

DEWAN BAHADUR DR. L. K. ANANTHAKRISHNA IYER.

(1861-1937.)

Dewan Bahadur Dr. Ananthakrishna Iyer was born in 1861 at Lakshminarayanapuram, one of the Brahman villages in Palghat, in the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency. Ananthakrishna's father, L. N. Krishna Iyer, had inherited the traditions of an orthodox and cultured Brahman family, and was himself a Vedic scholar of great local reputation. Ananthakrishna Iyer was the eldest son of Krishna Iyer's family of four sons and two daughters. Ananthakrishna's educational career was almost synonymous with the development of English education in the district. He completed his education up to the Matriculation in the High School at Palghat which was the forerunner of the present Victoria College. After his Matriculation, he proceeded for higher education to the Kerala Vidyasala at Calicut which subsequently assumed the name of the Zamorin's College. Ananthakrishna completed his F.A. Examination here and we find him next as a student of the Madras Christian College. In common with many succeeding generations of students from that institution, Ananthakrishna also came under the inspiring influence of the late Dr. William Miller, its Principal at the time. At the Christian College, he took Natural Science for his main subject, but under the curricula then in force he had also to have a grounding in Psychology, Philosophy and History. Ananthakrishna could not, however, take his degree at the end of his course, and not wishing, due to adverse family circumstances at the time, to burden his parents, he joined service in the Revenue Settlement Office at Ootacamund as a clerk in 1888, but left it in 1890 for the more attractive and quieter work of a teacher in his *Alma Mater*, the Victoria College, Palghat. Ananthakrishna worked here for a period of seven years, 1890-97, during which he obtained his graduate degree and also the diploma of Licentiate in Teaching.

In 1897 the Cochin State, requiring a Science teacher for the Ernakulam College, offered him appointment as an Assistant Master in Science. He accepted this appointment and settled in Ernakulam from 1897 onwards. For the next 23 years he was an official of the Cochin State.

The first five years of his service in the State contained few events of note. In 1902 came the great turning point in his whole career when he was appointed Superintendent of Ethnography, Cochin State, in addition to his full-time substantive appointment as teacher in the Ernakulam College. His career in the Educational service terminated in 1914, when his organizing capacity and scientific training were requisitioned to create the State Museum, the State Zoological Gardens and an Industrial Bureau. When Mr. Ananthakrishna Iyer retired from the Cochin State in 1920 the Government issued

a Gazette Extraordinary referring to his valuable services to the State in the following terms :—

‘ The Government desire to place on record their high appreciation of the valuable services rendered by Mr. Ananthakrishna Iyer during his twenty-three years’ service. His work in the field of Indian Ethnology is known throughout India and Europe and has brought honour not only to himself, but also to the State under which he has been employed.’

This was soon followed by the Government of India conferring on him the title of Rao Bahadur in 1921.

Ananthakrishna Iyer’s activities as Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, and Officer in charge of Ethnography, Mysore, for a period of 17 years after his retirement from Cochin are best examined with reference to his earlier work as Ethnologist in the Cochin State. They form in fact a logical continuation of the earlier investigations in the field of Anthropology which he had started in Cochin. Soon after the Census of 1901, the late Sir Herbert H. Risley inaugurated a comprehensive Ethnographic Survey of India. That programme was not merely confined to British India, but embraced the Indian States as well. The Cochin Durbar in response to the request from the Government of India agreed to undertake a survey of its peoples and appointed Ananthakrishna Iyer as Superintendent of Ethnography of the Cochin State. This appointment he held from 1902 to 1924, and he carried out his work in that capacity even after his retirement from the State in 1920. The results of his investigations were published from time to time in the form of brief monographs on each caste or tribe which were later incorporated in his work on *Cochin Tribes and Castes* published in two volumes (1908–1912).

The publication of these two volumes evoked considerable interest in the anthropological world. Dr. John Beddoe, who contributed the preface to the first volume, testified to ‘ the importance and interest and to the great desirability of its being read and pondered by students of Ethnology and Sociology in England and the West generally ’. The late A. H. Keane who had invited special attention in *Man* for March 1907 to the earlier monographs by ‘ this enthusiastic student of primitive peoples ’ contributed an introduction to this volume.

By 1913, that is after the publication of the two volumes of *Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Ananthakrishna Iyer’s reputation as an anthropologist was established. We find him elected President of Anthropology in the foundation session of the Indian Science Congress at Calcutta in 1914, with the late Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee as General President. In 1916, the University of Madras appointed him Reader in Indian Ethnology to deliver ten lectures.

During the eight years from 1912–1920, Ananthakrishna Iyer was engaged in further studies on the peoples of Cochin. The original plan was to complete the Cochin survey in three volumes, the last one being devoted to an

Anthropometric enquiry. This was interrupted by an independent enquiry on the Syrian Christians of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. The monograph bearing the same name was published by the Cochin Government Press in 1924, after Ananthakrishna Iyer's retirement from the State.

In 1920, the University of Calcutta invited him to deliver a course of University Readership lectures in Anthropology, after which he was appointed as lecturer in Anthropology in the Calcutta University. Ananthakrishna Iyer joined the Calcutta University early in 1921. He remained the head of the Department and the Chairman of the Board for Anthropology till his retirement in 1932. In 1924 he was appointed to complete the Ethnographic Survey of Mysore, started by the late Dewan Bahadur H. V. Nanjundaia. Ananthakrishna Iyer assumed charge of the survey in 1924, and from that year onwards during every vacation after the University sessions at Calcutta, he proceeded to Mysore and toured the villages to collect information for the Ethnographic Survey. The entire work was completed by 1936 with the publication of four volumes and a final volume of appendix.

After Ananthakrishna Iyer's retirement from the Calcutta University in 1932, he still continued as Officer in charge of Ethnographic Survey for Mysore which, in fact, terminated only with his final departure from our midst.

Early in 1934, Ananthakrishna Iyer received invitations to lecture at a number of Universities in Europe. He had never been out of India before, and in spite of his advanced age—he was seventy-two at the time—and his strict vegetarian habits of food, he decided to proceed on a voyage: a fact which speaks volumes for his courage and adaptability. He had his youngest son, Mr. L. A. Natesan, to assist him. He sailed on April 23, 1934, and spent about five months out of India. Disembarking at Brindisi, he proceeded to Naples and thence to Rome. He addressed the Department of Indian Culture of the Royal University of Rome on 'Black Magic in India'. Visiting Florence on May 14th, he spoke at the Institute of Anthropology of the University of Florence on 'Primitive culture in Southern India'. The Rector of the University presented him with the University Medal as a token of appreciation of his scholarship and contributions to Anthropology. Towards the end of May he arrived at Paris and spoke at the Anthropological Institute and the School of Indology under the late Dr. Sylvain Levy. Early in June he gave a lecture on South Indian Culture at the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford before an audience no less distinguished. He next started on his lecture tour in Austria and Germany. At Vienna he addressed the Asiatic Society and the Anthropological Society. He next visited in succession Breslau, Berlin, Königsberg, Halle, München, Heidelberg, Bonn and Cologne. He gave lectures at the Universities and Anthropological Societies in all these famous centres of European learning, except at München and Heidelberg. Most of his lectures were illustrated with lantern slides and greatly appreciated. The visit to Germany lasted only till July 14, 1934, as it had to be cut short on account of the approaching International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological

Sciences at London. One of Ananthakrishna Iyer's objects in going to Europe was to attend the Congress, which was the first International gathering of its kind and which was due to open on July 30th. His long record of contributions to Anthropology and Ethnology was recognized by the Comite d'Organization, and he was elected unanimously to the Comite D'Honneur of the Congress. Ananthakrishna Iyer took a prominent part in the proceedings. Besides reading a paper entitled 'The Agricultural Basis of Religion in India' he also served as Vice-President of the sections of General Ethnology and Sociology. Soon after the session was over, Ananthakrishna Iyer embarked at Venice and arrived in India towards the end of August, 1934.

Ananthakrishna Iyer's activities thereafter were directed to two tasks. He prepared an index and appendix volume to the *Mysore Tribes and Castes*. When this was done—it was only a matter of a few months—he desired to take up seriously the ethnographic survey of Coorg, which he used to say was the only blank in the present literature on South Indian Ethnography. With his accustomed enthusiasm and energy, he conducted this survey during the cold weather of 1934 and the summer of 1935 with Professor Lidio Cipriani, whom he had invited from the University of Florence, as a collaborator. His manuscripts were almost ready for the press by February last when he was cut off unexpectedly and without warning from his labour of love.

In 1935, evidence came forth of a further recognition of his work as a scientist. The President of France honoured him by electing him to the distinction of the Officer D'Academie. The Government of India conferred on him the title of Dewan Bahadur. The University of Breslau awarded him the Honorary Doctorate of Medicine and Surgery (the Faculties of Medicine control the Department of Anthropology and Ethnology in the continental universities).

His connection with scientific institutions afford some light as to the scientific contacts he developed and cultivated. He was one of the original members of the Indian Science Congress, and had attended, except for a year or two, all its annual sessions. He was five times President for Anthropology in the Indian Science Congress, and would have celebrated, if only he had lived for another year more, his Jubilee participation in the Congress. He was once President for Anthropology in the Oriental Conference; Corresponding member of the Anthropological Society, Bombay; Associate Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta; Member of the Mythic Society, Bangalore; Foundation Fellow of the Indian Academy of Sciences; Foundation Fellow of the National Institute of Sciences; Corresponding Member of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland; Corresponding Member of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington; Member of the Intermediare Sociologique, Bruxelles; Honorary Fellow of the Anthropological Societies of Firenze, Vienna and Koln; Fellow of the Asiatic Society, Vienna; Member of the Eugenic Society, London. More recently, in December last, the Scottish Anthropological Society elected him Honorary Member, as a token of

appreciation of his contributions to Anthropology. On February 13, the old Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte elected him Honorary Member but before the communication could reach the hands of Dr. Ananthakrishna Iyer he had passed away.

Dewan Bahadur Dr. Ananthakrishna Iyer was known to a wide circle of friends as a man of genial temperament and unflinching courtesy. He was simple in his habits and throughout led the life of an orthodox South Indian Brahman, doing his *Pujas* regularly every morning.

Dr. Iyer leaves behind him to mourn his loss Mrs. Iyer, who was a source of inspiration and encouragement to him for forty-five years, four sons and four daughters, all of them happily settled in life. His eldest son Mr. L. A. Krishnan is an Anthropologist in Travancore, the second is Dr. L. A. Narayanan of the Geological Survey of India, the third is Dr. L. A. Ramdas of the Indian Meteorological Service, and the youngest is Prof. L. A. Natesan, Professor of Economics in the Scottish Churches College, Calcutta.

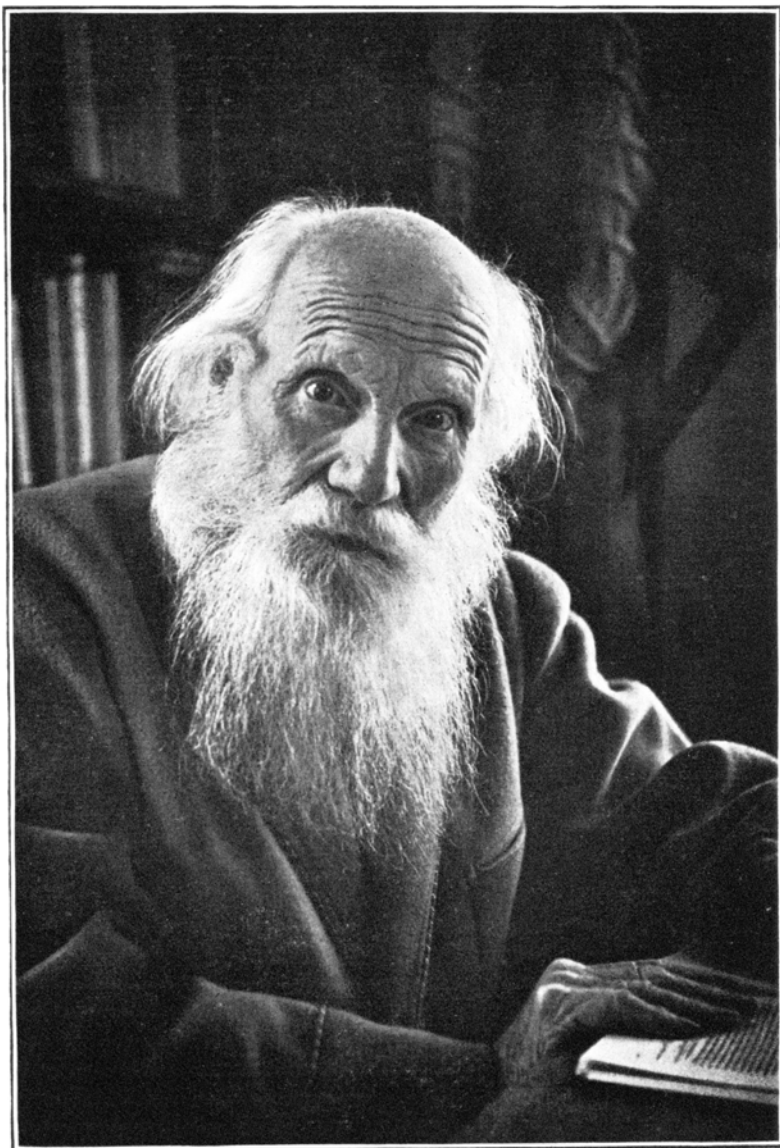
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF PRINCIPAL WORKS.

A complete list of the works of Dewan Bahadur Dr. L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer will have to include scores of short papers, communications, reviews and articles which he had contributed to various learned societies, papers and journals. The numerous papers he had read before the Indian Science Congress and the Presidential Addresses will be found in the records of the Royal Asiatic Society, Calcutta, but his principal works on Indian Ethnology, on which his claim for reputation as an anthropologist rests, are given below:—

1. The Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I—Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1908 ; pp. 366, 44 photographs.
2. The Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. II—Cochin Government Press, Ernakulam, 1912 ; pp. 504, 81 photographs.
3. Ethnology of South India, a contribution to the Encyclopædia of South India, 1920.
4. Syrian Christians of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore—Cochin Government Press, 1924 ; pp. 340, 44 photographs.
5. Lectures on Ethnography—Calcutta University Press, 1926 ; pp. 277, 44 photographs.
6. Mysore Tribes and Castes, Vol. I—Mysore Government Press, 1935 ; pp. 550, 60 photographs.
7. Mysore Tribes and Castes, Vol. II—Mysore Government Press, 1928 ; pp. 578, 78 photographs.
8. Mysore Tribes and Castes, Vol. III—Mysore Government Press, 1930 ; pp. 615, 75 photographs.
9. Mysore Tribes and Castes, Vol. IV—Mysore Government Press, 1931 ; pp. 550, 75 photographs.

10. Mysore Tribes and Castes, Appendix ; pp. 70.
11. Notes on Ethnography, Calcutta University Press.
12. Ethnography of Coorg—awaiting publication.

L. A. K. I.



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