16th of July 1956 and close on the 18th of July 1956 or earlier without notice.

Applications for the bonds and loan will be received at

- (1) Public Debt Offices of the Reserve Bank of India at Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras and Bangalore;
- (2) Branches of the State Bank of India except in the States of Hyderabad and Mysore;
- (3) Branches of the Hyderabad State Bank in Hyderabad State; and
- (4) Branches of the Bank of Mysore Ltd., in Mysore State.

For full particulars apply to any of these offices or branches, or treasuries.