XXI.

THE KURKU DIALECT OF THE MUNDA FAMILY
OF SPEECH.

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THE Kūrḱūs are a Muṇḍā tribe living in the north of Berar and the adjoining parts of the Central Provinces. At the last Census, of 1901, their dialect was returned as spoken by 87,675 individuals.

The literal meaning of the word *kūrḱū* is 'men.' It is the plural of *kōrō*, man, which word corresponds to Muṇḍārī *hārā*, Santālī *hāṛ*.¹ Like other tribes, the Kūrḱūs, Muṇḍās, and Santāls call themselves men *par excellence*.

The Kūrḱū dialect belongs to the so-called Muṇḍā family. I prefer this denomination of the family to the altogether fantastical name Kolarian, though the latter one is perhaps better known, because it is due to the scholar who first clearly distinguished the family from the Dravidian forms of speech.

The best known Muṇḍā dialects have hitherto been Santālī and Muṇḍārī. The difference between the two is not great, nor do they differ much from some other dialects, viz., Bhumij, Birhār, Kōḍā, Hō, Tūrī, Asurī, and Korwā. All these forms of speech are spoken in the same neighbourhood, in and about the Chota Nagpur Plateau, and they can be considered as slightly different forms of the principal Muṇḍā dialect, which I propose to call Kherwārī, after Kherwār, a name which occurs in the old Santālī traditions and denotes an old tribe from which the Santāls assert that they themselves and also the Muṇḍās, Hos, Birhārs, and so forth are descended.

The best representatives of Kherwārī are Santālī and some

¹ The sign *ā* denotes the sound of *a* in 'all' and the corresponding short sound. In a similar way I shall use *ā* in order to mark the open sound of *ā* in German 'Bär.' Compare the sound of *ai* in English 'hair.'

forms of Muṇḍārī. The remaining dialects have come more or less under the influence of the surrounding Aryan languages.

In addition to the various Kherwārī dialects there are further Khariā; three Muṇḍā dialects spoken in the hills of Orissa and the north-eastern districts of the Madras Presidency, viz., Juāng, Sabara, and Gadaba; and, lastly, the dialect of the Kūrḱūs.

The Kūrḱūs are now separated from the bulk of the Muṇḍās by tracts where Aryan languages are spoken. Their neighbours speak Aryan dialects or Gōṇḍī, and their own dialect has been subject to influence from both. We have not till now been in a position to decide to what extent this double influence has changed the character of their language. There exist, it is true, some Kūrḱū vocabularies, and the Rev. E. F. Ward has published notes on Kūrḱū grammar. That latter work is, however, difficult to get, and I have never seen it. Now we have the "Grammar of the Kūrḱū Language," by Mr. John Drake, published at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, in 1903.

Mr. Drake's book adds very considerably to our knowledge of Kūrḱū and of the Muṇḍā dialects generally. The author has lived among the Kūrḱūs as a missionary, and he has paid much attention to their language. The marking of the sounds of the dialect is much better than we are wont to see in similar books. Thus the peculiar semi-consonants are correctly described, though I feel certain that they occur in many words where Mr. Drake has not recognised them. The description of the grammatical features is very careful. I think that it would have been possible to make it clearer, and that a more thoroughgoing comparison of Santālī would have explained many difficult points. On the whole, however, it seems to me that Mr. Drake's Kūrḱū grammar ranks high among similar works published in India.

It is now possible to judge about the position of Kūrḱū within the Muṇḍā family, and also to draw some conclusions regarding the original form of the old dialect from which Kūrḱū as well as Kherwārī have been derived.

It has already been mentioned that the Kūrḱū word *kōrō*, man, corresponds to Muṇḍārī *hārā*. It will be seen that *k* here corresponds to Muṇḍārī, i.e. Kherwārī, *h*. The same is the case in several other words such as *kōn*, Muṇḍārī *hōn*, son; *kōrā*, Muṇḍārī *hōrā*, way, and so forth. The *k* of such words is not only found in other Muṇḍā dialects such as Khariā and Juāng, but also in connected languages in and outside India. Compare Mon *kōn*, Khmēr *kūn*, Semang *kōn*, Khassi *khūn*, son. It is evident that Kūrḱū in such cases has preserved a more ancient stage of phonetical development than Kherwārī. This point is of some importance for the question of the etymology of the various names under which the Muṇḍā family and its various members have been known.

In most other respects the phonetical system of Kūrḱū is the same as in Kherwārī.

The vowels *e* and *o* have two sounds each, one broad and open, somewhat like the sounds of *a* in 'care,' 'man,' and of *a* in 'all' and *o* in 'not,' respectively, and another corresponding to the sounds of *e* in 'men' and *ay* in 'say,' and of *o* in 'no,' respectively. The same is the case in Kherwārī. I have written *ä* for the open *e*-sound and *ā* for the open *o*-sound. It seems as if the two sounds are sometimes interchanged. Compare Kūrḱū *mī kār*, one man; *kōrō*, a man; *kūr-kū*, men; Santālī *hār*, man. It is not, as yet, possible to define all the rules regulating the matter. In some cases there is a distinct tendency to approach the sound of vowels in consecutive syllables to each other. Thus *ä* agrees with *ā* and not with *o*. Similarly, *i* agrees with *u*, and so forth. Compare Santālī *ān-tā*, there; from *ona*, that. The base of the pronoun is here *ān* or *on*. Before *i*, *u* is used instead; thus, *un-i*, this. This tendency is known under the name of harmonic sequence, and it plays a prominent rôle in Santālī, and partly also in Muṇḍārī. So long as we only knew of the existence of this law in Kherwārī, it might reasonably be doubted whether it formed a feature of the original Muṇḍā language. The state of affairs in Kūrḱū seems to show that this has really been the case. The open and closed forms

of *e* and *o* do not, it is true, any more interchange mutually and with *i*, *u*, respectively, according to well-defined laws. There are, however, sufficient indications to show that the state of affairs has once been of a similar description as in Santālī. Compare *āp kār*, three men; *kōrō*, a man; *kūr-kū*, men; *gō* and *gujū*, Santālī *gāc'* and *gujuk'*, die; *jōm* and *ju-jum*, to eat. We are therefore justified in tracing the law of harmonic sequence in the Muṇḍā languages back to the parent dialect from which Kūrkū and Kherwārī are derived.

One of the most characteristic features of Muṇḍā phonology is the existence of a set of semi-consonants, which I shall write *k'*, *c'*, *t'*, and *p'* respectively. They are formed like the corresponding consonants *k*, *c*, *t*, and *p*, but the enunciation is checked at the point of contact, and there is no off-glide. The semi-consonants have a tendency to develop into the corresponding voiced consonants, especially before vowels. Compare Santālī *gāc'* and *guj-uk'*, die. Mr. Drake's book shows that Kūrkū in all essentials here agrees with Kherwārī, and we can therefore trace the use of the semi-consonants and the tendency to change them to voiced consonants back to a comparatively ancient period. It seems probable that they existed in the original Muṇḍā language, and there are perhaps indications of their use in the language of the aboriginal inhabitants of Nearer and Further India. I also think that it can be made probable that the old Muṇḍā semi-consonants have something to do with the development of the so-called abrupt tone of many Tibeto-Burman languages.

I have already mentioned that the semi-consonants are probably used in Kūrkū in several instances where Mr. Drake does not recognise them. In this connection I may mention that the pronunciation of the semi-consonants in other dialects such as Muṇḍārī is often so indistinct as to become scarcely discernible. The same is probably the case in Kūrkū. I think that we can safely assume that a semi-consonant is spoken in most cases where Mr. Drake states that a euphonic consonant is inserted before vowels. Compare *dā*, genitive *dā-g-ā*, water; *ūrā*, genitive *ūrā-g-ā*, house;

tōl-yū, being bound, genitive *tōl-yū-g-ā*; *gō*, die, passive base *gu-j-ū*, and so forth. That such words have originally ended in a semi-consonant is clearly shown by Santālī *dāk'*, water; *orak'*, house; *tol-ok'*, being bound; *gāc'*, die. I am even inclined to think that the semi-consonant can still be heard in Kūrkū. Mr. Drake in such cases operates with euphonic consonants. It is sincerely to be hoped that this term should be restricted to its proper sphere. It is possible to explain the introduction of all kinds of 'euphonic' consonants into a literary language, such as for instance Pālī. In the case of spoken vernaculars, on the other hand, the talk of euphonic consonants is usually only a semi-learned way of expressing a *non liquet*.

It has already been mentioned that the phonetical system of Kūrkū in most essential points agrees with Kherwārī. In some features it closely agrees with Muṇḍārī as against Santālī. Compare *ōtē*, Muṇḍārī *ōtē*, Santālī *ōt*, field; *kōrō*, Muṇḍārī *hārā*, Santālī *hār*, man; *kōrā*, Muṇḍārī *hōrā*, Santālī *hōr*, way, and so on. In other points Kūrkū agrees with Santālī as against Muṇḍārī. Compare *kā*, Santālī *kan*, Muṇḍārī *tan*, is; *bang*, Santālī *bang*, Muṇḍārī also *ka*, not, and so forth. On the whole, Kūrkū occupies a somewhat independent position, without marked affinity to any Kherwārī dialect.

The inflexional system is mainly the same as in Kherwārī, though the influence of the neighbouring languages is here clearly felt.

The animate and inanimate genders are distinguished as in Kherwārī. Like the various forms of that language, Kūrkū possesses three numbers, the singular, the dual, and the plural. The suffixes of the dual and the plural are also the same as in those forms of speech, viz. *king* and *kū*, respectively. It is interesting to see that the dual is used to denote a married wife, as in Kherwārī. Compare *Tumlā-king*, Tumlā's wife.

If we turn to the formation of cases, on the other hand, we will find important traces of the influence exercised by Aryan vernaculars. In Santālī and Muṇḍārī, and originally

in all Kherwārī dialects, the cases of the direct and indirect object are expressed by means of pronominal infixes in the verb, and there is no accusative and no dative of the noun. The Aryan dative suffix *kē* is, however, used in such dialects of Muṇḍārī as has been most influenced by Aryan languages. The same is the case in Kūrkū, where *ken* is used to form a dative and an accusative; thus, *kōn-ken*, to a son. *Ken* is clearly the Aryan suffix *kē*, and there are sufficient traces left to show that the Kūrkū dative-accusative is a comparatively modern development, and that the cases of the direct and indirect object were formerly expressed in the same way as in Kherwārī, by means of pronominal affixes added to the verb, and not by means of suffixes added to the noun. The fact is interesting as showing that the state of affairs in Kherwārī can claim some antiquity.

The suffix of the genitive is *a*, and it is not changed so as to agree with the qualified noun in gender. In Santālī and Muṇḍārī there are different suffixes according to whether the qualified noun denotes an animate being or an inanimate object, respectively. Compare Muṇḍārī *hatu-ren hārā-king*, the two men of the village; but *orak'-reak' duar*, the door of the house. Here the suffix *ren* can only be used with a qualified noun which denotes an animate being. The corresponding inanimate suffix is *reak'* or *ak'*. There are, however, some instances of interchange between the two suffixes, at least in Muṇḍārī. Thus Father Hoffmann gives both *Paku-ren hon* and *Paku-ak' hon*, Paku's son. The state of affairs in Kūrkū makes it probable that there was originally only one suffix of the genitive. Compare also the genitive suffix *ā* in Khariā, Juāng, and Sabara. The genitive was an adjective, and, like other adjectives, it could be distinguished by adding pronominal suffixes in order to denote the gender of the qualified noun.

In this connection I may also note that Mr. Drake does not appear to have analysed the various genitive forms correctly. The *g* in *dā-g-ā*, of the water, is certainly derived from *k'*; compare Santālī, Muṇḍārī *dāk'*, water. If it is correct that the *a* of the genitive suffix is lengthened in such

cases, the lengthening must be explained from the influence of the accent, or else *dāg-ā* corresponds to a Muṇḍārī *dāg-āk'*, of the water. The suffix *kā* in *kākū-kā jōm*, fish-of meal, on the other hand, must be the Aryan suffix *kā*. The word *kākū* corresponds to Santālī *hākō*, fish, and does not end in a *k*. Mr. Drake has also failed to see that the difference between the ablative suffixes *aten* and *ten* must be explained by the fact that the ablative suffix is often added to the genitive, and not to the base.

The numerals agree with Kherwārī as against Khariā, Sabara, and Gadaba. The difference between the two groups does not run through all numerals, but is, mainly, restricted to the numerals seven, eight, and nine. Compare—

	KŪRKŪ.	SANTĀLĪ.	KHARĪĀ.
seven	<i>ē-ya</i>	<i>e-ae</i>	<i>gul</i>
eight	<i>ilār-īya</i>	<i>irāl</i>	<i>thām</i>
nine	<i>ārē-ya</i>	<i>ārē</i>	<i>tom-sing</i>

Sabara and Gadaba mainly agree with Khariā. When we compare Khmēr *grul*, Khmu *kul*, seven; Mōn *d'cām*, Suk *tam*, eight; Bahnar *toksin*, Lemet *tīm*, nine, and similar forms in other connected dialects, it becomes probable that the forms used in Kŭrkū and Kherwārī are later than those current among the other tribes.

The higher numbers are counted in twenties as in other Muṇḍā dialects. Mr. Drake thinks that *isā*, twenty, is not an Aryan loan-word. I am unable to agree with him in this supposition.

The personal pronouns are the same as in Kherwārī. Thus, *ing*, Muṇḍārī *ing*, I; *ā-lang*, Muṇḍārī *ā-lang*, I and thou; *ā-ling*, Muṇḍārī *ā-ling*, I and he; *ā-bung*, Muṇḍārī *ā-bu*, I and you; *ā-lē*, Muṇḍārī *ā-lē*, I and they, and so forth. There are also shorter forms of the personal pronouns,

which are suffixed to transitive verbs in order to indicate the direct and indirect objects. Thus, *ā-ling-ken tōl-ling-bā*, us-two-to bind-us-two-will, he will bind us two; *dī-kū ā-ling-ken cōc' māndi-ling-bā*, they us-two-to what say-us-two, what do they say to us two? It will be seen that the same form is used to denote the direct and the indirect object, and that the full pronoun is also added in the dative-accusative. We can safely assume that the latter circumstance is due to Aryan influence. The use of pronominal affixes is no more necessary, and it is much more restricted than e.g. in Santālī. What remains is, however, quite sufficient to show that the state of affairs in Kūrkū has once been the same as in Kherwārī. On the other hand, there seems to be little doubt that the Kūrkūs will ere long discard the pronominal suffixes altogether.

The suffixed form of the third person singular of the animate gender is *ec'*; thus, *dīc' dīc'-ken tōl-ec'-bā*, he him-to bind-him-will, he will bind him. In Kherwārī the corresponding form is *e* or *i*; thus, *Muṇḍārī rak'-i-a-e*, calls-him-he, he calls him. In some dialects of Muṇḍārī, however, *ic'* is apparently used instead. Thus Father Hoffmann gives *om-ad-i'-a-e*, he gave to him. If this form is not simply due to a misprint instead of *om-ad'-i-a-e*, i.e. *om-at'-i-a-e*, it must stand for *om-ad-ic'-a-e*, and contain a suffix *ic'*. Similar forms certainly occur in connected dialects. Forms such as Muṇḍārī *lel-ki'-a-ko*, they saw him, in Father Hoffmann's grammar, on the other hand, must be explained in another way. *Lel-ki'*, saw him, should properly be written *lel-kic'*. It is derived from the past base *lel-ket'*, saw, with the pronoun *i*, him, added. *Et'-i* in the Mankipatti District regularly becomes *ic'*. *Lel-ki'ñ-a-ko*, i.e. *lel-kic'-ñ-a-ko*, they saw me, is in a similar way derived from *lel-ket'-iñ-a-ko*. This latter form shows that *lel-kic'* must contain a suffix *i* and not *ic'*, there being no room for a suffix *c'* in *lel-kic'-ñ*, saw me.

The sketch of Kūrkū conjugation is perhaps the least satisfactory portion of Mr. Drake's book. I think that it could have been made much more perspicuous. It is

not, however, difficult to see that the Kūrku verb still in numerous details is inflected in the same way as in Kherwārī, though Aryan, and perhaps also Dravidian, influence has been at play.

It is a well-known fact that the Muṇḍā verb is not a verb in the strictest sense of the word. Every form can be used as a noun, an adjective, and a verb. The principal dialects of Kherwārī possess a separate particle, the so-called categorical *a*, which shows that such a form is used in the function of a verb. Thus, Santālī *dal-ket'-e*, struck him, denotes the idea of a striking of him in the past. The form can be used as a noun, as an adjective, and so on. If we add the categorical *a*, this form is changed into a real verb; thus, *dal-ket'-e-a*, (he) struck him.

Kūrku does not possess any such thing as a categorical *a*. The same form is, without any difference, used in the different functions. Thus, *ing-ken tōl-ing* means 'me-to binding-me,' 'binding me.' If we use this form as a noun we may, for instance, add the suffix of the locative; thus, *ing-ken tōl-ing-en*, me-to binding-me-in, in binding me. The same form can be used as an adjective and as a verb; thus, *ing-ken tōl-ing kōrō*, me-to binding-me man, a man who binds me; *dic' ing-ken bang tōl-ing*, he me-to not binding-me, he does not bind me.

In this wide use of the various 'verbal' forms Kūrku thoroughly agrees with Kherwārī. The same is also the case in general principles and in numerous details.

The root of a verb can be modified in various ways, and such modified forms are used as the bases of different conjugations. I therefore propose to call them conjugational bases. Mr. Drake calls them species. I do not intend to go into detail. Suffice it to note that the base can be reduplicated as in Kherwārī; thus, *jōm* and *ju-jum*, to eat. There is further an intransitive and passive base, formed by adding *ū* or *yū*, corresponding to Kherwārī *ok'*. The actual form probably ends in *k'*; compare *tōl-yū*, to be bound; *tōl-yūg-ā*, of the binding. Another base is formed by adding *kī*. It often has the meaning of a causative, and

perhaps corresponds to Santālī *oco*. Compare *bīt'*, to rise; *bit'-kī*, to raise.

From such bases are formed various tense-bases which can, in their turn, be used as nouns, as adjectives, and as verbs. These bases are mainly formed by means of the same suffixes as in Kherwārī. Thus the suffixes *ā* and *kā* correspond to Kherwārī *et'*, *ket'*, respectively. It is possible that a trace of the final *t'* of such suffixes is still preserved in forms such as *dic' dic'-ken tōl-kā-d-ic'*, he him-to bound him, he bound him. This *d* can, however, also be the initial *d* of the pronoun *dic'*, he. The passive and intransitive forms corresponding to those ending in *ā*, *kā*, end in *en*, *ken*, respectively. There is apparently some confusion between the active and passive forms, for an *n* is often inserted before pronominal suffixes beginning with *i*; thus, *dic' ing-ken tōl-kā-n-ing*, he me-to bound-me, he bound me.

It may also be noted that the number of different tense-bases in Kūrkū is much more limited than in Kherwārī. Some forms, such as the indefinite present ending in *bā*, have perhaps been developed under the influence of Aryan vernaculars. On the whole, however, the conjugation of verbs still follows the same principles as in Kherwārī.

The negative particle is *bang* as in Santālī. There is, besides, a negative copula *dun*, not to be. I have not found anything corresponding in other Muṇḍā dialects. Is it possible to compare the negative *tōten* in the Dravidian Kōlāmī?

The formation of words in many details agrees with Kherwārī. Thus we find a causative prefix *ā* in *ā-n-nū*, to cause to drink, Santālī *q-ñu*. An infix *p* is occasionally used to form reciprocal verbs. Thus *ā-pa-rang*, to quarrel, from *ā-ram*, abuse. An *l*-infix probably occurs in forms such as *ōl'* and *ō-le-t'*, to go out; *sā* and *sā-lē*, to bring, and so on. On the whole, however, the use of infixes is much more limited than in Kherwārī.

I hope that the preceding remarks will be sufficient to show that high importance attaches to Kūrkū grammar.

It shows that it is quite right to consider Kherwārī as the most typical form of Muṇḍā speech. Kūrķū agrees with it in important features. In some few points it has preserved a more ancient stage of development. On the other hand, it has come under the influence of neighbouring forms of speech of the Aryan and perhaps also of the Dravidian families, and it can probably only be a question of time when Kūrķū shall have become so mixed up with foreign elements that it cannot any more be considered as a typical Muṇḍā dialect. It was high time that a trustworthy sketch should be published, and Muṇḍā philology is much indebted to Mr. Drake for the careful work he has given us.