Chapter II
Root Culture of the Tribal Peoples of the Damodar Valley region
In the present day context of socio-economic changes throughout India, it is very difficult to find out a community or a group of tribal peoples, who still adhere to the culture-pattern of primitive stage. The tribals we meet in different spheres have no doubt undergone various changes due to the operation of the natural laws of time and space. We cannot identify a particular stratum of culture as the root culture, i.e. the original culture, on which has been built up the edifice of modern sophistications. Notwithstanding such limitations, we face some communities of the tribal people, who live in the most interior places of the country, inheriting certain traits of primitivism, as well as, the vestiges of pristine faber attached with the stages of civilization, they are now fixed in. By root-culture, we mean actually those traits. To find out the root-culture, the method which has been followed is made up of two components – firstly, field-survey made in the interior villages of the Upper Damodar Valley; secondly, evaluation of the data furnished by relevant Monographs, Reports and Gazetteers published so far.

The villages of the Upper Damodar Valley, that were brought under the purview of our survey include the following:

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Hazaribagh  
(i) Jaminijara  
(ii) Kônar Santal Bustee  
(iii) Munda Tanda

Ranchi  
(i) Nagri  
(ii) Bhargaon  
(iii) Dhumbo  
(iv) Juro  
(v) Beti Tanda  
(vi) Jehangutua  
(vii) Husir

The unmixed tribal culture may be traced, to some extent, more in the villages of the Upper Damodar Valley than in those of the Lower Damodar Valley.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The basic unit of a society is family. A lot of anthropologists consider that family is comparatively a modern institution. Westermarck holds that the rudimentary form of a family existed even in primitive times¹, although we may concede to the view that it is only at a later stage that the family in the strict sense of a group consisting of father, mother and children has

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become recognized. Morgan, Maclellan and Bechofen have maintained that at the earliest stage of development of society, the family as such did not exist.

The karmabinti of the Mundari sept narrates that in the land of Hihiricipiri, Haram was the first man and his consort was Budhi. They had five sons and six daughters. They migrated to different places and had contact with different communities and out of these contacts separate units of family emerged. The oral tradition incorporates also the fact that the tribes as such were organized into totemistic groups, each group having a distinct totem symbol of its own. It has been suggested that a totemistic group consisting of a number of families represented a clan and a number of such clans formed a tribe.

However, consortship implies the system of marriage that formed the foundation of a family. Among the Munda speaking peoples, different forms of marriages can be traced since the very beginning of tribal tradition. They call it Bapla, which etymologically means 'union between soul and soul and flesh and flesh'. There are seven traditional forms of marriage, namely, Kirin Bahu Bapla, Kirin Jawae Bapla, Tunki Dipil Bapla, Sanga Bapla, Ghardi Jawae Bapla, Itut Bapla, Nir Bolok Bapla.

From the above it is evident that the tribes under our consideration had family as basic unit of society. It is difficult to determine how and exactly when the family was enlarged into totemistic groups.

The origin of totems is shrouded in mystery. The relics of totemistic beliefs among the tribal people simply indicate that a group of people belonging to a tribe looked upon some object of nature as sacred and was closely associated with their origin. The Hembrom group of tribe hold 'arecanut' (Hembram) to be their totem. A ritual abstinence from
eating areca-nut is religiously maintained by the Santals of the Hembram group. Likewise, an Oraon with 'palash' totem maintains ritual abstinence from 'palash-tree'. The Oraons bearing a surname of Toppo attach sacredness with the 'palash tree'. Prof. J. Madan, an eminent anthropologist, holds that some sort of ambivalence persists in relation of the tribes with the totems. Most of the tribes settled in the Damodar valley are found to be maintaining more or less the totemistic tradition. In their relation a strong spiritual attachment with the totem object is evident.

The totem groups represent virtually the first social formulation among the tribal peoples. Internal relations within the totem group is independent of the production relation prevalent in the economic sphere of the totemistic group.

Closely knit totemistic groups probably didn't have a leader and practised an early form of democracy with the most experienced man guiding the community, but having no explicit authority. The totemistic groups as are found today are almost all exogamous in nature. Marriage within the group is forbidden.

A question arises whether totemistic groups are really exogamous in character. If such group is the primary basis of a society, it is natural that exogamy was neither possible nor encouraging. On such a probability anthropologists opine in majority that monogamy was the most usual form of union between man and woman and that exogamy was either forbidden or discouraged. The economic basis of the social unit of totem is a matter of conjecture.

Examples of aesthetic conception of totems are provided by the pictorial carvings of the totem symbols on the cottage-walls or on the body of tattoo-marks.
Once a group is formed as the basis of society, the question of leadership naturally arises and it often attracts political power of some kind, simply because it becomes a forum of many peoples' opinion. At the same time, it provides a forum for expressing and discussing matters that interest the group. The members of the totemistic group prefer to select the eldest male member of the group or the sept as the natural leader. Since totem concerns with the lineage and lineage protects its members' lands against encroachment, the main task of the totem leader is to look into the settlement affairs of the tribes. Group-members may own some common property which they share by virtue of their membership – for example, common grazing grounds. The rights of group-members to the property serve to define the limits of the group and differentiate it from others. They may have a further social significance. An Australian aboriginal clan is associated with particular totem and its members alone may perform the ceremonies which, they believe, ensure continued increase in the species.

The rights to grazing and water have vital economic importance for pastoralists like the Bedouin or the Basseri of South Persia, whether or not the group rights are of major economic significance. Their members protect them from outsiders.

When they protect their interests and rights against the rest of society, members of the group are said to be acting politically. In order to do this they must have an internal organization to co-ordinate their action, however occasionally. Among the Santals, Mahalies and also the Oraons, internal organization within the totem group never comes to surface in face of an effective village-organizations. Here the selected leader chooses as his associates a few other elderly men, whose tasks are mainly to protect the heritage of the clan. Their round-the-clock activities become very evident during the seasons of Karma-festival, when the Karmabinti is recited amidst the gathering of the females, children and the common folk.
If a generalization is to be made, it may be generally stated that the policy within the totem group is determined by a group leader, whether he emerged through discussion or are formally chosen depending on the size of a group. From the perspective of the resources it controls and its importance in the society, this leading position may carry considerable power even in small-scale organization. The nature of leadership within any single group may be fixed being determined by such inherent criteria as age or sex or by more changeable factors, such as length of membership or prolonged capacities. Almost in many tribes the leadership in totem group is informal. Settlement of disputes and policy-making emerged in course of discussion. The discussion sets general policy and so provide the arena for much political manoeuvering. Such informal affluent structures are characteristic of local communities and of small-scale organizations in which membership changed easily and frequently. Such affluent structures are well detectable in Mahali and Malpaharia society.

The largest political unit in the tribal society under our consideration is a village or a cluster of villages, a sub-division of the whole people or a unified state. The amount of power, the smaller groups wield in the society, is determined by their relationship to this overall organization. This may be apparent from the nature of the group itself. Thus, the Hembram of the Santal community is gradually rising as the predominant totemistic group in relation to the overall tribal organization.

A good number of totemistic groups converge together in order to build up a broad social organization, which is controlled by a council of five men or Monrehor. Amongst the tribes, belonging to the hunting stage of culture, the village Council of five men is not found, though traces of such an organization are detected during seasonal festivals. The seasonal festivals of hunting peoples are organized under the supervision of five elderly men chosen at random under the temporary designation of Manjhi.
Jog-Manjhi, Parganait, Naiki, etc. The hunting people prefer to run the village-Council under the leadership of a single head, commonly designated as Lāyā or Nāiyā, who acts as the central figure of social, political, economic as well as religious activities of the community. Among the people living in hill-cultivation-stage the village leadership corresponds to that of the people living in plain agriculture phase.

The social structure of the tribes under our consideration is not detached from the groups known as economic classes, like Karmali, Chikbaraik, Lohra and Janguru or Witch-doctors who act as the medicinemen. The Malpaharia Demano, Deashi of the Koras constitute such groups of medicinemen. They are the vital organs of the society, who act in co-operation with the headman of the village-Council. However, in spite of the prevalence of economic classes like Karmali, Lohra etc. caste-characteristics are conspicuous by their absence. No hierarchical tradition has been evolved among the tribes on the basis of such class-interests.

RITUALISTIC PRACTICES & BEHAVIOUR

The rituals associated with the life-cycle, from conception and pregnancy to death and burials are very fascinating in view of their inner meaning or the essential truth. The tribals of the Damodar valley have designed symbolical frames of rituals in order to maintain a prolonged culture in lifestyle, basically conservative in nature. Even in changing circumstances, the rituals are followed with tenacity, even though the common people are unaware of the basic components. The rituals may be classified under the following categories:

(a) CONCEPTION AND PREGNANCY
(b) THE BEGINNING OF LIFE
CONCEPTION AND PREGNANCY:

General:

In the tribal world, various myths are prevailing over the stages of life. Normally, common people do not consider conception as a result of sexual act. Among the Santals and other Mundari groups of people, it is held that a child comes into the womb of the mother, when the spirit of forefather on ancestor descends on her. They try to establish that a man and a woman may copulate many times, but conception does not occur on every occasion of sexual act. Pregnancy is, according to them, a gift of their ancestor, who desires to be reborn on earth in order to complete the unfulfilled course of activities in the previous birth.

Since ancestor is closely related with the birth of child, a couple aspiring to have babies must at the first instance offer oblation to the ancestor who, according to them, might assume the form of some animal or bird. Thus, among the Davidian speaking peoples, the spirit of ancestor takes the shape of Kudro, Kudure or Kudurai or horse. The ancestor is worshipped with the offering of earthen images of horses. Even in fertility-rituals for bumper crops, earthen images of horses are installed on the corners of the plot of land for worship. Horse-worship is not the single ritual for attaining the purpose of bringing child on earth. The spirit of the husband is sometimes considered to be the representative of the spirits of the ancestors. In order to appease the spirit, they present offerings to the phallic symbol, which they designate as Mandarsala. Whether among the
Davidian speaking people or Mundari speaking people, knowingly or unknowingly, mud is considered to be the symbolic representation of semen. The mandarsala or any type of phallic symbol must be anointed with the liquid mud with the inherent objective of bringing forth the effect of physical union, through which the spirit of the husband may bring the blessings to the woman in the form of a child. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that water symbolises the hormonal secretion out of the female bodies during physical union. Profuse watering is considered efficacious for giving birth to the child. The playing with mud and water in the fertility rituals during spring-festivals actually represent this inner meaning.

The phenomena of multiple birth is ascribed to the outcome of eating twin fruits, like banana, cucumber etc. After puberty, there is strict prohibition for a girl to eat any sort of twin fruits, to avoid multiple birth, which according to them, is the birth of good and evil simultaneously. Twin brothers or sisters never become alike and they believe, twins always act in enemity with each other, ultimately causing death to one. This belief is focussed in the ritual of avoidance of eating of twin fruits by those who have attained puberty.

Similarly, a mother, while having a child, avoids plucking leaf from the tree lest the leaf is torn in two parts. The belief is that tearing into two parts would lead to the tearing of the limbs or the earfold of the baby. The birth of a deformed baby is apprehended thereafter. Normally, a child with nasal deformation is considered to be the effect of such an act on the part of the mother.

Child-birth is seriously treated by the tribals. Hence, the females are subjected to various taboos. Some of the taboos are: (i) restriction of the women to visit the places like cremation ground, grave-yard, the place where animal is slaughtered, visit to the altar of Jaher etc., (ii) avoidance
of certain foods, like molasses, fruits with multiple seeds, listening to the catcalls from wild cat etc., (iii) lying with the husband on the same bed at the advanced stage of pregnancy, avoiding the companion of widows without child, whom they consider to be equivalent to witch, attending the husband after his return from hunting etc.

All these taboos can hardly be explained, because, the secrets are known only to the Janguru, who alone knows the social injunctions propounded by Supreme God, like Marag Buru or Dharmesh.

Some of the magical words have a close relation with the motherhood of the tribals. Khekhel is a term of that type meaning the earth. Among the Dravidian-speaking people, a child-bearing woman is considered to be the Khekhel of the society. Therefore, she requires fencing to protect her fruits, that is child. It is the injunction of the tribal society that woman must wear her cloth with multiple knots at her waist. If the woman forgets to use knots, she may be attracted with malevolent souls like alchies. A child-bearing mother is to be protected not alone by the husband but the society also. The Parganait enjoins various 'do nots' to guard the mother.

The occasion of birth in human life is very critical and is fraught with various types of dangers. To control these dangers, protection against any external harm is ensured through elaborate socio-religious rituals involving the help of the benevolent Bonga or Nad. These socio-religious rituals satisfy the emotional needs of restoring hope and confidence, so that the life-crises are set off. By observing these rites the tribals virtually consecrate the crisis and marginal situation in individual and collective life. The gravity of the event is marked by a whole repertoire of ideas regarding pollution and purification.
In tribal society, children are considered very important because of their potential working ability. A child is so important, especially a son, that a husband can lawfully divorce his wife, if she is found to be barren and vice-versa. A wife can divorce her husband, if he is found to be sterile. A couple always consult a Raranic, who prescribes various medicines and rituals for having children. If the prescription of Raranic fails, recourse is had in super-natural aids. The woman approaches an Ojha who divines whether bongas are blocking the way. If this is so, the Bonga is said to be transferred into a fowl.

The various precautions which a pregnant Santal mother must observe may be broadly divided into two categories: (i) those meant to protect the mother and child from the unsatisfied souls of the dead, and (ii) those enjoined because of their effect on the physical appearance or the character of the child. Among the precautions in the first category we find that a pregnant woman must not take any life, nor must she look upon or touch a human corpse. Contact with a corpse is believed to transmit danger. She must not weep when a death occurs. She must never go near rivers and streams where curins are supposed to dwell. She must not walk over the straw- rope (bor) used for binding bandis (bundles for storing grain). She must not lie down in the courtyard or any other open space lest bongas and a particular type of bird called Puni-cere, 'might fly across her body'. She must not put a flower of the Kanthal-tree (jackfruit) in her hair, lest the child should shrivel in the womb as a Kanthal-flower does when it dries.

As regards precautions in the second category, during a thunder-storm a pregnant woman must keep indoors and put her fingers in her ears so that the child in the womb does not hear the noise and be born a coward. She is not to make bread, lest her child's ears be wrinkled, nor must she plant or break turmeric roots, lest the fingers of her child be
forked, or the child gets an extra finger. She must not make leaf cups, lest the child be born with a split lip, nor look upon an elephant, lest her child's tongue be very long and his ears be large and flappy. Certain restrictions are also imposed on the child's father. Thus, for example, he must strictly observe the rule against taking any life and must avoid all contact with dead bodies. He is to refrain from eating the flesh from head of an animal offered in sacrifice or slain in hunt.

THE BEGINNING OF LIFE:

Mundari Group:

Birth, according to the Mundari belief, is rarely attended with any difficulty. In case of a difficult delivery, an Qjha is called upon to divinise whether a bonga is present. If this is asserted, a vow is taken to make the proper sacrifice in the case of a speedy delivery. A very unfortunate event occurs, if any witch-minded fellow casts evil eye on the mother, she may forestall the speedy delivery by inserting nails on certain trees or on the posts of the door of the house, where the mother is kept. The magic effect of such insertion of the nails is so prompt that the mother feels instantly by feeling severe pain in the womb, without causing the smooth delivery of the body. The danger is removed only by extracting the nail from the identified area.

The placenta and the 'afterbirth' are buried near the main door of the room where the delivery has taken place. The Mundari people assert that the reason for burying the 'afterbirth' is to avoid its eating by the animals, because should it be eaten by a dog or any other animal, the mother becomes sick and die. They also believe that if the 'afterbirth' is buried deep in the ground, the difference in age between the present child
and the next becomes long. If it is, however, buried near the surface, another birth may be expected after a short time. The Mundari people do not talk of their 'birthplace' but refer to it as 'the village where their afterbirth was buried'. As soon as the child is born, the women present cry out the news to the husband who, taking a large stick, repeatedly beats the roof of the house so as to drive away any lurking bhuts or curins. When the other villagers hear that a birth has taken place in their village, they ask Dipii se bharia? which means, 'Does it carry on the shoulder (a boy) or does it carry on the head (a girl)?'

When a child is born, the house is considered ritually unclean. This ritual uncleanness is shared by the whole village. The bongas of the sacred grove are said to become defiled. No festival or bonga-worship is held in the village, nobody drinks or dines in the house where the child has been born, till the purification ceremony is observed. One ceremony, performed on the day of birth, is meant to protect the mother and the child. This ceremony is known as Met Halan, which literally means 'lifting the eye'. The mother then fills a leaf-cup with rice-bear and gives it to the mid-wife who throws away its contents on her left side. This is repeated three times and is believed to render both the child and the mother immune from any imminent danger.

The cleansing ceremony after birth is called Janam Chatiar. Janam means 'birth' and chatiar is a word connected with the Hindi word chhut which means 'polluting'. This ceremony may be said to have a threefold functions: (i) it purifies the house and the village from the defilement caused by the birth of a child, (ii) it gives a child a name, thus formally admitting it into its father's clan and sub-clan, also giving it the protection of its father's spirits, (iii) it incorporates the child into the tribe.

Name-giving is an essential part of the Janam Chatiar ceremony.
In giving a name to the child, the father removes all traces of illegitimacy, if any, recognizing the child as his own. In so doing, the child is given the protection of its father's bongas. The name is chosen by the parents of the child. In assigning a name, however, they follow a traditional formula. Provided the marriage is not in the ghar jawae or ghardi jawae form, the first-born son is named after his paternal grandfather, and the second after his maternal grandfather, the third receives the name of his paternal grandfather's eldest brother, while the name of the maternal grandfather's eldest brother is given to the fourth son. Other male offsprings, if any, consecutively receive the name of their paternal grandfather's brothers and maternal grandmother's brothers. Daughters receive the name of the equivalent female relatives in the same order. In the case of the father being a ghar jawae or ghardi jawae, the naming order is reversed, that is, names on the maternal side come first, by following these traditionally established practices in naming their children. Thus, the Mundari people perpetuate the memories of their ancestors. In the case of twins, the names are drawn from Hindu mythology. Thus, if both the twins are male, they are named Ram and Lakhan, and if female, Chitra and Khapra. If one is male and the other female, they are named Ram and Chita.

It is interesting to note that most of the Mundari speaking people are given two names. One is called mul or bhitri nutum which literally means 'inner' or 'private' name, and the other is called bahna or cetan nutum which literally means 'upper' or 'outer' name. The bhitri nutum of the child must correspond to that of the relative after whom it is called. The cetan nutum is a kind of nickname. The conclusion of the ceremony is marked by the drinking of gruel made out of boiled rice-water (dak mandi) with nim leaves. This is why this ceremony is also called Nim Dak Mandi.

When a child is born to a Santal girl out of wedlock, the girl's father and household are semi-outcasted (Pante-Begar) and they can only return
to the tribe by arranging a father for the child. This can be done in two ways. First, if a person is proved to be the genitor, whether he accepts the paternity or not, he either has to marry the girl or pay for a 'bought husband'. Second, if the village cannot prove who the real father is, then a substitute father is arranged. In both instances, the Nim Dak Mandi ceremony removes all traces of illegitimacy and the child takes to the bongas of his father.

Dravidian Group

Relation of a new-born baby with the spirits of ancestor is assumed to be so intimate that a necessity arises among the Dravidians to cut off the connection of the mother with the ancestor's spirits and village-deities of her father. A special ritual designated as Joda Kamna is observed with the object of snapping such imagined connection. The ritual is inaugurated with the invitation of the father of the child-bearing woman. He comes to his son-in-law's place with a few kinsmen of his own. They are received with the usual formalities. Their feet are washed, and they are seated on a mat in an open space a little away from the house and are offered tobacco and lime to chew. A pig, now-a-days often substituted by a female sheep, is then brought out and some grains of arua-rice are placed on the ground before it, and while the animal is eating the rice, the elders of the village sprinkle rice on its head, saying 'from this day may ye, oh ancestor-spirits, deotas (deities) and bhuts (spirits) of the pregnant woman's father have no concern whatsoever with her. Leave her ye ancestor-spirits, deities and ghosts'. The pig is decapitated with an axe. Then the assembled guests enter the house of the husband of the woman and are regaled with rice-bear. When rice and meat have been cooked, they have a hearty meal. After chewing tobacco mixed with lime, and after mutual salutations the pregnant woman's people take leave of her husband's people. Similarly
rituals are also observed among the Mundari speaking peoples of Chhotonagpur13.

Difficult labour is ascribed by the Dravidians to some evil spirit or to the evil eye. To facilitate delivery, the woman is made to cough. In a case of difficult and protracted labour, imitative magic-rituals are practised, such as, taking off the covers of all earthen vessels. If this expedient fails, another is tried. A handful of rice is fried on an earthen pan and distributed among all present. It is said, however, that this step hardly requires to be taken, inasmuch as the mere utterance of the works "put the frying-pan over the fire" generally brings about a speedy delivery.

Another ludicrous, but curious expedient is sometimes adopted. A man goes to a tamarind tree, with lightning, stands against it and strips off a portion of its bark where it touches his waist. The man now goes with this bark to the door of the 'lying-in room' which is forthwith closed against him, thrusts one end of the bark through a hole in the door, and remains standing there holding the other end of the bark with his hands. The woman has to fasten her gaze on this bark to facilitate delivery. As soon as delivery takes place, the man is informed about it and takes out the bark for, otherwise, it is believed, inversion of the uterus is sure to occur.

The birth14 of a child is, no doubt, a memorable event in a family, in so far as it helps to preserve the lineage of man through generations. Man is dead in a single birth, but man is immortal through births or generations. Therefore, a baby is holy and the most precious belonging, not only of the parents, but all the members of the household and the community. The welfare of the baby is also the prime consideration of all members of the community. The welfare of the newborn is ensured with the ritual of Paisari. The main prayer of the Paisari rituals runs thus. "Here is the Paisari-offerings to ye all for the welfare of this new-born babe. May the babe live
up to a ripe old age”.

Observances in connection with the Paisari ceremony are more elaborate. The village-priest is called in and on his arrival a grey chicken (in some places, either a black or a red chicken), a small quantity of arua-rice on a leaf-plate, and an anna or two as price of the offering are placed before him. The priest first takes up the leaf-plate in his hands and waves it round and round over the head of the babe and finally touches babe's head with the leaf-plate which he now puts down on the ground again. He then takes up the chicken and similarly waves it over the head of the child, touches its head with it, and then takes the fowl, etc. home and there sacrifices the chicken to the presiding-spirits of the village, uttering the spell, referred to above. The heart of the sacrificed fowl is now extracted and a bit of flesh from its neck taken out and both are enclosed in an envelope made of a folded-up sal-leaf. This meat is then roasted over a fire. The rest of the flesh is boiled with rice in the form of tahari. The priest then scrapes off with his fingers bits of this roasted heart and offers them to the spirits (by dropping the meat on a leaf-plate on the ground), and similarly offers a libation of rice-beer. Then the priest takes a drop of rice-beer. In a few villages, one or two other elders of the village (as panches) are also present. They along with the Pahan take up each a leaf-cup in their hands. The three leaf-cups are now filled with rice-beer. And the three men pour on the ground a portion of the rice-beer each from his leaf-cup by way of libation to the ancestor-spirits, saying, “Today we are making Paisari of so-and-so (names the child’s father). Divide this amongst yourselves, amongst all your relatives and friends either on this side of the river or beyond it”. The sacrificial rice-beer left in the three leaf-cups is then mixed with the rest of the rice-beer in the vessels; and this sanctified liquor is distributed to all present. Then the tahari (sacrificial meat boiled with rice) is similarly distributed and eaten.
The child and also the mother must be protected against evil spirits as well as from the evil eyes of the neighbours. The tribal is afraid more of the evil spirits than of the human beings. It is, therefore, essential for Dravidian family to take precautions against Bhuts. To guard the mother and her babe against the attacks of these spirits a cane or a stick, preferably an iron-tipped one, as also an axe or a sickle, or other weapons made of iron, are placed by the bed-side close to the mother's head. Iron, so the Dravidian believes, is feared by evil spirits. A handful of mustard-seeds is also tied up at one end of the woman's cloth, so that evil spirits may not approach her in the apprehension that the mustard-seeds will be flung at them, should they venture to do so. It is believed that an evil spirit must pick up every grain of mustard, an almost interminable task, before it can proceed to other business.

On the eighth or ninth day after birth, Dandakatta ceremony is performed. A spirit-doctor (mati) is called in. In some places, the paternal grandfather or the sister's husband is preferred, provided such a relative has the necessary knowledge. A hen's egg, a small bhelwa-twig, a little rice-flour, a little coal-dust, and a little burnt clay from the hearth are placed before him, and with these he draws a diagram, representing a magic symbol on the ground. The egg is inserted into the forked end of the twig, and placed over the diagram. The three colours, red (or the burnt clay of the hearth), white (of the rice-flour) and black (of the coal dust) are believed to represent the rainbow, the largest and most powerful bow in heaven or earth and, therefore, most potent in warding off the evil eye and the evil attention of malignant spirits. A drop of the oil of the bhelwa fruit may spoil one's eye, and so the bhelwa twig is believed to scare away the evil eye. The man who officiates at the ceremony of 'cutting the evil teeth' sits in front of the diagram and recites in a sing-song tone a long story, the first part of which gives the traditional account of the origin and multiplication of mankind, and the institution of agriculture, and the second
part commemorates the discovery of iron and gives the traditional origin of the gods and spirits. All the time the man recites the story, he goes on rubbing with his hands some arua rice placed on a winnowing basket. When the recital is finished, the man takes up the egg in his left hand, sprinkles rice over it with his right hand, and says, 'O Dharme, I am offering arua rice to Thee. From today may so-and-so's house and family be shunned by evil spirits and by persons with the evil eye, as bitter jhinga and bitter lana (pumpkin) are thrown away by men. May nowhere, in dense forests and roads, stumps of trees or prickly thorns injure. "Now I am sacrificing this (egg). Now I have offered it. Now I am breaking it". The Dandacutta ceremony is concluded by distributing the baked yolk of the egg, first to the lord Dharme and then to the children, present during the ceremony. The entire ritual is purported towards bringing unqualified welfare for the new-born.

The name giving ceremony is known as Name-Pinjna. A asol or real name is selected by the mysterious process of the floating rice-grains. The real name is not given out to outsiders, for fear of the name being used as a handle for sorcery or witchcraft to harm the person.

A child is formally admitted into the community through Chhatti-ceremony. This is generally celebrated on the sixth day from the birth, but sometimes later. Relatives and neighbours of the parents of the new born child are invited to the house. On the appointed day, the members of the child's family and their near kinsmen have their nails pared and their beards shaved on this occasion, and the babe's head is shaved with the exception of a tuft of hair on the crown. The guests are treated to a hearty dinner with plenty of rice-beer.

Rituals have been enumerated above with specific objectives behind them. Apparently, it is evident that these rituals are meaningless activities,
simply, engendering a craze or psychological morbidity towards certain functions of a group of religious practitioners. But a deep insight reveals that these are not at all products of insanity of certain idle brains, but events of immense significance both from social and individual point of view. These rites are generally known as the 'rites of passage'. The rites of passage have specific protective, propitiatory, purificatory and productive purposes. Not only that, these rites have social functions also, in so far as, they build up the social personality in the individual. Most of the rituals are symbolic and congregational. These rites and ceremonies help to re-enact the community-relationship of dependence and fellowship with their spirits and in so doing they virtually reinforce the community's own solidarity and reaffirm its own value.

THE COMING OF AGE

General:

Between childhood and adulthood human beings for the first time receive the greatest power they will ever possess. The ability to reproduce, to have children, comes gradually, usually during the period from 12 to 17 years of age. This period is referred to as puberty.

It is marked in both boys and girls by a growing desire for adult sexual relations, by a maturing of the genitals and a number of other physical changes. For boys it means the growth of facial and body hair and the deepening pitch of the voice. In girls the breasts develop and pubic hair grows, while changes also take place in the overall body shape particularly in the pelvis.

The most dramatic aspect for boys is the ejaculation of semen and
for girls the first menstruation. The appearance of menstrual blood is such a definite sign of change that puberty ceremonies for girls usually accompany this actual physical change of the body in pre-literate societies. But since no similar specific moment can be pin-pointed for a boy, an arbitrary time is often chosen, perhaps a convenient occasion once a year, when a group of boys can be initiated together.

The dramatic change which takes place in children at puberty is of great importance both to them and to the society in which they live. The ability to have children is the sign of adulthood and once it has happened, adolescents must be treated differently both by their family and by the wider society to which they belong. But this, combined with the fact that the change is gradual, presents a problem for many peoples of the world. What sign can be used by people to know that the child, from that point onwards, must be treated in a totally new way, a way appropriate for a fully adult member of society? Puberty rituals are, therefore, not confined in a particular season in all societies. Initiation ceremony is nevertheless important in all societies of the world, and on the whole, the gradual passage from childhood to adulthood is filled with stresses and strains for everyone concerned.

Mundari Group:

Puberty rituals mark the change of age. In spite of that, it would be wrong to assume that all initiation ceremonies allow the initiate to indulge in sexual freedom, although this may be the case for some peoples. The Murias of India\textsuperscript{16} recognize puberty by allowing young girls and boys to enter special communal houses where they live together until their marriage, and may take part in a number of trial unions. In some societies, the recognition of puberty actually marks the end or a diminution of sexual freedom. In the Trobriand Islands small children are encouraged to take
part in general promiscuity which ends at adolescence and is replaced by a much sober and regulated sexual life, and in some societies adolescence, especially for girls, may be a period of complete chastity and even isolation until marriage.

Among the Mundari people, two rites are performed to mark their changing nature. A boy who has reached the age of seven is branded on the left arm, above the wrist. He is given one, three, five or seven marks according to his father's fancy and is expected to stand the operation without evincing pain. The marks have no connection with his clan and are rather an indication of his tribal status, a sign that he is truly Santal. 'If a boy is not branded, he will suffer in the after-world. He will be given a caterpillar as large as a log and will be made to hug it'.

The same calamity awaits a Santal girl who, for any reason, has failed to be tattooed. As soon as she is ten or twelve, her left arm and left breast are pricked with a variety of marks. The patterns vary with the village and, like the marks of a boy, they are not intended as a clue to her family or clan. It is rather as a means of identification as well as an aid to beauty that the marks are given, to add a bluish tinge to the dark chocolate of the glossy skin. Until a girl is married only her left side is tattooed and it is when she has joined her husband that her right arm and right breast are also pricked.

Dravidian group:

Among the Dravidian speaking peoples, both tattooing and marking scar (known as Shika marks) are practised. In addition to this the ritual known as Juro-ear (tying the hair for the first time) is practised. The hair-tying ceremony is very elaborate. On this occasion, oil is poured on the
heads of the boys and girls, the hairs of the girls are tied up by an elderly woman in a knot and inserting wooden hair-combs into it. It is held that, after this ceremonial hair-dressing, a boy might be admitted into the Bachelors' House (Dhumkuria), and a girl might be married.

The initiation ceremonies of other tribal peoples are insignificant in so far as ritualistic contents are concerned. Only mother addresses their daughters on the secrets of life, when the first signs of puberty are revealed, which are rhetorically described as 'blossoming of flowers'. The Karmabinti of the Mundari people as well as the Dravidian group refer to various ethical values attached with the changes of life-cycle, the values are held to be eternal and cannot be altogether changed with the personal motivation of an individual. Since the materialistic basis of tribal life is fraught with various dangers, most of the instructions concern protection of the life from evil souls hovering around the earth.

Dhumkuria System

Dravidian Group:


The tribal peoples always put serious emphasis on the transitions or phases of life. Attainment of manhood, therefore, is considered with serious concern both by the person himself attaining the maturity and the people
of their community where the individual is born and brought up. Dormitory or Bachelors' House variously known as Dhumkuria (Pello-Erpi & Jonkh-Erpi) and Gitiora are the places where the first ritual of the transition from boyhood to manhood is enacted. The Gomo-Gosain or the supporting pillar of the roof of Dhumkuria building becomes the presiding deity of such rituals performed at day and night during the induction of a child into the tribe. Gomo-Gosain is an Oraon concept. It may be said that it is a Dravidian concept of the presiding deity of the Dormitory, which is normally divided into three grades. The Oraon boy is admitted into the Dhumkuria at the age of about ten to eleven years, when he is called a Punna Jonkher (New Jawan). Three years later he enters the stage of Majturia Jonkher (Middle Grade Jawan) and after three years, again, he becomes Koha Jokher (higher grade Jawan). He continues in this grade till he is married. A few of the Koha Jonkhers remain in the institution till they have one or two children. The Punna Jonkhers who are just novices dare not talk about sex in presence of any Majturia or Koha Jonkher. This is just a way of their showing respect to the higher social grades. It so happens that a few of the members of the lowest grade (Punna Jonkher) may develop intimate friendship either with the few of the Majturia Jonkhers, or with Koha Jonkher. In this way the secrets of the Koha Jonkher are passed on through a few to all the members of Majturia Jonkher, and through a few of the Majturia Jonkhers to all of the Punna Jonkhers. In this way all the members of the Dhumkuria are interlinked.

The Dhumkuria life virtually remoulds the personality of a tribal man. It is during the first few months of the school period that there is a development of "gang feeling" in every child. He picks up a company of a few of his class-mates and forms a group. He always prefers remaining with other members of his group and a sense of "group belongingness" develops in him. Gradually, one of the members of the group is perceived by other members as an individual of outstanding ability in one sphere or
the other and he is informally chosen as their leader. The idea of leadership and fellowship also develops during this period. Wherever they go and whatever they do, they prefer that all four or five of them be at the same place. This develops in them a feeling of sympathy for each other.

Sympathy is a tendency to experience sad feelings of emotion expressed or manifested by the members of one's own group. The sharing of sympathy does perform a useful social function. It knits them more closely with their fellowmen. Through sympathetic reaction they get a fuller understanding of the sad feelings of others and thereby a uniformity of behaviour is created in society. When a Punna Jonkher falls ill or is indisposed, other members of his group look after him and see that he comes round as early as possible.

When a child enters the Dhumkuria as Punna-Jonkher, he learns the norms and values of his culture mainly by two processes: (i) process of instruction and (ii) process of imitation. The process of instruction is rendered by the members of the higher grades, the Majturia and the Koha-Jonkhers, in the form of "do's" and "don'ts" followed by reward and punishment in the form of appreciation and denouncement. Imitation plays an important role in patterning the behaviour. The principle of imitation, especially in the Oraon's Dhumkuria, is not just a passive imitation. They imitate, because they are forced by their cultural needs and values to imitate.

Dhumkuria serves as a sleeping club for the Oraon youths. This sleeping together night after night, for years together, nurtures in them "we-feeling" and a feeling of brotherhood and a close primary-group relationship emerges. The Oraon boys and girls go to the Jatra and complete in dancing and music with the other Parha people. This encourages their co-operative tendencies and this association helps to shape the
group-life in a concrete form.

In the life of the dormitory or Dhumkuria, various types of rituals are performed, with the purpose of good life, social integrity, as well as procreative stimulation. One of the rituals, known as Birio, though apparently romantic in nature, actually enacts the motive of a conservative tribal, as sense of trouble due to the birth of a female child. Birio stands for an ear ornament. The Birio of a girl is stolen by the boys, at night, stealthily after dancing before the Mutri-Chandi, the presiding deity of Dhumkuria-rites. The stolen Birio is buried. All the boys urinate into the hole and fill it up with earth. While these are being done, the boys shout in their own language meaning "May girl-children decrease and boy children increase". According to S. C. Roy, this ceremony had a magical power of decreasing female population and strengthening procreative powers of the young man "so as the enable them to indefinitely increase the huntsmen in the tribe".

Another rite is described by Roy as occurring twice a year, once before the phagu-festival in the month of March and the other before the Sarhul in April-May. The Mahato takes the boys to some secluded spot, carrying a new thin Sal-stick and a Sal-sapling in which a slit has been made so as to resemble the vagina. The boys smear each other with red earth. The Sal-sapling is planted firmly in the earth. The small children have to strip themselves naked and the older ones spit into the slit in the sapling. The little boys now insert, in turn, their penile organs into the saliva-filled-slit. As each boy does so, the Mahato hits him with the Sal-stick. Here, says Roy, "we see a persistent endeavour to gain an accession of power through alliance with the powerful force of nature and of man. The saliva of efficient young men and contact with the powerful Sal-sapling and the Sal-stick are evidently supposed to promote fecundity, and the object of the ceremony seems to be a magical accession of power to the procreative organs".
The Dhumkuria-boys are given training to perform the ceremony of driving away the spirits that cause cattle-disease. We may quote the observation of Sachchidananda. "At about mid-night the bachelors gathered in the dancing ground, stripped themselves completely naked and each took up cudgel in his hand. A village cow-herd with a wooden bell suspended by his neck was chased by the youths with shouts resembling the bellowing of cattle. When the former was chased out of the bounds of the village he quickly dropped the cow-bell and beat a hasty retreat. Thus, the disease was driven away from one village to the bounds of another village. The practice continued till the disease spirit was driven away from the entire neighbourhood". S. C. Roy has also described this peculiar rite of driving of the cattle disease performed at night by naked Jonkheras.

In the Dhumkuria, the most interesting feature is that the education in social matters is largely carried on by the adolescents themselves, orally and by example, on purely traditional lines. The Dhumkuria provides training to the natives in all matters relating to socio-economic sphere of Oraon life. By telling the folk-tales, stories, myths, legends and riddles, the younger generation is acquainted with their traditional social and cultural customs and practices. In the absence of written literature, myths and legends help in maintaining the tribal traditions. The training in music, songs and dances is also given in Dhumkuria and Akhara to the young girls and boys. Not only that, Dhumkuria's boys and girls help immensely in the social functions in the community life, organising the community feasts on the occasion of marriage, disposal of the dead, and even foundation of the community-house in the villages. Each Dhumkuria also serves as guest-house, during socio-religious functions organized in their community from time to time. Each dormitory has an emblem of its own. The emblems are like the following :-

1. Ghotus (crocodiles)
2. Ghodo (horses)
3. Hathi (elephant)
4. Enjo (fish)
5. Kula (umbrella)
6. Eagle
7. Negara (big drum)
8. Rampa-champa (decorated cloth)
9. Unt (camel)
10. Kuda (umbrella)

Dhumkuria is virtually the central unit in the village life of the tribals, where the primary attention of the elders and social leaders are drawn to the fellows. The villagers receive the service of the Dhumkuria boys and girls, in the construction of a house, in putting tiles on the roof, in digging the well, in making the land suitable for cultivation and, in fact, in all other public works of the village. The villagers approach the Dhanger-Mahto and Kotwar who direct particular individuals of their Dhumkuria to carry on those works. In return, those who work, are fed properly and the villagers supply Karanj-seed or Karanj-oil for lighting the Dhumkuria and a few logs for the winter-fire in Dhumkuria. The social solidarity found in Dhumkuria reflects, to a great extent, the whole tribal life, characterised with the discipline and conduct of a well-defined ritualistic practices.

Dhumkuria System

Mundari Group:

The Munda community maintain the dormitory system in skeleton form in some parts of Bengal districts, adjacent to Bihar. The boys and girls of the Mundas have separate dormitories. The unmarried boys and girls of
the village sleep there at night. The Munda child grows in the lap of nature. When he or she grows, they become members of this institution which acts as a school. In the dormitory, they learn the folk-tales, traditional customs and laws, agricultural methods, hunting and everything about the community life. When they leave the dormitory, they know all about sex, morals and social customs of the tribe. Thus they get moral and intellectual training in the dormitory. They learn the vital aspects of their culture in the constant company of the members of the tribe.

THE ROAD TO MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

General:

In tribal society, marriage is not always a licence to sexual life, nor is it an arrangement for financial gain or material benefit. In most of the tribes, sex starts in the puberty period, without reprimand from the seniors. Among the Mongoloid people, fecundity of an woman is the basic component which must be tested beforehand for attaining eligibility for marriage. Marriage in tribal concept is the first step to attain a corporate life through the unity or alliance between two families of two different groups or septs. To ensure a good advantageous match, various types of rituals, some symbolic and some supernatural, are resorted to. In tribal communities of Eastern India, it has been observed that most of the rituals have the objective of achieving not of personal pleasure, but of the welfare of the community as a whole. Marriage is, therefore, a socio-religious rite, practised with the society's participation.

The rituals are nothing but the methods to implicate or attract members of the society to the activities at personal level. The personal affair of the man and woman start with a ceremony of betrothal which is
known in Mundari society as Agua. Agua is a term for a negotiator of the match. He makes contact between two families for marriage. But, the etymological meaning of the term Agua is something different. It means advancement, that is, proceeding forward between two young souls for union. Since the love-match is not frequently indulged in, the help of a negotiator is taken. The agua-ritual indicates the real meaning of the term which is absolutely personal in nature. The ritual consists of going of a group of persons from the groom's village to the house of the girl where they are entertained with rice-beer and pig's meat. In the din and bustle of the festival, the innermost and core-ritual of the ceremony is celebrated through the offering of rice-beer, molasses and water, washing the feet with hair etc. Other rituals are observed between the bride and the groom elsewhere. This is practically the betrothal ceremony. After a lapse of several days, months or years, according to the suitability of the parties, the actual marriage ceremony takes place.

The desirability of the match is consecrated through the rituals of the Khed-Norhna, Sagun and Neg-Borey, appexed with the concluding ceremony of Sanni-pahi, which is a step forward towards building a final-bond between the two families (not between the two individuals). Binding the two families has an eternal value in the life of the backward people. This bond is not resolved even by the death of any of the spouse. It continues both in ceremonial affairs and also in material activities like agriculture, trade and small industry, etc.

**Dravidian group:**

The marriage rituals of the Dravidian group of people are numerous and have been elaborately described by the writers like S. C. Roy, S. P. Sinha etc. Rituals just preceding marriage are called Laganbandhi, that is, the fixing the date of marriage. It is done by the parents and relatives of
the groom going to the house of the girl's parent. The mango-leaf, a potful of water and a piece of red cloth are adequate to compose the ritualistic ingredients of this auspicious occasion. The second ritual is the big relationship feast of Koha-Pahi. It includes a host of activities both on the part of the groom and the bride. The drinks served in its different phases are named variously like Jurub-Khittur-borey, Nag-Borey or Kheta-una-borey and finally, the Prasadi or consecrated rice-beer which is drunk by all participants in the ceremony. Thirdly, Pum-Mejhna or Phul-Khusi, a ritual of sticking flowers into the hairs of the relatives of both parties (Bride & Bride groom). Fourthly, Bahi-jorna or clasping the hands, in which the relatives of the bride and the bridegroom clasp hand with each other. Finally, Athkha-Kadrika, which is nothing but the cementing the bond of two families through the visit of the women-folk of the groom's family to the inmates of the family of the bride.

In all the ceremonies or rituals Gor-lagg (obeisance by touching the feet) is practised. Gor-lagg, according to the Dravidians, is nothing but submission of the human heart under the feet of the person with whom one likes to be intimate.

The actual marriage rituals21 include Parchhna (the welcome), Gurkhi tirkhna (the bride groom pressing the bride's heel with his toes), Isung sindri (anointing with oil and vermillion), Gundari dhukna (entering the house of the bride groom), Khiri tengna (propounding riddles), Sava Sindri (anointing with the vermillion before the assemblies), Mandi-Ona (eating rice together), Sindri pabe (anointing the forehead and the parting of the bride's hair with vermillion), Era-Kirtan and Baharaont (taking back the bride from the bride-groom's house), Jhara gunda (going back to the husband's house). Ach othorna (extracting thorns) etc.

Finally, it is significant that among the Dravidian speaking peoples.
marriage between persons is indissoluble from spiritual point of view. If under certain adverse circumstances the male or female is divorced and remarriage is practised elsewhere, the situation is explained to be the going away of the spirit of the bride or the bride groom which, in case of remarriage, must be appeased through offerings in the Phulki-stone erected in the village.

**Mundari group:**

The betrothal ceremony amongst the Mundari people takes place with much sancting. The match maker goes to the house of Jagmanjhi, the assistant to the village headman of the village-Council. He confesses that they have come for a good reason to the house of one of his men. Actually, they are searching for a new pot. He requests the Jogmanjhi to show them one. The Jogmanjhi replies "Is it a new pot or a used one that you are looking for?" The answer comes: 'A new pot in beautiful condition is what we want and we have already seen one in a house. If there is no other applicant, please show us this pot first'. 'Wait, while I ask about it' replies the Jogmanjhi. 'There are quite a lot of pots here and then we shall certainly be able to fix you up'. The ultimate outcome of this discourse is selecting the girl and the selection is consecrated through the ritual of 'believing the word'. In this context, it may be mentioned that the simple people of this tribe do not know anything to be 'lie'. A simple word of the girl, that she is quite free to court hardship in the family of the future groom would suffice for the preparation of the marriages ceremony. The irony of fate is that, in case, the marriage becomes invalidated, the girl is not blamed for her lies or a feminine articulation. The unsuccessful event of the marriage is explained by referring to the dictum prevalent in their own traditions of oral culture, which has been translated into English by David Gascoyne.24 a known anthropologist, in English:
'Supposing the sex
A cruelty and dread in the thighs
A gaping and blackness a charred
Trace of feverish flames'

However, the ritual of "believing the word" makes the way for the coming events of the Bapla ceremony, the main theme of which is uniting together for life. One of the bapla sereng is sung on the occasion of betrothal.

"You have no wife
I have no husband
We have tied our lives together
If you leave my love now
I shall drift away
Like a leaf
Tossed in a whirl-wind".

The final event of match-making is marked by the ritual known as 'a recognition by clothes'. By this ritual, exchanges of cloth happens between the two parties. Every visit becomes full of merry-making and the women of both parties smear each other with oil and turmeric. Any unbecoming incident during this match-making ritual with oil and turmeric may be held responsible for dissolution of the agreement. The restrained behaviour of the people concerned is attested by the observance of the ritual called 're cognition by clothes'.

Among the unmarried boys and girls, certain taboos are observed. The langhan or 'breaking of the taboos' would result in unhappy match, accident in married life or birth of bad children etc. Some of the taboos are as follows :-
(1) A bachelor must not eat the flesh of suia-bird, else his marriage proposal will fail.

(2) A bachelor must not plant a plantain tree, for, if such a tree falls down, with its head to the south, the planter dies.

(3) Youth must not eat an egg which produces a sound, when shaken, else he would get up in his ear.

(4) Youth must abstain from eating brain of an animal, as that turns the hairs grey.

(5) As soon as a child is born, he or she is first given a sip of goat's milk, if available, and then only mother's milk is given after that.

The goat's milk is a taboo to the female children, as it is believed to make the female children quarrelsome.

During the match-making, intimate enquiries are undertaken whether any of the above taboos have been broken by any party knowingly or unknowingly. The female-folk become very particular in this enquiry, because it is held that the future of the girl or the bride depends on how the sanctity of a bachelor's life has been maintained. Interestingly enough, in order to assure themselves of the youthful power of a male, queries are made as to how many Badna festivals have been attended by the youth before starting of the negotiation of the marriage.

Among the Mundari Group of people, the actual marriage ceremony starts with the setting up of a Marowa or marriage-shed in the girl's house, as well as at the residence of the boy. A Marowa actually signifies the villager's co-operation in the marriage-ceremony.
when a Marowa is set up, almost all relatives and villagers lend their helping hand.

The first ritual of the marriage starts on the day before the bride groom's party sets out for the bride's house. The ceremony or ritual is called Duk-bapla or water-marriage. The ceremony starts with the Tetrekuri or anointing all the people, assembled beneath the Marowa with oil and turmeric (sasan & sunum), beginning from the priest and his wife to other village-officials and their wives. The groom's parent and groom are the last to be anointed. Meanwhile, dancing and singing go on to the drumming by the dons. The Jogmanjhi carrying a lota (pot) filled with rice-beer and being accompanied by some people from the girl's house, goes to fetch the ceremonial water. Two girls carry two small earthenware pots, which are called ominous pots (Sagunthili), on their heads having covered them with a yellow cloth (season cirioric), which is later used by the bride. The groom's mother carries a flat basket, on which there is Arua Chawl, Dhubi grass, oil, vermillion and three kori shells. Two paternal aunts of the groom, in turn, carry a sword, arrow and bow. Then the ritual of sword and arrow are celebrated round a small hole, dug at the waterside, where one of the women plays the jesture of shooting at the water, while the other strikes with a sword.

The next ritual is Jawae Kora-ul sakamto, which means the binding of the groom to the mango leaf. The mango-leaf is considered sacred and capable of scaring away evil spirits and influences, that may befall in the married life of the boy. At the groom's house, the ritual Nunutoka ceremony is performed, which is nothing but paying the mother the price for the milk, she fed the boy in his childhood.

While the groom reaches the girl's village, the Balaea or salutation ceremony is performed among the in-laws. The ceremony is concluded with
Gurjom or eating of molasses. After a mock-combat between the males from boy's and girl's parties, the actual marriage starts. The most important programme in the whole marriage ceremony is Sinduradan or smearing the bride's forehead with vermilion. After it, one of the bride's maternal aunts ties together the ends of the clothes of husband and wife and lead them into the house. Before entering the house, Cumoura or waving ceremony or Parchan or purifying ceremony is held. In the house, the couple is served food, which they eat from the same plate. Next day, while the bride and bride-groom get ready to leave for the groom's house, Gidi cummaura is performed. The object of the Gidi cummaura is that the girl may not take away all the prosperity from her parent's house. With the Balaea-Johar or salutations, the bride and the bride-groom leave for the groom's house. In the parting ceremony or Bidah a favourite song is sung by all present, the meaning of which is, 'from today our two villagers have become as one . . . formerly you were strangers and used to pass by our village. Now if any one of your village, passes this way, he must stop and ask for a drink'. Thus the social and moral teaching of the institution of marriage is revealed. In the rites and customs, two fundamental attitudes are stressed. One, the new social involvement of the couple and the consciousness of the Santals on the dependence of the relations for the fulfilment of the life. Secondly, the entire episode of social relation is consecrated, that is given a religious fervour with the purpose of making it everlasting.

The rites and rituals, enumerated above, relate to Kirin bahu bapla only, which is the normal and most popular form of marriage among the Mundari groups of people. There are other forms of marriage, like, Kirin-Jawai Bapla, Tunki dipil bapla, Sangha bapla, Gardi jawai bapla, Itut bapla and Nir-bolok bapla. Itut bapla and Nir-bolok bapla are very rare in the Mundari society. Itut bapla is 'marrying a girl by simply putting vermilion by force' and Nir-bolok bapla is forcibly entering the house of the boy by the girl, who intensely love him. Normally, both these procedures of uniting two
souls is followed by regular marriage, Kirin-bahu-bapla. In the Mundari community, polygamy is avoided and monogamy is preferred. Polygamy is, however, not unknown and not at all condemned. Instances are not wanting when cordial relations between the relatives and peoples of the villages of the girls and boys are maintained where extra-marital relations are established.

DEATH AND BURIAL

General:

"Death is an experience which is common to the entire human race. But people differ widely both in their practical treatment of it and in their understanding of what it means. In an ultimate sense we die alone. Yet in most of the world's societies, death is also a social occasion, a time when family and neighbourhood obligations are taken most seriously."\textsuperscript{23}

Among the tribals of Eastern India, it is considered important to visit the dying. Failure to do so, may be interpreted as a desire for the patient's death and can lead to accusation of killing him by witchcraft. Even where such an interpretation is unlikely, this failure can be regarded as a serious social and moral lapse.

Dravidian people:

Among the Dravidian speaking people, death is considered to be out and out a social phenomenon, when the soul of an individual is taken away by the power unseen in order to chastise those who are living. Death is, therefore, caused according to Dravidian concept due to the wrath of the supreme power, either a Nad or a god like Dr-armshe. Since the wrath of
the spirit implies punishment of a group of people, this is indicated by certain signs much ahead of the actual incident, either through the crow-call, tremor on the eye-lid or the call of the jackal. The signal, if properly understood, can give caution to the relatives and neighbours of a dying man to eradicate the ills and save the victim. Death is perfectly a social occasion among the group under our reference. So, when a Dravidian dies a loud chorus of lamentation and wailing is set up by the female relatives of the deceased. Lamentation for the dead is must, because, if it is wanted, dangers from double sources may haunt the community as a whole. To avoid such an unwanted incident, hired lamenters are also brought to the house to mourn for the day.

The dead body is taken out into the courtyard of the house by the usual door, with its head to the south and feet to the north. As soon as the dead body is taken out of the hut, ashes are strewn on the floor and the doors are shut.

When the corpse is brought out into the courtyard, it is bathed in cold water. If the body is that of a woman whose husband is living, vermilion mixed in oil is anointed on its forehead and in some places on the parting of the hair of the head by some other woman.

In the case of important persons, a small leaf-cup with some oil and a wick placed in it is lighted to serve as a lamp by the side of the dead body. By the side of this lamp, where such lamp is lighted, and in other cases, by the side of the corpse, are placed a basket and a small earthen jar. Relatives and fellow-villagers, on hearing the wailings of the bereaved family, hasten to the house of the deceased, each carrying some paddy (called *baipi*) in a small basket (*nachua*) or on a winnowing basket (*sup*). On their arrival, they go round the empty basket kept by the side of the corpse, and then empty into it the contents of the baskets or winnowing...
fans with their own hands.

The dead-body is placed on a wooden frame, known as Sarha. Carrying of the dead-body to the cremation-ground is generally done by the female relatives of the deceased. Boiled rice, oil and copper-coins are offered to the dead by saying onda, onna akku eman ambkae, Akku nighae daharen irkae. Hurmi rog pap pap hoarki kala, i.e. "Take, eat. Now you have given us up. Now you have seen your way. Go, taking (with you) all our sickness and sins". Here the 'sickness' and 'sins' also imply actually, all the inconveniences caused to the tribe due to paucity of usable materials or, owing to the unkind attitude of the spiritual being.

To the Dravidian speaking people, there is a provision of a temporary burial. If the death occurs before the setting in of the rains, the corps is cremated at once. But, if Dravidian dies after the sprouting of the new paddy seedlings of the year in June-July but before the harvest in November, the dead-body is given a temporary burial in the masan. The final disposal of the dead is done after the harvest by exhuming the corpse.

On return from the cremation ground, the Utur-Khila rite is observed. Through this rite, the ancestors of the clan of the dead person are prayed for the mercy of accepting the deceased into their company. The next ritual in connection with the disposal of the dead is Hochol-pump pesa or gathering the bones. The women collect the bones of the deceased with their left hands, and place it in a jar which is preserved with offerings of half-boiled rice etc. Ekh-Mankha or taking back the shade is the next ritual, which is performed for bringing back the spirit of the dead on the earth at least for a temporary period. The most spectacular ritual is Koha-Benja or the great wedding or Har-Bora, when the earthen ware pot containing the bones are drowned in a stream or pool or water-course. The last two rituals are Padda Kamna or pacifying the village and Fulkhi or erecting the
memorial stone. The Fulkhi stone is actually the monument in memory of the dead. The most notable feature in funeral rites is the use of left hand. According to the Dravidians, right hand is used in wedding and the left hand at funeral, whereas arua-rice is used in marriages and usno-rice is used in funeral.

Mundari group:

Amongst the Mundari speaking people, death does not occur due to natural cause, nor due to an accident, but due to the malignancy of certain bongas, impersonal powers and witchcrafts. The Mundari ideas about life in the future world as opposed to this world are rather confused. But one thing is certain, everybody believes in the survival of the soul after death. The Mundaries believe that, on the death of an individual, his soul is transformed. They say, utok doe hapramena, meaning, he has become a bonga. Death, to accident, or in a childbirth does not enable the soul to achieve full spiritual status. Ritual pollution is observed after the incident of death. No religious observances is encouraged during ritual pollution.

The dead body is carried by the males to the cremation ground where burial is done after placing the burning embers into the corpse's mouth. After cremation, Tel-Nahan or 'oil-washing' ceremony is performed. Shaving of the relatives is done on this occasion. The next step is Bhandan ceremony, whereby the spirit of the dead finally joins the realm of his ancestors. The Bhandan-ceremony is concluded by offering a goat or fowl to the departed spirits. The flesh of the victim is enjoyed by all assembled.

The congregational aspect of the funeral rites, denotes the social implication of the death. The man is not an individual, but a social being. This truth is emphasised in the funeral rites. According to Radcliffe-Brown and other sociologists, these rites and ceremonies re-inforce the
community's solidarity and reaffirm its values. The critical junctures in the life-cycle of the man are replete with danger. Those are tried to be counteracted jointly by the fellow-persons of the man. This sense of social efficacy gives another strength of the internal solidarity of the tribe, that helps, withstand the daily tribulations in the struggle of life on this earth.

There is a sharp difference in the ritualistic behaviour of the tribals, living in the villages with agriculture as the main source of economy. The difference is marked astonishingly in the sphere of attitude. The tribals of rural areas are still clinging to the traditional values of human life on earth controlled by the will of the spiritual beings, living in the hidden world. They believe in the spirits and their effectiveness on the mundane life of man. The rituals are, therefore, obstinately clung to. Deviation is interpreted as a breach of faith in spirit, gods and goddesses. Man cannot live under the displeasure of the powers unknown.

The rituals with regard to the life-cycles of man are pertinently aimed at with bringing in the welfare in the life of the individual. The congregational attachments with the ritual have social implications, no doubt, which is important in the context of achievements of life's good at individual level. The tribals always think from the view point of belonging to a group. Group-involvement is, therefore, essential in the attainment of individual's goal. From this characteristic feature of ritual observances, it would be wrong to deduce that the tribals are more social or socialistic in their approach to life. Basically, each individual of a tribe is selfish-minded and oriented to the efforts of fulfilment of individual interest. But since the reality is fraught with manifold dangers due to unwholesome nature and malevolent and jealous wishes of other persons. The personality of a tribal gets distracted and cannot flourish without the assistance of the fellows of the group to which he belongs. Brian Hall in his essay, on the consciousness on life-values of the downtrodden have emphasised that persons in
the first phase of development, that is, a stage where men struggle for the minimum necessities of life are more self-interested than the people belonging to the fourth phase of development. The hypothesis can be tested effectively, if we delve deep into the mind of a tribal youth, who is more materialistic and self-oriented than other people of their neighbourhood. The socio-economic insecurity, they are placed in, have compelled them to be more social in approach to ritualistic activities, because, they have no other alliance for the achievement of their goal.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RITUALISTIC BEHAVIOUR

Religion as such would become meaningless unless it is fostered through social behaviour of individuals and communities as a whole. The tribals under our consideration compose the autochthons with peculiar environmental conditions encircled by peoples completely different from them, both from cultural and economic point of view. It is, therefore, presumable that the ritualistic behaviour of these peoples had been subjected to two-fold interactions—first, with an inimical natural environment, and then, with an alien set of peoples. The religious rituals consequently have two dimensions. The positive part ensures a fruitful holistic approach, so that the gains of life may either be fortified or newly acquired, while the negative aspect of the rituals is directed towards attempting a neutralisation of the pernicious influences of the objects and forces that put obstacles in the path of success in the struggle of life. The tribals realise that there are two kinds of agencies or forces in this world. The positive agencies are benevolent beings that "give" them, while the negative agencies are evil and malevolent beings that "extract" from them or "take" from them. The second one represent the destructive forces which the tribals try to avoid in every step of life. There are some religious rituals which attempt to bind a tribal individual with the benevolent beings
perpetually and there are also some rituals through which a tribal tries to maintain a distance between the individual and the spirit and thereby ensure an abstinence value.

There are taboos in primitive society, that attempt to ensure an abstinence of an individual from certain objects. Taboos are the "nos" in the life of the tribals. Other rituals, like offering vermilions on a stone that represents a deity, sacrifice of fowl or wild animals before the altar of a deity, wearing red cloth at the time of epidemic, erecting wooden post at the gateway of the village as a mark of sentinel against epidemic, offering flower to the deity etc. are rituals practised with the manifest purpose of entering into a fruitful relation with the supernatural beings in the environment. These rituals, it may be safely concluded, have built up a cultural ethos that actually sponsors within an individual and the society that which in Latin is called "Eros", providing an impulse to go ahead in the path of development.

Rituals may be classified into two broad categories: (a) observance-rituals, (b) subjective-rituals. Rituals under the category 'a' are easily understandable, while rituals under category 'b' are matters of feeling and are sometimes practised on social basis. A pregnant mother (a full mother - as per Mundari term) will never see 'devouring of the moon and sun by a demon' during the eclipse period with the fear that the baby in her womb may likewise be devoured by a demon or a ghost. On the contrary, during sun or moon eclipse she remains sitting erect on her backbone before an artificial disk made either of tin or wood imagined to be the symbol of full moon or sun.

Rituals of category 'a' are normally observed on social basis and have a social bond. Durkheim, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Radin Paul have opined that primitive religion is basically founded on observance-
rituals. The subjective rituals are not parts of religion, but fragments of individual beliefs manifest through individual behaviour. They have also emphasised that whatever we mean by the word 'Culture' is virtually a fomenting product of observance-rituals arising out of the interaction within and outside the society.

There are some rituals among the primitive peoples, which actually involve strong emotional element, but practised so carelessly on an individual basis. Examples of such phenomena may be found in the sex-rituals and puberty-rituals of both boys and girls, even at the risk of some injury at some points.

Among certain Dravidian speaking tribes like the Malpharias a unique practice is found on some occasions to erect the central pole of the house, that supports the roof, in penis-shaped structure and is also represented by a symbol, worshipped in the courtyard on the last day of Chaitra in the name of 'Mandarsala'.

Amongst the Oraons the same practice is found in the worship of Gomo-Gossain, which is very popular among the boys and girls living in Dhumkuria (both Pello-Erpi and Jokh-Erpi). These types of rituals have strong subjective base. These unique features may be categorised as special rituals that are not obligatory nor mandatory, but are occasionally observed with some special consideration.

There are numerous examples of fetishes among the primitive peoples. Durkheim and Malinowski have included these fetishes in the category of observance-ritual. But Brown and others consider these fetishes not to be rituals, but objects with intrinsic magical power and completely outside the area of religious activity. These are, according to him, like elements in physical world that can produce something in
in combination with other elements. Fetishes\textsuperscript{27} have their own motion and can activate on the life of mankind both independently or in combination with others.

Rituals, on the whole, represent the behavioural pattern either of an individual or a society aspiring for success in the struggle for existence. These are manifestations of human craving for long life as well as unhindered growth of life-flow from generation to generation.

\section{RELIGIOUS BELIEFS}

The tribal religious concepts, unlike those of the organized religion, are wholly dependent on a notion of an all-pervading, omnipotent spiritual being, differently designated among various tribes and groups. The Oraons call this religious being as 'Nad'. The Malpaharias attribute the name 'Gossain', while the Santals identify it with Bonga. The omnipresent spiritual entity gets ramified through various objects of nature as well as the events of the world.

The Dravidian speaking Oraons hold the same belief in Nad and considers it to be the life-essence behind all objects of nature, animate and inanimate.\textsuperscript{28} Outside India, similar terms like Mana, Orenda, Tinh and Monitou etc. are found to indicate such universal element of spiritual essence.

The Graeco-Latin word, \textit{Anima}\textsuperscript{29} is the synonym of the English spirit. It was the belief in spirit that formed the foundation of the primitive cult of animism. Animism means the belief in spirits, that is, individual spirits animating individual objects. Animism does not indicate the belief in a single omnipresent inchoate abstract idea universally present in all things
of the Universe. It simply states that particular objects have particular spirits but does not indicate a singular omnipotent spiritual being pervading the universe disregarding the limits of individual entity.

It is really perplexing to answer what is prior to what. Is the universal Bongaism the first step in the thought of the primitive people? Or, is the general abstract concept of universal element of Bongaism a conclusion from the experience of the primitive people in the existence of spirits in particular objects? If the theory of Tylor30 is accepted the second alternative is more plausible. Tylor holds that man's idea about the existence of soul developed from the phenomena of dream and shadow. According to him, primitive men dream about many things while sleeping in his cave and dreamt occurrences of many events under his direct participation, away from his cave or shelter. In his reason, unless there was second self like soul within him, this could not have been possible. Therefore, it was natural for the primitive man to develop a soul concept that animated him while awaking and going out of the body in sleep.

The phenomenon of shadow, according to Tylor, provided the second impulse to the origin of the idea of human soul. A man, in activating state remains upright on his leg. A shadow falls on the ground as a natural consequence. A dead-man or a sleeping-man remains lying on the ground and he has no shadow. A deadman or a sleeping man does not work, while a living man, standing upright and having a shadow, works. In order to keep up the body for walk, there should be a self within the man beyond his corporal frame.

The shaman had the experience of the spirits of various particular objects and they had developed an ingenuity to capture the mind of the common innocent people. So, it was natural that they could apply their mind for a theorisation or generalization.
Judging from the psycho-dynamics of a Shaman, the idea of universalism of a single spiritual agency is not as stable and well-propounded as the concept of immanent spiritual agency of Hindu philosophy. The idea is inchoate and full of obscurity in comparison with the well-defined concept of animism, that is, a belief in spirits of particular objects. From this experience, Tylor was justified that animism was prior to the 'theory of animism' in primitive cult.

However, the idealistic concept of animism in primitive mind was sponsored as well as nurtured by a fear-complex. The life of the primitive people was surrounded by various hazards. Nature was not always kind to them and often they were victimised by its devastations. The kindred-fellows living side by side with them were not always co-operating, but on the contrary, intra-species conflict was the natural impulse, adding problem of maintaining the existence. The powerful were ready to exploit the weak, the devouring conflagration of forest put their shelter in danger. The hungry wild animals and the uncanny movements of the snakes placed them in perpetual stake. Under the circumstances, primitive men were always in fright and find no other means but appeasement for entering into a fruitful relation with the beings that activated objects of their environment.

Objects of nature, as well as phenomena in the environment, therefore, have in their background life-potencies or spirit-elements. Among the tribal groups of the Damodar Valley, instances of such spirits are many, as for example, the Santals had the spirit of hill (Buru Bonga), spirit of water (Da-Borga), spirit of fire (Sengel Bonga), spirit of forest (Bir-Bonga), spirit of spider (Bindi Bonga), spirit of snake (Bing Bonga), etc. The Oraons had Khekel Nad (spirit of earth), Biri Nad (spirit of sun), Chando Nad (spirit of moon), Purbia Nad (spirit of the east), Jhanda Nad (spirit of flag), Chigri Nad (spirit of bamboo), etc. Similarly, in Malpaharia religion, we find Amte Gossain (spirit of ancestors), Addo-Gossain (Spirit of hut), Beru Gossair
(sun spirit). Diklo Gossain (spirit of moon), Pahari Gossain (spirit of hill), Dharti Nadu (spirit of earth), Pan-Nadu (spirit of highway), or Pan Gossain, Tudu-Nadu (spirit of Tiger), Charaka Gossain (spirit of wheel), Gomo Gossain (spirit of the pillar that supports the roofs of the house), Gohor-Gossain (spirit of cowshed) etc. Here, it may be noted that both the Malpaharias and the Oraons use the word Nad for spirits. The word Gossain appears to have been imposed on such a concept under the influence of Hinduism on the Malpaharia tribe.

From spirits of different objects, gods or goddesses emerged and from the idea of god or goddess, the Supreme spiritual being has developed either as Great Mother or Great Father. Among the Santals, the Supreme god, is called Marang Buru,\textsuperscript{32} who is imagined to take his abode on hill. Among the Oraons, the spirit of sun has evolved into Dharme, the Supreme religious authority. The Mother goddess of the Santals or the people of Mundari group is Jaher arising out of the spirit of forest or vegetation, Bir Bonga, whereas amongst the Oraons Mother goddess has evolved from the spirit of earth Dharti-Nad or Khekel Nad. The supreme deities of both Mundari and Dravidian groups have today come nearer to Hindu supreme god or goddess are now considered to be the basic forms of folk religion of Bengal.

Fairs, festivals as well as manifold rituals have developed among the tribal groups on the basis of a primitive cult of animism and polytheism.\textsuperscript{33} The tribal religious concepts provide a base to the higher Hindu religion in India.

The religious belief of the tribal people, in course of its evolution, has no doubt, established close links with the socio-economic structure of the communities. The socio-economic situations prevailing among the tribes reveal at least three phases – a phase of Hill-hunting, a phase of Hill-
cultivation, and a phase of agriculture on the plains. The priestly class with hereditary property and having roots in class-divisions emerged at the state of plain-agriculture. The concept of the supreme god or goddess had a causal connection with the activities of the priestly class. The philosophical base of supreme deity was provided with the acculturation of higher culture also. However, the phenomenon of a ritualised social religion with legends and philosophy was a consequence of a well-organised society, where, village-leadership with all its paraphernalia took a modern shape.34

Enumeration of the tribal gods and goddesses

The tribal gods and goddesses that have been noticed during our survey may be classified into three categories. Firstly, simple spirits and deities presiding over certain particular phenomena. Secondly, departmental gods and goddesses with clear delineation of attributes and activities. Thirdly, gods and goddesses that have obtained supreme position in the tribal pantheon.

Of the first category, instances are numerous; such as Bir-Bonga (spirit of forest), Da-Bonga (spirit of water) etc. of the Mundari peoples and Beru-Nad (spirit of sun), Chigri-Nad (spirit of bamboos, which surround a tribal village) of the Dravidian peoples.

Departmental gods and goddesses among the Mundari group of peoples are many. The most important are Buru-Bonga (God of Rain), Jaher (Goddess of fertility and vegetation), Bing-Bonga or Nago-era (the god presiding over the phenomena of snake poison), Orak-Bonga (the god in-charge of the family life). Amongst the Dravidian group of people, Biri-Belas (sun-God or god of fertility), Darha-Nad (village-boundary deity), Parta-Nad (the god of hill or mountain), Dharti (earth-Goddess) are important.
In the third category, mention may be made of Marang Buru of Mundari group and Dharmesh of the Dravidian group. These types of gods and goddesses are considered to be the Supreme divinities. They have their consorts also, as for example, Marang Buru has his consort in Jaher and Dharmesh in Dharti.

The social significance of these gods and goddesses is basically mundane, that is, which relates to the material life of man. In formation of the ideas of the gods and goddesses, the role of the priestly class is very prominent. In addition to the tribal priestly class, the impact of Hinduism has provided an additional stimulus. The imagination of the priestly class has been built up on the model of Hindu pantheon hitherto followed by the people living in the neighbourhood. Not only that, direct interference of the Hindu catalysts are noticeable, when even the names of the tribal gods assume Hinduised nomenclature, just as Dharti assumed the name of Kalo-Pakko, meaning thereby black old-lady or Dharmesh from the Hindu term Dharma.

The departmental gods and goddesses of the tribals are modelled on the line of family relations, thereby indicating strong bond of family-relations among the tribes. It would be wrong to assume, as it has been pointed out above that family provided the only basic relations of blood. The institution of family included distant relations within and outside the tribal village. The tribal pantheon was, likewise, not only designed on the relations of wife-husband, son-daughter etc., but also, family-associates, friends and brothers, from extra-village surroundings. The miniature idols that are used to decorate the image of Dharmesh are very interesting in view of the fact that even the domestic servants, menials, including maid-servants are given their due position. The legends of Marang-Buru depict that Domna, Chiti, Kapra etc. are women, not related in blood, but related in family affection. They are associated in the rituals of the ceremony of the worship
of Marang Buru and Jaher. Jaher, it is held, during Baha-festival lives under the shed of Rahir tree in the forest along with six other ladies whom Marang Buru seduced as life-partners, even though their marriage with Marang Buru is not formally consecrated. For this reason, the offspring of Marang Buru out of the informal relation with them is called Jaher-ete, which means, the son of informal marriage between Marang Buru and Jaher and her associates.

FESTIVALS

The festivals of the tribals are in colloquial called "Parab", a corrupt word form Parba denoting a phase in a year marked with special temperature and climatic conditions. In tropical countries, at least six variations are found in a particular solar year. These six phases are called six seasons in nature. In a folk-song, composed by the itinerant Baul singers, the six seasons are compared with the six cycles in a woman's procreative functions. It is told that nature like women could never be fertile unless six cycles are properly rotated.

The festivals in a tropical country like India are the virtual welcome-performances in ritual for these seasons. The first of the cycle is summer in the month of Vaishakh and Jaistha. Summer is the high-time for preparation of the soil for the coming rainy season. The summer is heralded by the tribals by a very romantic ritual known as 'Eroksim'. The site of the festival is selected in a nearest paddy-field. A ploughshare is fixed in the middle of the field. A fowl is sacrificed before the ploughshare and an unmarried lady with a pitcherful of water on her head advances towards the ploughshare in dancing steps. Drops of water rolling off the side of her body ultimately moist the soil under her feet. The pitcherful of water is dedicated to Eroksim with the prayer for adequate rain in the coming days.
A rain-ritual designated as Mote-nama is performed in some villages at night when all the neighbours and villagers are asleep. Women after getting themselves undressed altogether carry water in pitchers on their head. It is believed that fall of a lady on the ground made slippery through drop of water from the pitcher is a good omen. The benevolence of the Rain god can be fully assured, if a young lady fully naked during operation, falls in a swoon. This is interpreted that the Rain God has attracted her in "Agosan".

The Eroksim is concluded in the next morning with the distribution of country-liquor (Haria) among the fellow-participants including both male and female members of the community.

The next season is the rainy season. The most important ritual observed in festivities in this season is known as Mig. On a particular selected day, drums in all households are collected in a place and are beaten to the highest pitch resembling the roaring of cloud. Obviously, it is the performance of an imitative magic – "similar produces similar" – that is, if sounds of the cloud are imitated on the earth, clouds would accumulate in the sky and bring down shower with roaring sound. Mig is performed at the village-level. The ceremony is concluded by a fun. Both cows and oxen are let loose in the open field to mix freely. This may appear silly and obscene to an outsider. But to the tribals it is a ritual that ensures fertility of the land to produce vegetation in large quantity.

The next season is autumn. Autumn is earmarked as the third wheel of Jatra Bonga or the spirit of time and space. On an auspicious day in the month of Bhadra, especially on third lunar-cycle of fullmoon of bright fort night, a "Nagardola" or an wooden wheel with twelve spokes is erected in an open field. On the third spoke of the wheel is fixed an impoverished chair or a plate, whereon the oldest man and woman are seated together.
to symbolise Haram and Buddi. Both of them are revolved with some of the members of younger generations. A storm of laughter and jests enliven the atmosphere. This is a community-festival that is concluded through distribution of rice-bear among the participants. The wooden wheel is preserved till the end of season, when Jatra-Bonga is dedicated special offerings with the sacrifice of fowls and goats on the day of Ekadoshi after Durgapuja in Bengali houses.

Autumn is significant, in some tribal regions by way of an emotional role-playing of the tribal youths, as friends, brothers and sisters through the observance of Karma festival. Karma is also an important event in the intellectual life of the tribal people and the important episodes in the life of the tribals, the age-old rituals and customs, the ethics and norms of social administration – all are narrated by the village singers, reciting from memories. The serengs of Karmabinti, the stories woven, are recited without break for three days, by a group of chanters, who are the experts in the sphere of oral-folk literature.

The autumn receives a special ovation due to Nawania festival. Nawania is the ceremony of offering of the first fruit to the great ancestors. The ancestor-cult is a prominently living cult amongst the tribals under our study. The first crop from the field is dedicated to the revered souls of the great hero and the heroine of the tribe, the Haram and the Budhi, whose memory is cherished through ages.

The pre-winter season is called Hemanta in Eastern India. In the first phase of the season the paddy-plants in the field assume a luxurious lustre. Gorbhu or Gora³⁸ is performed for the propitiation of corn-spirit, which is now pregnant with new seeds. It resembles the ritual of Sadhbhakshan, observed in a Bengali house, to feed, on a special day in special manner, the pregnant daughter of the house. Not only that, the mother-earth is also
adored in this season. Mother-earth is called Dharti-Burhi among the Dravidian speaking peoples and Jaher among the Mundari speaking peoples. Both Jaher and Dharti are worshipped on the Amabasya day or the new moon night of Aghrahayan or Aughun. At dawn of the next day, after the worship of Dharti and Jaher, 'evil driving' ceremony is observed which is locally called Dharemashayi. Even in the Bengali household, this "evil driving" ritual is faithfully observed by the children. The winnowing fan, pieces of broken tin and buckets are held by the children in their hand and vigorously beaten from door to door. They say that this is a mosquito-driving ritual. They shout in a somewhat musical tone:

"Dhare-mashay dha
Jata gulo masha achhe
Onnya paraye Ja".

The evening can-marked for the worship of mother-goddess Earth is called Enjal Penjal that is "fire burning", when heaps of straw, fallen leaves etc., are thrown in fire with much jubilation. Among the Bengali people, the Enjal is pronounced as 'Anjal'.

Hemanta is significant in the life of the tribals because of Dashai festival. Dashai is associated with witchcraft. The Gurus or preceptor, proficient in witchcraft, initiates the disciple on the new moon night of Kartik. The initiation is normally done on a hill-top, covered with dense vegetation. The mantras or spells are uttered for the welfare of the disciples. Dashai is concluded with Dashai Dance and drum-beatings. Dasai-songs or serengs are awe-inspiring songs that evoke fear among the common men. The drum-beatings are also done with a particular sound-rhythm. In the plain-land villages, tribals perform Dashai dance during day-time. They wield a broom of peacock feathers at the time of dance. In this context, it may be mentioned that broom is held to be the
carrier of the witch-goddess, Bishohara, who is capable of both spreading poison and destroying poisonous elements. Among the tribals the females generally become the witches and the males become the Ojhas who cure the witchhood of the women. Dashai-ritual is attended by the male participants only, because it aims at imparting lessons in the administration of spells (mantra) for curing the witches.

Winter keeps everybody engaged in harvesting. The harvesting operations not only bear potentialities for employment of the additional hands, but also provide scope for merry-making and full manifestation of culture related with agriculture. The great Badna festival is observed for a long duration of five days. The Paush-mela, the Gei-Jagao, the Haku-Katkom, Gari-Enech are all staged in rapid succession on different days during Badna. The ceremony is concluded through an apparently extravagance of free mixing between the males and the females, during the course of which only relations of parental standard and filial connections are avoided. The fertility content of the ritual is established in tribal belief.

Sohrai, Disom Sendra occupy a place of distinction at the close of the winter festivals.

Spring brings in a new life to the otherwise morbid state of living of the tribals. At that time, they are awakened with a new zeal. Baha with its colour and emotion gets fulfilled in staging erotic behaviour. Sometimes searching of new love for marks the essence of Baha. Fertility rituals are immensely propagated in order to ensure the fertility of uplands as well as womenfolk. Interestingly enough, Baha is not all, in its basic content, a fertility-oriented festival. In its essence, there are also elements of ethos of love. Mating, both extramarital and pre-marital, occurs without reprimand from the social authority of Monrehore on the occasion of Baha.
Search of a tribal identity through festivals

The eternal craving of man is to become a perfect man and what perfection means is 'synthesising the corporal existence with that of spiritual world'. Man cannot become man and woman cannot become woman unless both get an identification in the realm of Supreme God, Marang Buru. The identity of a man is in his heart and the identity of a woman is in her hand. Man is abstract and woman is material. Man unites with God, at the first instance, in order to unite with woman, i.e. with the matter. A direct approach, therefore, to a woman is a sin. Similarly, a female must not seek her fulfilment without reference to the abstract man and the spiritual entity i.e. God. Thus a triangle in human relations always prevails.

Tribal festivals provide platform for the purpose of translating this philosophy in real life. Festival is for making "man and woman" and a prominent place is given to the spiritual elements like Maragburi, Jaher etc. Attractions for spiritual ecstasy sometimes occupy major part in ritual performances. The identity of a tribal lies in a synthetic approach towards nature, man and God. Therefore, the tribal festivals are considered to be essential part, rather the essential component, of an understanding of what we actually mean by mankind.

Among the Dravidian speaking people like Oraons and Malpaharias, seasonal festivals are similar to those of the Mundari speaking peoples. The agricultural operations being the mainstay of their economic life, in the summer the earth-spirit is appeased in order to restore the earth's fecundity, that is lost during the previous years' cultivation period. Since in Oraon belief the earth is full of spirits, as the tree is full of leaves, they utter a secret mantra or spell on the first day of ploughing in the summer, on the junction of the embankments around a particular plot of land. The mantra
or spell is as follows:

"Khe kel nue Nad
nind kiri man-nonu
atkha nindkiri".

Nature in the imagination of a Davidian speaking Oraon is very sacred and man feels a strong bond uniting him to nature, which he seeks either to strengthen or loosen according as he considers nature, friendly or hostile. The soul inherent in all object of nature is called Ekh. The soul or Ekh of earth is propitiated in order to maintain the optimum level of fertility of soil.

During rainy season, among the Dravidian speaking people the worship of Pachgi is held. The worship of Pachgi is virtually the worship of the old woman. In Dravidian vocabulary Pachgi means ancient or old and denotes a female. In this context, a difference may be noted in the conceptualisation of the deity. Amongst the Mundari speaking people, the Rain-God is a male deity, while amongst the Dravidian speaking people the rain deity is a female one. The study of the Dravidian religious concept indicates that the basic necessity of human life is closely associated with a female spiritual being. Females amongst the Dravidian speaking peoples are more than human beings. They are equated with spirits and every Dravidian seeks the assistance of female spiritual beings in all social and economic activities, thereby installing the fair sex on a high pedestal of honour. It is believed that unless and until the female proceeds for assisting the male, success in no sphere of human activity can be ensured.

The autumn among the Dravidian speaking people is the season for worshipping Mandersalas. Mandersalas are nothing but phallic emblems installed on the Jatra ground. The festival arranged in honour of Mandersalas is called Jatra festival. The ritual of worshipping amongst the
Mundari speaking peoples consists of ritual anointing of this emblem with Patnimati (a whitist clay). Sometimes, Mutrichandi is associated with Mandersala for receiving the honour offered to the phallic symbol. Special dancing performances are arranged in Akhra or Jatra-ground before a wooden post, known as Jatra khunta.  

In the beginning of Hemanta i.e. in the month of Agrahayan, Chigrinads are propitiated for attaining an immunity from all diseases. Chigrinad is identified in a bamboo pole called in Dravidian term as Chigur. Sometimes Chigrinad is given another name as Darha chigri.  

During autumn or in the beginning of Hemanta, Gaisalinad, or Gohar Deota or Gonria is invoked for bringing about the welfare of livestock kept by the Dravidian speaking people. On the night of worship of Gaishalinad, Kalopachcho or Kali is adored and disease-driving ritual (Rog-Khedna) is practised at dawn on the next day.  

In the context of observance of the ritual, a common practice should specially be mentioned. This is called as Benja, meaning ritual-marriage. This is not like the marriage between a boy and girl, but it is a marriage between two souls. It may, or rather, it must be sacramented whenever a man proceeds to do anything with the assistance of some objects. Thus Benja is done between a man and his cloth on his wearing it, with the seat he is sitting on, with the person he likes, with the lady whose assistance he seeks for any work. The philosophy behind it is unless man enters into a relation with the objects or persons in his association or in works, success can never be achieved. The relation is between the mind of the man and the spirit of the object or the person he is associated with. Amongst the highups in Dravidian speaking people, the word Benja is used to indicate close relation between two males or two females.
The winter is full of mirth and merriment amongst the Mundari speaking peoples either in harvesting or in festivities. When the last crop is harvested special worship of the corn-spirit is held in the field. Feast is given on the closing day of harvesting. Token erotic rituals are held on the closing day of harvesting. The erotic behaviour of the Dravidian speaking people, though composed of many sex-acts, are considered to be less physical than psychological. A man is believed to enter into a woman, not always in physical union but, in psychic penetration into the self of the female. This psychic penetration is enforced through a special ritual known as Bir-Amn meaning the sacred water sanctified by the great ancestors. Bir-Amn, when scattered on the body of a male or a female, can unite them together psychically, whatever physical distance between them there might be. Such philosophy in erotic activity, it is believed by some sociologists, forestall the ethical erosion of the Dravidian youth.

The Supreme God of the Dravidian speaking people is Biri Belas, who has been identified with Dharmesh. Dharmesh amongst the Hinduised tribals is held to be equal to Bhagawan, the etymological meaning of which may be something other than spiritual. The material or the base of reality of the concept of Bhagawan is shrouded in mystery.

On the first day of Magh, Dharti or the mother-earth is propitiated along with several other spirit-deities, like Chigrinad, Gaisalinad, Baranda, Pachcho, Chandonad and even Chandi. The entire ritual on the first day of Magh is conducted with the assistance of Panbhara (Susari) and the Pahan. The medicineman is also given a place of honour during the community-worship on the first day of month. In the districts of Bengal, where the tribal people concentrate in large number, the first day of Magh is called the day of Ekkhen. Folklorists interpret Ekkhen as the relics of the beginning of a new year in some unknown days. However, pigs, goats, and fowls are sacrificed to the deities on the occasion of community-worship of
the first day of Magh.

Among the Dravidian speaking peoples of the Damodar valley, hunting rituals are seldom observed with the same devotion and sincerity as that found amongst the Mundari speaking peoples. In the Disam Sendra of the Mundari speaking people, some persons belonging to Dravidian group of languages participate as fellows. But, of their own, they have got no annual hunting ceremony with a fixed nomenclature and date of observance. The migrated tribals on the fringe of Burdwan district remember simply a female hunting ceremony known as Janishikar \(^{46}\) which is repeated every twelve years, in commemoration of some glorious epoch of fighting the enemies by the females of the society.

There is an element of high sense of value in human work. Even if a man or woman, is defeated or frustrated in a job or activity, he or she declines to recognise the failure as the result of his/her disability. He/she ascribes other factors as the cause of the failure. The behaviour is the outcome of a mentality of not down-grading the self which is held to be really supreme in all spheres. This fine psycho behavioural aspect is manifested in a colourful ritual on the setting of spring in Oraon villages. The festival is known as Naderakan, the etymological meaning of which is visiting the deity or temple of God.

On the same day, another feature in the worship of Chando-omole \(^{47}\) reveals the total attitude of the tribe towards an individual man or woman. The deity is worshipped in the night. Aesthetic performances like dance, music, story-telling and even the art of making fun are considered to be indices of human qualities. An individual, according to them, gets his identity as man, because, he or she attains some special qualities from Chando-omole. Minus a quality, a man is not man, and a woman is not woman. What is that quality that makes one a man or a woman? In
answer, they will utter a single term — the qualities of a Kurukh. Kurukh means man, indicating high quality of human capabilities like the working capacity, the power of expression of aesthetic virtues, the high poetic sense of the females. A man and a woman should be different in virtues and the difference lies in the degree of poetic sense. It is expected that the females would express virtues in arts, like dance, music and their skill in rearing child. Chando-omole is considered to be the presiding deity of moon and she presides over the beauty of a female life. The worship of the Goddess is performed through lighting thousands of lights.

The spring is marked by a gala of a series of festivities. Apparently, resembling the Sahrul of Mundari stock the Dravidian peoples observe the ritual of colour on the full moon night of the month of Phalgun. The best colour chosen is red, because, red symbolises the life-giving blood flowing within man. Red being the colour of blood, is also selected as the choicest colour of the ritual of the shamans.

Spring is the season of vigour instead of fertility to the Dravidian people. The spring-festival is, therefore, a festival of hunting and martial activities. Mock-fighting and the annual hunt symbolises the basic content of the spring festival. Like the Hindu Doljatra, the Oraons also observe colour-sprinkling-ceremony amongst the close inmates.

Creative Activity

Amongst the tribals a creative activity has four dimensions. Firstly, an instinct of creation, that is, to transform a thing into a new object; secondly, the logical activity, where the analytical mind permeates; thirdly, practical activity, by which an expression or manifestation is established and fourthly, the economic activity, for the material means or requirements
to sustain the whole process.

The tribal attitude to identify a man with nature may be elucidated from the above. A tribal accepts the nature as it is and replicates the movement of nature in their dance, drama, music and other cultural activities. In the mask dance, on the occasion of Badna, the main content of which centres round the harvesting phenomena, the role-play of cattle is an essential ritual. By mask-dance, a tribe desires to ensure stability in production and multiplication processes. Imitation of animal-movement is done by a man who, it is obvious is different from cattle. In his act of replication, the person is required to undertake several exercises and acquire special skill, by dint of which he creates a new thing. Thus ultimately the imitating of the animal movement in mask-dance becomes an act of art.

The elements of logical activity may be traced, if we delve deep into the exercises undertaken by a tribe to replicate the movement of nature. He must first observe the movement in nature. Secondly, he must analyse the movement and note its details. Thirdly, he acquires the skill of co-relating the details of animal movement in the movement of his own limbs. Fourthly, the practical activity in the mask-dance consists in the expressions – the expressions of ideas of the movement of a particular animal in a particular mood, or psychic state. The expressions are really very complicated, as all animals do not express in like manner their psychic reactions. In the mask-dance, therefore the performer has to undertake to imitate the details of animal behaviour as far as practicable. Lastly, the economic activity in mask-dance consists in material conditions like the existence of a group of artists in the society to manufacture the masks the availability of materials for it, the existence of the infra-structure for training and also related matters. On the whole, from grammatical point of view, mask-dance is an aesthetic activity and indicates a high watermark of creative sensibility.
in the so-called downtrodden society.

**Dance:**

The dances among the Mundari speaking people are divided into several categories indicating different sentiments and feelings. The dances are known as Galwari, Lagre, Tumdun etc. Galwari is mostly indicative of heroic jestures, Lagre of the love affair and Tumdun of filial affections and parental pity. The emotional feature in each type of dance reveals the poetic imagination of the performer.

There is a proverb among the Mundari speaking people: "girls do not usually learn from girls, it is the boys who teach them". The proverb holds true in the social dances of the Mundari speaking people, where both men and women dance without mixing with each other. Dance without women is not possible, but dance that involves mixing with the women is incomprehensible. Because, the women act as the carrier of the rhythm produced by man in front of them. In dance, the stepping, the ornamentation and the music are first produced by the male, while these are spread in waves by the female.

The grammar of Mundari dance has been analysed by Archer in his *Hill of Flutes* thus.49 "The girls form a curving line facing the drummers. They begin with a song to 'bind' the Akhra or dancing ground and after that, they slowly edge along its rims. Then the drums quicken and a jerking oscillation starts. The right-foot goes slightly out and edges the left, the right foot joins it. Then the right moves a little to the side and the left goes out and edges near it. At the same time knees bend and straighten, the clasped hands sway gently in and out, the buttocks bob roundly up and down. The heads go nodding to the drums and as the line of bodies sets up a vertical undulation, the songs rise calmly through the din".
The songs sung during the Lagre dance bear romantic connotations. Birds such as fly-catchers, peacocks, doves and pigeons stand for girls, monkeys and porcupines for boys. Making love is suggested by phrases such as 'drinking a riverful of water', 'crying for water', swaying in the dew', 'picking cotton on a hill', and 'losing a ring'. Seduction is implied by the phrases like 'striking with a flute', 'shooting an arrow', or 'climbing a fig tree'. An unwanted pregnancy is described as 'making a citron fruit fall' and places of assignation are referred to as 'a gully with the plantain' or 'the foot of the mountain'. Direct allusions to sex are never made. 'Four-letter' words are scrupulously avoided and it is rather by means of symbols drawn from daily life that the singers make their point.

"As the dance goes on, with the line undulating and the haunches jerking and jerking, the girls become more and more a set of neutral units. With their slow doll-like swaying, the blank indifference in their staring eyes, their calm singing, their buttocks nodding to the drums, it is as if they are a line of rounded forms whose sole function is to undulate and sing".

In sharp contrast to the calm and restrained singing of the girls, the male-folk demonstrate various types of antics. As the line of the dancers goes round and round, the drummer become jubilant and toy with his drum. He tosses it high in the air, rolls with it on the ground, but all the time he sincerely maintains the basic rhythm. Sometimes the youth with flutes go prancing round. They also try to amuse the girls by comic poses and by applying things like stick, flower, leaves in the hair of the girl. 'Sniffing a flower' is a very amusing play amongst the youths at the time of Lagre-dance.

After dancing the basic standard form, they try out other patterns, such as Handwe lagre, Bangla or Tumdun lagre. The most jubilant pattern known as Candok is demonstrated at the concluding part of the
programme. The dancers withdraw from the line with laughing talk.

Side-by-side with Lagre, the Santals also dance the Dahar. As with Lagre, Dahar songs are chiefly concerned with village-romance.

Both Lagre and Dahar are remarkable for their nodding poise in dance-type. These types are called the prose of Santal dancing. The poetry in dance is represented by Galwari. This dance occurs either when the nocturnal performances are almost over or before Lagre is commenced. It consists of a series of figures based on scenes from Santal life, each dance being, as it were a rural pantomime. The type with the greatest majesty is called the 'Vulture dance' and is modelled on different kinds of bird. The women stand, one behind the other, in single file, their arms held out like flapping wings. Then very slowly and deliberately, they start to move in a circle. As they advance, their hands gently paw the air, their breasts are thrust out and with a proud insolent dignity, they bear down on the drummers. At the end, if we use a phrase of Sir Richard Burton's, they sometimes 'cower down and lay out their buttocks'. Then squatting in a line, they flutter their arms and edge slowly forward like great ungainly birds.

'Vulture dance' is the most impressive of the Galwari dances, but the Baha sid, bears also the dignity of a graceful march. The word Baha sid means 'putting flowers in the hair'. The girls put out their hands as if they were picking flowers from a tree. They gather the blossom and drop it in their 'aprons'. Then, as the line moves slowly on, each 'picks a flower' from her hip and puts it in the hair of the girl in front of her. Sometimes they turn about and after picking flowers from a bush, they swing sharply round and put them in a dancer's hair.

Another Galwari dance is based on catching fish. The women stand on their left legs, while their right legs swing out across their bodies, as if
they were driving fishes from the mud. Then with a little whisk of the hand, they catch the fish and tuck them into their waists. In the alternative, they form a bending line, their hands dart out as if plunging into water and with each stroke they seize some fishes and throw them over their heads.

Another variant is 'catching snails'. The girls make a little ruck in their clothes and edge along the circle. At every fourth step they swing the right arm out, bring it back as if it had scooped up some water and then drop a 'snail' into the ruck at their hips. As they do this, they sing. Other dances depict the planting of paddy. The girls stoop down, 'pull up the seedlings' and twist them into bunches. Then the torso bends low and the arms dart out as if they were plunging the seedlings into mud. Sometimes, as a change, they reap crops, one hand grasping the stalks while the other 'cuts' with a 'sickle'.

Side-by-side with 'agricultural' dances, several others employ the gestures of greeting. A few kinds of Galwari are distinguished either by hopping or by the clapping of hands. Sometimes the women kneel on the ground, and swaying to and fro, clap their hands, and in yet another form they crouch in a long line which follows the drummers in a wriggling course, clapping their hands, first in one side and then in another. The key-word in all songs of Galwari dances is "I am yours", which indicate, the nature is the possession of the articulator, that is, man and woman identify themselves with nature.

There is another kind of dance, known as Dasae dance. It may be considered as a series of plays in dance and music, the totality of which is denoted by the term, dasae daran, etymologically meaning, 'september wanderings'. Dasae daran is a mixture of dancing pantomime and trance. For putting on these plays, boys who have undertaken a course in tribal medicine under an ojha or medicineman, assemble in the village. They
wear a special dancing dress – a long white skirt, not unlike a cassock and taking with them some peacock feathers, cymbals, fiddles and a special kind of drum (dedger), they go to a lonely spot beyond the houses. Here the medicine-man sacrifices to Marang Buru, Pargana bonga, and others. As he does this, the boys form a small platoon and begin to chant and sing. They advance in swaying lines, clashing the cymbals, brandishing the feathers and lifting their voices with a curious praying fervour. When everything is ready, they leave dancing, tuck up their skirts and squat on the ground.

The 'plays' that next commence are a series of 'impersonations'. Boy after boy is 'possessed'. He stands or crouches in a dream-like trance and is then 'impelled' to impersonate a bonga or enact a story. The bongas which possess him bear no relation to actual bongas and seem, in fact, to be not bongas at all but rather the 'spirits' of dramatic parts. Various 'bongas' seem to come and the 'plays' proceed in whatever order, the company decides. The first 'character' to assume control is the tiger-bonga or baghut. Next come the Hati bonga and so on.

In the plays the pre-dominant places are occupied by (i) Gai Bonga, (ii) Mermetec Bonga, (iii) Carcari Bonga, (iv) Jugi Bonga, (v) Bindi Bonga, (vi) Sanla Bonga, (vii) Haru Bonga, (vii) Backear or Landa Bonga, and Dhubi Bonga. When the 'plays' have been rehearsed outside the village, and in the presence of Marang Buru and the other Bongas, the way is made clear for their presentation to the villagers. The boys repair to their teacher's house and for three days, the company goes dancing down the street, stopping at the houses, swirling into courtyards, begging presents and staging its varied shows. As the long white skirts flounce into the courtyards, the dancers sing variety of songs. Some of these invite the village girls to enter their jacking rank. When the begging is over, a feast is held and the 'plays' and dances are laid aside for another year.
Almost in all types of dances, music or sereng occupies a prominent place. The Lagre serengs are mostly symbolical love-songs. Dahar invites romantic happenings in the life of the unmarried. The most colourful life-features are reflected in the serengs of Galwari dance. Galwari is composed of diverse sentiments or human feelings, heroism, love, separation, frustration as well as wishful waiting for the dear ones. Dasae represents music mostly of joking types. Specimens of different types of songs associated with different types of dances are reproduced below.52

**Lagre:**

At night I slept on a verandah  
And in a dream I found you  
How lovely you were  
Swaying in the dew.

**Dahar:**

In a bush of thorns  
Two pigeons  
Are busy with a nest  
Boy  
Do not shoot an arrow  
For the two  
Are calling to each other.

**Galwari:**

(i)  
The vultures circle in the sky  
O vulture, give me wings like yours  
And I will fly like you.
(ii) Come to the pool, girls
    And pick up fishes
    We will cook them in a fire
    The smoke rises
    To the mouth of the dead.

Dasae:

In the river, the fish glitter
In the stream, the fish shine
In the big village, the girls are flashing.

TRIBAL POETRY IN ORAL TRADITION

Man is different from other animals in two different aspects. Firstly, man is rational while other animals possess little sense of reasoning. Secondly, man creates beauty, at least a sense for beauty, in order to make the facts of life more enchanting and relishing. Beauties, according to everybody, are absolutely a subjective theme and its concept may vary from person to person. This variation depends on the personal mood, test and views of life. But whatever be the differences in approach, nobody denies that man creates beauty and makes capital out of it in the furtherance of his life's goal.

The initial notion about beauty has been drawn up from the attraction of a man towards another person, whatever be their sexes. According to the psychologists, attraction by other sex and the passionate and sentimental episodes are the most significant events in the existence of man. because, those are most deeply associated with his intimate happiness and with the zest and meaning of life. Within the village itself a
tribal goes about enjoying the company of his fellow beings. Occasions arise on sentimental and passionate issues, which they reformulate as objects of aesthetic beauty. The ethos of life as expressed in behaviours have value above mundane involvements.

The first episode that may be related in respect of tribal aesthetics is about the feeling of a boy when he gets mature and becomes increasingly engrossed with the village girls, whom they were previously habituated to look upon as fellows in their play and childish activities amidst sylvan environments. As the boy grows up and attained adolescence, a new lence on his eye is put up to look differently at the opposite sex. Similarly, girls with the attainment of puberty, look upon the boys endowed with manly qualities, the expression being "the jack-fruits are rough, the mangoes are smooth." The boys with moustaches are like jack-fruits. The girls' lips are smooth like mango. The English version of the poem53 is:

Why are jack fruits rough  
And mangoes smooth ?  
Why have boys moustaches  
And girls smooth lips ?

The poetry is inherent in sentiment and its expressions. The expressions are aesthetic or are endowed with beauty, because, these add to the salt of life. The individual feels an intimate happiness and zest in those sentiments and he finds out a meaning of life, no doubt, a new meaning, that keeps him upright amidst the trials and tribulations involved in the struggle of life on the earth.

They crave for the union with each other. But, they do not know how the union can be wrought about. They find out answers themselves. They try to explain that the union is possible in the process by which the juice
oozes from Mahua flowers or oil is squeezed out from the Mahua fruits. An illustration may be cited from a poem translated in English:

How does juice
Ooze from the mahua flowers?
How does oil
Spring from the mahua fruit?
The son of one
The daughter of another
How do their hearts join?

The above instances of poetic expositions betray physiological knowledge of a tribal youth, which becomes possible because of their close proximity in common residence youth dormitories, where they get access to the knowledge of the realities or facts of life under the guidance of a matron.

A girl addresses a boy with flute, comparing herself with the flute on the lips of the boy. In a song such disposition is thrown in vivid manner, creating rhythms in minds.55

O you two boys
Playing on your flute
You look for my heart
On the shelf for the water pots
You can see a flower
In the flower is my heart.

Boy you are the singer
You can only play with flute
I am a flute
I am on your lip
Play me on and on.

A thought of union of celestial sublimity is hinted at in the above poem, though in an immature shape.

The most enchanting becomes the figure, when intertwined in erotic activity. The expression stands like this:

Mother,
A snake from the river
A snake from the river,
Wriggles in the palm tree.

But it is very difficult to have a girl as eternal companion. She is flirting and may run away at any time. Her redness may become dim within a short time, like the red flowers of a cotton tree. Therefore, she is compared as an Oriole, which still evades capture. The feeling is expressed thus:

Oriole, at the spring or tank
You see me and you hide
If once I catch you, Oriole
I shall carry you
Away and away.

At the end of the village
Is a cotton tree
And its flowers are red, my love
People say it is meat
It is not meat
It is a flower
It is a flower, my love.
I am on your lip
Play me on and on.

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At the end of the village
Is a cotton tree
And its flowers are red, my love
People say it is meat
It is not meat
It is a flower
It is a flower, my love.
While the girl appears to be an oriole, the boy takes pleasure to compare himself with a tiger. The tiger is ravenous. The youth feels pleasure to behave ravenously with the girl. They say,

In the upper village
The tiger eats,
In the lower village
The oriole sings.

But roaring ravenously does not always serve the purpose. Therefore, it requires a hunter to shoot at the Oriole or the parrot.

Below the field
Is a young parrot
In the creeper on the tree,
shoot it for me, brother
Its tail points at us.

On the big mountain
The deer graze,
In a dried – up stream
Are feathered peacocks
Bring a gun
Load it with shot
The feathered peacocks
Are too tired to fly.

It is a quest that nears conclusion when the boy has at last decided on a girl. The reflection is in the poem and, no doubt, reveals the aesthetic build-up on the eternal urge of man for a woman, whom in the Bible, God created out of the rib of man.
Before getting united, the man and the woman feel the impulse of creative tremor, the tremor that was also felt by the Creator himself. The expression on the girl is described thus:

On the headman's smooth verandah
I was grinding kode, boy
But when I saw and heard you
How my body trembled.

I do not know the tremor
How to squeeze
Would you come and help me?
I am tremble stricken
won't you embrace me?
To calm down.

The answer was –

Sit down, stand up
O friends, we have no food or drink
But in the eyes meeting there is pleasure
(mataio)

In the thick forest, father
A dove has been decoyed
In the middle of the village
The headman was enticed.

And ultimately the time came for a union in ecstasy. The boy cried,

Father, the parrot
Bleeds and bleeds
O milk – tree
You have murdered me.

Here ends the episode of sweet relation before marriage and then the struggle with realities begin.

The moving appeal to dance activities comes up, of course, from the heart of the male, who sees flames on the mountain. The male is not an old one, though he stumbles. He must be a boy, addressing a 'lily, straining into bud'. Dance is inspired from the fire in the eye. It becomes rhythmic, because of the trembling in the heart of the lily, when it becomes a flower. Lily is, no doubt, a girl. Interestingly enough, no girl before puberty is allowed to participate in the dance, because, she has not yet flowered.

The music or Sereng throwing light on the aesthetics of dance is thus:

On the mountain the flames spread,
On the hill, the fire goes mounting in a line
Look at that old man, running and stumbling
Look at that boy
And the lily
Straining into bud.

Here, the beauty of man and of nature appears to be alike. The impulse of dance gets aroused when there is an overwhelming synthesis between the beauty of nature and man.

The culture of dance depends on the precepts of the Guru and his wife who are held in high esteem. The position of the Guru and his wife is depicted in a song.
Guru, your right foot
On a line of gossamer
Guru, your left foot
On a fiddle's bow.

In a Gold cloth
Is the Guru's wife
She is sitting in a chair
She is looking in a Glass
And like a lotus leaf
She moves her head.

The dance and music for which the Santals are singularly famous are accompanied by the playing of flutes (Bansi) and pipes (Pepre), drums (Tumdah) and cymbals and violin (Kendra) of different shapes and sizes with decorative patterns on them. The decorative designs are also drawn on the floor of the Akhra. The Santal woman give sufficient proof of their aesthetic sense during dance by drawing artistic designs and patterns of various types in a circle. No dance pattern is stereotyped.

The aesthetic life of the Dravidian group of people is manifest in the drama of daily life, the rituals, rites of ceremonies, they perform on different occasions.

The beauty of nature is relished by a boy or girl even at the stage of living in the dormitory.53

"Māghegi Pūrnmāsinu erā mōkhōr.
Jaldi jhārabiō mākhle,
Mālbio Kāchri mānō".
The English version stand thus:

In the month of Magh,
On full-moon day,
Goat they will eat,
But intoxicant towards the moon
Rice-beer is ready, but it is unfit for use
Because, they are intoxicant already

The people, particularly the youths in the dormitory (kuria) get intoxicated not with the beer, but with the rise of the moon. Being intoxicated, they express thus:

"Nekhai gushan
Khush laggi
Are gusan kalae,"

In English, 'Go to the person with whom you are well-pleased'.

Obviously, they entreat the boy to go to his lady-love and the girl to her beloved. The inspiration comes from the moon. Ultimately, they are enamoured to say to each other.

"Thikse, Menke54
Emhati Kaththan
Sikar eman pit-tage"

Listen well to the words in order to enable us to kill game. They request the partner to kill the opposite partner, because, this is the time to feel pleasure to be killed by the life-partner. The moon-lit sky creates a benumbing influence on the youths and they feel that it is better to die in
association with his or her lover than to live to be the victim of the hard realities without love. The most enchanting and appealing becomes the movement, when the girl sitting behind a well, prays:

"Bhalase Sewa nana lagdan
Isung Sindri Chiarki erpa kala lagdan
Baro kos tero kosanti
Borae ki enghai
paddanti Ghore onu barae ki khatrae"

That is,

'I am propitiating the well
I am going home offering the oil and vermilion
May come from twelve or thirteen kroses on horsebag
And fall in my village.

This is the prayer of a lone girl praying for the union with the boy of her choice. She prays so that her beloved comes swiftly on horseback and fall in her village. All these interesting episodes are purely personal affairs, that are being enacted through ages, at the end of the winter, when the first step of the spring is heard in the murmuring sound of the newly grown leaves of the tree, and the full moon shines in the sky at the end of the month of the Magh or in the middle of February.

The poetry in life never dies, but is created and recreated generation after generation. The old men call these episodes as childish games or silly activities, even though they started their career with such as a series of emotional upsurge. To the old man, these are dirt, fit for being swept away, but to the youth, these are the new foliage of a blooming man, which are not only enchanting, but a necessity in the process of the growth of life.
The drama of life remains dynamic being enshrined in the life-cycles.

"Ledra chithra kura
Banchra dhyanim nandam
Baba gyanim nandan".

'Clothed in rags, I meditated, I meditated on thee and request the father to drive off the wicked ghosts that make noise on the youth'.

"Pāpi mūdāi nandan,55
Bābā hātāiyō nānā,
Bābā, bātāiyō nānā."

'O father, do thou drive off and scatter abroad the wicked ghosts'.

Interestingly enough, in spite of uttering of the prayers through ages by the old wise man, the ghost does not leave the youthful men, but becomes the driving force behind all the activities of life. The abstract image of an infatuated life virtually keeps the man erect in the trials and tribulations of the strenuous life in an unwholesome earthly environment.

As the tribal youth sings his timeless theme of love in dappling moonlight of the forest and his melodious dancing rends the air, slumberous woodland seems to wake up to a burst of primitive passion, beauty and joy. In the following song, the picture is evident.

"Jangala vitarey jangala vitarey
Baba gela herai yo gela.

Jangala vitarey jangala vitarey
Bahir gela herai yo gela."
In the above song, the language is not entirely Kurukh, but mixed with Bengali words. Here, the singer is a male youth, who takes the life of love as the ultimate fate of man. This was true also in the life of his father and sister.

According to the Oraon Philosophy of life, man is expressed in a better way in love than in other activities. The rudimentary form of this Dravidian concept of expression is sophisticated with the high literary achievement of the Sangam age. The essence of human life is depicted there, not as life of bodily impulses, but impulses of spirit that can unite a man with others and can build up heaven on this earth, where only the parrots recite the music of the glory of love and human life and thereby sing the glory of God.

For the Oraons, not music alone, but dancing is a part of their life. Dancing is occasioned by the various Oraon festivals, namely, Karam, Sohrae, Hariari, Fulli, Fagua and so on. Oraon dance is simple and unaffected and animated by primitive passion. The dance seeks to convey a mood through expressive gestures of hand and feet and sharp swings of the body. The Karam dance is performed on the occasion of the festival of new harvest. It is not a simple dance to show the attachment of human
being with the crops of the field, but depict an enchanting sphere of human emotions, the spell of which inspires a man to open himself or herself to other.

The most enchanting are the varieties of Jhumur dance. Jhumur is held to mark various festivities around the seasons. Jhumur dance has no rigid rules and is adaptable to any situation. Sometimes it is presented in a circle, and sometimes in two parallel lines. It can either be all men's or all women's presentation. In Danrshal Jhumur no woman takes part. On the other hand, Nachni Jhumur is executed solely by women. Nachni Jhumur is not limited to the Oraons alone, but is familiar to other tribes also. Moreover, recently the Oraons have adopted from their neighbours the Mukhush Nach (Mask dance). In the mask dance, various plays are depicted through various episodes, like Kali Nach, Dashabatar Nach, Hunuman Nach and so on.

In all the dances, music is must. It would be wrong to assume that in all dances, love-songs are recited. Devotional songs with high philosophical ideas occupy a major part. Amongst the Oraons, devotion is looked upon not as a complete mingling of an individual soul with the universal soul, but as a feeling of sublimity that makes the universal mind to sing the glories of the individual soul of man.

Three categories of songs are found to be recited in accompaniment of musical instruments during dance performances. These are: (i) Religious songs that is hymns in praise of the Creator, God or even the evil spirits, or devotional notes invoking rainfall, stimulating harvest, preventing epidemic, vanquishing an enemy, curing barrenness or calling back the dead at funerals, (ii) Social songs sung during marriage-rites and ceremonies, birth and harvest and other ceremonial occasions. (iii) Romantic songs that reflect a desire for union with the beloved physically or
otherwise. Romantic songs sometimes do have a spiritual undertone and the love of man and woman is the allegorical representation of love of God. In almost all the songs, there are various moods like desire or union, the eventuality of separation, the episode of sadness and matters of jubilations. In the background of the variegated landscape, the tribal music presents breath of variation. But there is an under-current of similar melody which is dominated by peculiar accent and rhythm.

An exception to the above categories is found in a special type of dance, known among the Oraons as Dhulia dance. This has close similarity with the Dasae dance of the Mundas. But, in essence, it is a war-dance. Dancers of Dhulia dance are to be attired in battle-dress and a battle-field atmosphere has to be created by the frenzied playing of drums, trumpets and bugles. It should be noted here that in all the dance-forms an agosan is attributed. Agosan is the attraction of spirit, thereby meaning that unless a spell descends on the performers, no dance can be perfect. It is for this reason that dancers are sometimes seen falling unconscious before dancing. He or she groans in a comma-stage and the groan is interpreted as the voice of God. Sometimes it is also seen that the dancer drinks the blood of live-fowl by slitting its neck and his hair is loosened untidily.

Dancing-costume is another attractive part of tribal-dance. If the dancing is of religious type, the costumes used in dancing are holy. The dresses must be gaudy and resplendent, because the tribes think that gods are attracted by finery. The resplendent costume is sewn in its border with a white patch through upper piece, embroidered in golden brocade and sometimes set with mirroretts. Velvet bells inlaid with round semi-circular and square beads of glass are worn round the waist. The girls wear breast-bell, decorated with a string of beads; necklaces, made of rupee-coins are used over their neck. The male dancers wear a crown of feathers, tied up with bird feathers round their wrists and arms and
sometimes white anointment in their forehead. There is a belief that bead-strings and necklaces of rupee-coins are possessed with life-essence. When dancing is held in the field, the magical powers of the bead-strings and necklace, it is held, will enhance fertility of the soil and make for their material welfare. In addition to the normal costume, bizarre dresses are put on some occasions. Mask painted with animal-faces are usually used in dances before hunting. Totem-symbols are sometimes imprinted on the masks. Just as dance is sacred among the primitive tribes, so is the dress worn by the dancers. In primitive dance, religion and art are combined. As civilisation progresses, art and religion become independent of each other, but, even today, amongst the tribals both are not exclusive.

The natural abundance and infinitude of nature stimulate certain responses in the aesthetic sense of human mind. As urge to create wells up from the within, the artist feels an inconstant pain and frenzied thurst for self-expression, and wheeze out, pathos in articulate means, unknowingly even of the surroundings amongst the primitive peoples no exception is noticed.
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