CHAPTER 6

THE AGENTS OF HEALING

In the process of healing there are certain agents who play an important role. Medication is not just a process of extraction and consumption of herbs. The medicines have to pass through the medium of special persons who are known to be endowed with a healing gift. They have been termed as the agents of healing in this work.

Traditional or folk healers today are undergoing changes with the impact of Western medicine. Their position as healers is in a transitional phase.[1] Yet among the Baradkars healers do play a significant role.

These agents of healing may be human or super human.

Among the human agents are:

1) The Voktakarn (Medicine woman).
2) The Dištikarn (Woman removing evil eye).
3) The Budvont (Headman).
4) The Ghaşi (Shaman).

The super-human agents of healing are classified together as Demons and Deities of healing. They are:

1) The Hapşi.
2) The Bīrādkarn Saibin (Shre Shantadurga Baradkariņ).
3) The Funṭirkarn Saibin.
4) The Odu Paik.
5) Pirawoni (Babar Pir).
6) Mamai Saibin (Shree Shantadurga Fatorpekariin).
7) Tamaskin Saibin (Shree Kamakshi Shiroda).
8) Sant Huris (Holy Cross).

In order to understand the role of the healing agents, I have discussed each human agent separately. The super-human agents have been discussed together, except the Hapshi, Baradkarn Saibin, and the Holy Cross. They have been taken separately. The reasons for this will be evident from the description of each.

a) The Voktakarn:
She is a person who is endowed with the gift of healing. She has deep knowledge of medicinal plants and their use. She is skilled in collection and preparation of medicines. She has developed the art of identifying the best varieties of plant parts. Her special skill and knowledge of the materia medica are peripheral to her healing power. I say this because there are many men and women among the Baradkars who have equally good knowledge of flora and fauna used in medicinal preparations, but they do not possess the healing gift and hence cannot be termed as Voktakarn.

The Voktakarn are women healers. There are also male counterparts, the Voktakar. They are relatively few as compared to the females. In Baradi there is no medicine man, only medicine women. Some villages may have one medicine man alone, if the women have expired.
chores, takes part in all activities connected to her being as a member of her community. As she grows up into a bail (adult woman). She already has sufficient knowledge of medicinal flora and fauna. Being a member of the community she acquires this knowledge naturally from the elders. All men and women acquire knowledge of medicinal practices through a gradual process. Most of it narrated by elders when there is an illness. Some information is passed during the long firewood collection trips to the hills, tending the cashew orchards, or just when the people are relaxing after supper.

Though an adult woman may have all the knowledge of medicine, she is not yet acknowledged as a Voktakarn. A woman actually begins giving or advising people about medicines after she becomes a bail (here a married woman). She can put her knowledge into use only after her marriage.

Before she gets married despite her knowledge there are other elders in the family and neighbourhood who have the responsibility of giving medicines. Thus her position as a married woman is crucial to her start as a medicine woman. It is here that the categories of females are of three types, a girl, an adult woman, and a married woman (mother). A woman can become a medicine woman only after her marriage. When a female is still a girl she does not give medicine, even though she has the knowledge of medicines.

When a woman becomes a housewife she has the social sanction to give medicines to those who are in need. Often the first time
neighbourhood takes ill. As the medicine woman may not be available in the immediate vicinity. This young woman offers to give medicine as preliminary medication, before the actual treatment of the illness begins. The sickperson may find immediate relief after the medicine. The relief is attributed to the haat gun (healing power) of the woman.

This is often the beginning of a woman's life as a medicine woman. Once her success has been established, (even a single case is taken as that of healing power) the woman is approached by other neighbours and family members in times of need. She continues giving medicines. The neighbourhood then begins to acknowledge the fact that she is really endowed with the healing gift. Even the woman herself is convinced that she has the gift. She begins to treat her own self as different from the self she had when she was just married.

The medicine woman gets a new personality. She is looked up to by the neighbours. She performs necessary rituals like, offering prayers at the Cross and to the various local deities in Baradi. She takes care not to do anything to displease them. Whereas she had just been collecting medicines and administering them to needy sickperson, now she collects them with the solemnity of a ritual. She recites Incantations before collection, incantations during collection, and incantations while dispensing medicines.

Her interest in medicines plants deepens at the same time.
She is alert to note the places where medicines are found. Her contact with other older medicine women grows. She learns of new medications for illnesses. The trips to collect firewood attain special significance, because she has to collect medicines too.

The entire process of becoming a medicine woman is accomplished as a member of the community. A medicine woman is not removed from the labour process in order to acquire the knowledge she does, neither does she cease to do any of the activities required of a wife and mother. Nevertheless her conviction that she is chosen to serve her community takes precedence above all. A medicine woman makes time besides her working hours in order to heal the sick. If need be she has to rise earlier than her family members to prepare medications.

The process is therefore a simultaneous one. A woman's healing power unfolds along with her cumulative information of medicines. The essential characteristic of the medicine woman is her power to heal. Her skill to collect medicines and prepare medications in time, is treated as power no medicine can be effective. The drugs have no therapeutic value without them passing through the medium of the medicine woman.

The medicine woman collects plants on the way to the hills and back. Even though she accompanies all the other women, she does it discreetly. She will stay behind or walk ahead, and go to the spots where she had earlier sighted the medicinal plants. The other women may be aware of the fact that she is collecting medicines. When asked, she simply replies she needs them for some
GHADDI IN A DEEP TRANCE

THE GHADDI GOES INTO A TRANCE

GHADDI IN A DEEP TRANCE

RICE PICKING METHOD OF DIVINATION

COUNTING THE RICE GRAINS

THE GHADDI REVEALS THE EVIL SPIRIT
purpose. She does not even say she needs them for medicines.

Here the condition of secrecy tends to be jeopardized. In order to overcome this, the medicine woman deliberately gives vague, misleading answers. She deliberately asks to be left alone while collecting. When the women go collecting firewood, they perform all activities together. Despite this, the medicine woman has to maintain her secrecy.

In reality there cannot be a situation of secrecy, because all activities are done together. In order to fulfill the condition of secrecy she has to create a situation. The other women help her too. Both, the woman as well as the medicine woman pretend they are not aware of one another's knowledge. They create a symbolic situation of secrecy, replacing it for the actual situation, in which there can be no secrecy. It becomes the real situation under which the medicines have been collected. This symbolic secrecy is also maintained when the medicine woman dispenses medicines to her patients.

A medicine woman, assists as a midwife too. She learns this skill from other older volijin (midwife). A woman is expected to be toklen goț (brave) in order to assist in the delivery of a child. She has to pacify the mother, make her sit in the proper position, holding, manoeuring her breathing, bathing the baby, severing the umbilical cord; all involve the healing gift. The medicine women are often called by the doctors to assist in deliveries outside Bărădi too.

The knowledge of the medicine woman is passed on to her
children. Their mother being deeply involved in medicines aroused their curiosity as they grow up. They are socialized into an environment, where their mother's activity is seen as a humble responsibility towards the health of their community. As the children grow up they, have considerable knowledge of medicines. However all may not turn out to be medicine women. A son or a daughter may develop the healing gift when they grow up. None of the children may also develop the healing gift, despite the knowledge of medicines.

A daughter or a daughter-in-law acquire the healing gift just like their mother. They too can use their knowledge only after their marriage. A man can become a medicine man only after he becomes a husband or a father. A Æhêdo (boy) cannot become a medicine man. The Bârådkârs believe that the healing gift may genetically pass from mother to children. Sometimes it passes, sometimes it does not.

No medicine women dispense medicines for monetary benefit. their activity is a service to the community. Dispensing medicines is not an occupation among the Bârådkârs. But people may give goods to the medicine woman, as a reciprocation for the services rendered.

b) The Dištikarn :

The Dištikarn is a woman who can cause as well as dišt (evil eye). The term includes women with one (causative) or both (causative and curative) characteristics. A woman who is known to remove evil eye, cannot cause it. But the woman who is known to
cause evil eye can act as an aid to remove the evil eye (see pg.). It is because the woman under certain circumstances aids in removing it, that the dame term is designated for both.

Dişṭikarn as Causative Agent. The cause and removal of evil eye is the domain of the woman. A woman is thought to have the ability to affect the bodily functions of others through the evil influence of her sight. Such an influence can be exerted by certain types of females only. A Ėhedu (girl) cannot cause dist. a bail (adult woman, and married woman) can cause dişṭ. A Ṣaan bail (widow) a woman without children, a woman who is thought to look ugly, can all cause evil eye.

A young girl, even if she looks ugly cannot cause evil eye. But she has the potential to cause it when she grows up. At a young age a girl may signs of enviousness towards others. Accompanied with this trait may be habitual kleptomania, for beads, pebbles, and common play things. She may do the aas korop (show conscious desire to possess some things). These are all taken as signs that the young girl will grow up to become a dişṭikarn.

When such a girl grows up into a young woman, the sure way to find out if she has become a dişṭikarn is only when she actually affects another person. The woman shows envy for somebody's new clothes, new sandals, excellent skills, hardwork. She shows envy for any of the qualities or objects that she finds desirable for herself. The other person may take ill after her comments. She may not fall sick immediately, but may do so the
following week. If the illness can be traced to proceed from her remarks, the woman is taken to be the distikarn.

The same assumed distikarn could cause sickness to another unsuspecting victim. Communication is established among the neighbours about the woman who causes evil eye. Two cases of dist are sufficient, to declare her as the distikarn. At this stage the distikarn may not be aware of the peoples attribution to her. The people however regard her with caution. Direct eye contact is avoided. New clothes, house hold objects are not freely displayed to her. All the forms of behaviour adopted to avoid evil eye are adopted in her presence (see pg.).

It is the people who bestow the position of a distikarn on her. The woman in question may not be aware that she has been termed as the distikarn, though she may suspect her neighbours. When she suspects several cases, where the illness of persons are attributed to her, she begin to believe that she has the capacity to cause dist. Even so, she has no control over her super human ability. It is part of her, yet it is independent of her conscious control. Once she gets the power to cause dist, it is thought to remain in her body throughout her life.

The capacity to cause dist is often thought to be hereditary too. A woman’s child may grow up with her mother’s characteristic. Her ability to cause dist is again not in her control. People attribute her mother’s qualities to her. If a person is found to suffer from a sudden illness after having contacted her, the illness is attributed to her hidden capacities
as she is the child of diṣṭikarn.

When this child grows up, she realizes that she too is considered to be a diṣṭikarn. Though she may not agree with them, the fact that people take ill after interacting with her, is sufficient for her to suspect that she has developed her mother's qualities.

There are some diṣṭikarn who try and avoid carrying their neighbour's children, or community on new clothes that women wear. They avoid situations where they could be overtly accused of evil eye. However this does not stop from causing it, because they cannot control the effect of their sight upon others.

There is no means of avoiding diṣṭ altogether. It can be caused anytime and anywhere. Neighbours and relatives do not shun women who are believed to cause diṣṭ. People regulate their behaviour in their presence. No one would risk doing a skillful job, like stitching a beautiful dress, or weaving palm leaves in her presence. A activity which the people feel will may cause them illness through the evil eye. Some may cause it just once in their lifetime. Some may not cause it at all. There is no certainty about when the woman can cause evil eye. A sudden strong desire of another's possession, a sudden deep envy can be sufficient for causing evil eye, when the woman is not a declared diṣṭikarn.

Diṣṭikarn as a Curative Agent. A woman can remove evil eye after she becomes a bail (married woman). Like the medicine
woman, she too is not aware of this fact. From observing the elders in the house she learns the basic ritual of turning salt thrice around a victim's head.

If a family member chances to be affected by evil eye, the woman takes the initiative to turn the salt. She can attempt this only if there are no elders at the time. The sick person may or may not find relief. If he does, the woman is said to possess the heat gun (healing gift). The family members discover her gift. The woman herself is surprised at her own capability. She realizes that she has been endowed with the healing touch. She observes carefully the older dištikarn in the village. They become her role model. Through them she learns the various methods of removing evil eye.

The neighbours begin to ask for help. After several cases of healing, she is fully established as a distikarn. Once a woman is so recognized, she cannot cause evil eye to any one. Though other women whose healing gift is not yet manifested, may cause evil. What is socially recognized in the woman is thought to be biological fact.

The healing power of the dištikarn can be transmitted to her next generation. Her daughter or grand-daughter gets her gift. Her daughter-in-law may also get the gift. Though she is not her own daughter, she may share the same blood (ek rogot) with her. This blood relationship is sufficient to transmit the healing power onto the daughter-in-law. Men who remove evil eye extremely few. In Baradi there are no men who remove it. Men causing evil
eye are also seldom heard of. A man who becomes a curative agent of evil eye (dištikar), does so in the same manner as their female counterpart.

The dištikarn is called upon to perform the rituals for dišt kadop (removal of evil eye) not so much for her skill but because she now possesses the healing gift. The procedure of removing evil eye is known to many women, but only those with the power to heal can use it on the sick person.

When a woman who has caused dišt is identified (when she is the causative agent) she can also be used to remove it. In such a case it is not her healing power that is called into command. Since she has caused harm to the individual, she herself can break the spell of evil eye. She cannot ride a person of evil eye if she has not caused it. Known, narrating the illness to any other known dištikarn does not help rid the dišt in any way.

c) THE GHADI :
The Ghadi is a person who has supernatural powers to make contact with spirits. He is a person who can influence them to act in one way or another. A Ghadi has an important function in the community. He is capable of affecting the body of any individual through his powers.

The Ghadi does not enjoy special privileges in the village. Even in his own family he is treated like any other man. He goes about all his daily chores, cuts firewood, may go fishing, perform other services, and practices agriculture in the monsoons. He is not removed from the normal labour process of the
community. Shamans in other cultures too are considered like ordinary men, with special ability to contact deities.[2]

A man may get the bhar or bhang (trance) during certain rituals of the Mēl or else the man may go into a deep trance as a result of intense prayer. This trance is a devosponacho bhang (holy trance). It is like the bhang which also appears due to frenzied dancing at the time of the Mēl. The person begins to speak about things that will happen and things that have happened, but of which he had no knowledge.

This person gets the trance repeatedly ever after. Once the entitle trances have been successful, people begin to consult him regularly. The appearance of bhang is now just the reverse. People do not wait for the Ghadi to get the bhang through the deep concentration and prayers. Now he can answer the questions of his clients. People come to consult this oracle for finding solutions to mundane problems like, a good job, to find a lost cow, to ask for advice about undertaking a particular job, or if a person has taken ill and does not respond to any treatment. Here we will take into consideration only that aspect of the ghadis functions, namely his role as a causative and curative agent of illness.

**Causative Agent**

In order to make contact with the dead the ghadi requires the assistance of a personal spirit. An 'Alwantin' or a 'Khetri'. These are spirits of persons who have died young, under tragic circumstances (see pg.). The Ghadi acquires this personal Alwantin or Khetri by securing any of its body part. This he may

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achieve in two ways. When an Alwantin or Khetri is buried outside the village boundaries, he may dig up the remains and get a bone, hair or nail from the corpse. These body parts are used by him to call upon the spirit when necessary.

The body parts are useful because the spirits are thought to maintain a continuity with them. The ghadi works on the belief that every spirit has an insatiable desire to come back to earth. In order to do so they need human blood. They can cause irreversible damage to those whom they hate or envy on earth. They will thus harm anybody if they are promised blood in return.

The ghadi operates on this principle. If a particular person is to be harmed or made ill, the ghadi offers to give blood to the spirit for doing his bidding. Since it is not possible to offer human blood, he tricks the spirit by offering a foal's blood. In fact this too becomes a symbolic offering of human blood. The fowl has to be purchased by the client of the ghadi. If it is the ghadi himself who wants the spirit to act then he has to buy a fowl for the purpose. He cannot use the fowl given to him earlier by any client.

The spirit accepts the blood offered and does the necessary function on the body of the victim. This victim as he is thought is supposed to become ill or meet with several misfortunes, which in turn makes him a sick man. The ghadi on the other hand can perform this function on behalf of any client. He can find out if there is any spirit troubling them. Through his personal spirit he can find out if any other spirit has been troubling his
client, and also who it is who has ordered the spirit to do so. Having established the identity of the person, the ghadi can ask his personal spirit to reverse the spell back on the client's enemy or else he can ask the spirit to cause harm to the client's enemy.

If the person has done the ghadiapon to a particular person, the ghadi gives an advance warning. If the spirit has not been able to do the required harm, it means he will not get the blood. So, the same spirit which is used to cause harm to the body of others, attacks the body of the person himself. Because once the spirit is promised a way back to life on this earth, there is very little that the spirit will stop at to get what it wants.

A person who becomes the victim of a ghadi does not know about it, till someone else voices a suspicion. In case the person takes ill, or becomes sick that he nearly misses dying, it is said that this mellele are strong, and they protected him. This is when the role of the ancestors comes in. Each person's purwoz protect their family members. The Alwantins & Kheteris are also part of the spirit world. They are malevolent spirits. The purwoz of each family have the important function of protecting the family members from these malevolent spirits. They are the ones who cause various types of illness. (see ancestor worship). So though the Alwantin affects the body of the victim, the purwoz protects him. This may not happen all the time. Besides when there is suspicion of variance the patient cannot take a risk. He has to go to the ghadi either to check or to remove the evil influence. The patient may also ask the ghadi to revoke the spell
back onto the person who has caused it.

Curative Agent:

The ghāḍi can also be a curative agent of varyācē. When a sick person is suspected to be a victim of varyācē, it is only the ghāḍi who can cure the spirit, in order to ask for his favour. The personal khetri, on the promise of blood, removes the evil influence of the other spirits. The ghāḍi can also find out if the patient that is brought to him is really suffering from varyace. He begins before the trance itself. When the patient is brought in, the ghāḍi asks him a series of leading questions.

1. First, he finds out if there has been an Alwantin or a Khetri in the family of the sick person father or husband.

2. Second, he wants to know how relations were, when the person was alive.

3. If any living relative has strong enmity with him.

4. Who is their kul dev and the present gramdev.

5. Whether the patient has any bitter enemies in the neighbourhood or at the place of work. Based on these questions, he knows the background of the sick person.

With these preliminary answers he sits for his trance. The ghāḍi uses the assistance of all the local deities to effect a cure. Around Bārāḍi, the popular deities are the Bārāḍ karin, Funtir karin, the Odu Paik, Hapški, the Pirawoni, and the Sant Huris. Whether the patient that comes is a Hindu or Christian,
the ghadi invokes all the deities. He has to cure the person, as such he requires the assistance of all. He makes a synthesis of all part of the local pantheon and they have to be called on for help. Through their power they are able to pacify the evil spirits.

The offering given is a coconut and agarbattis. When the ghadi takes the assistance of the spirits he has to offer blood and therefore the sick person is required to bring a fowl. Instead of the ghadi offering the blood, he may sometimes ask the patient to offer it at a particular temple. Bārāṅkars mostly offer blood sacrifices at the Mallikarjun (Bageli Paik) temple at Canacona, the Shanta durga Fatorpekariṇ (Purva Khetri) temple at Fatorpa, or at the Chandreswar temple (Bhutnath) at Chandranath hill in Quepem. Depending upon the place from where the sick person comes, he has to offer the blood to the respective demon.

Throughout the trance of the ghadi, he indulges in various dramatic acts. He swings his arms, slaps his legs, swirls his head while uttering the chants. One of the method he uses to ask questions either to the spirits or the deities, is the rice sticking method. The ghadi talk to the spirits, in a trance as if talking to a fellow villages. For instance he says - Kohli āḍkod assa ti dakoi poia ? Anh ? Khetri asa ? Anh ? dakoi poia ? The questioning continues in this fashion with the ghadi picking up rice grains every time he poses a question. This is one way of establishing the existence of vāryaṁ. Sometimes the ghadi may find ‘no’ to all his queries. In this case he claims that there
is no varyae, but the patient may not be possessed by the spirit only 'bekdaila' meaning that there had been an attempt by the spirit to attack, this attempt itself affects the body of the patient.

When an attempt has been made once, same spirit may attempt to the patient once again. The ghadi asks to offer a fowl to the personal spirit, so that it can in turn keep the other spirit away from the sick person. When the patient is found to have varyace, the ghadi may also try to trap the spirit in a bottle. Through the blood sacrifice and a series of chants he lures the spirit to a bottle. Then he corks the bottle and leaves it at a spot far away from the village. After having done this the ghadi asks the patient to avoid travelling distant places alone. It is done for some time till he regains his health. When the body is just free from a spirit, it has to regain its original healthy state. The patient is still kept on herbal medicine for a few days. Because the biological body also has to recuperate.

The ghadi as a person cannot be affected by varyace. Because he has his own personal khetri, who knows that he has to protect him in return for blood. The ghadi is not directly responsible for cause or cure. He becomes the mediator between the human and superhuman forces. Though the ghadi stands out from other people in the community, his body though, made up of the same two aspects social/biological, his social body differs from the rest. He can use his body to exercise supernatural powers to make contact with the dead.
A CASE OF SPIRIT AFFLICTION
(AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR)

REMOVING EVIL EYE

BUDVONTS LAYING A HEALING HAND ON
THE SICK
KIRAYE (Andrographis paniculata) - root juice against worms.

PURNAMADO (Boerhavia diffusa) - root juice against jaundice.

KAMIN LASOP (Skin burnt to cure jaundice)
There are several cases when a sick person healed of waryala may get another attack from the same spirit, or some other. The ghadi may warn of this. Or else the sick person may never be free from the spirit. He may even die, inspite of the ghadiapcon and herbal medicine. In this case it is just accepted that the spirit was too powerful to overcome. Nobody ever questions the ghadi, or declares him as less powerful than other. It is just accepted that the spirit is too powerful and he killed the patient. Yet the ghadi's position as healer and causative agent of illness does not deter.

The Shamans therapy becomes effective within a specific context. He shares same cultural beliefs as the patients. He provides the right setting for the expected cure of the patient.[3]

d) THE BUDVONT : He is the head of each vangod (clan). The budvont is the spiritual and political leader of each clan. The budvont (one with wisdom) as the term suggests is a person of intelligence, far sightedness, fair judgment, and great courage. Yet not all men with such qualities can be called as budvont. Because he is also endowed with the special power of being the representative of his clan can communicate with the ancestors and their deities. A budvont is not chosen on the basis of age alone. Though a budvont is necessarily a man of at least 50 years of age. This is because the new budvonts are always appointed when the older one is too old to carry out the necessary rituals. But as long as he is alive the new budvont always performs the
rituals on his behalf. Only after the older budvonts death does he become the actual budvont.

The budvont is selected by a unanimous decision at the maan in order to discuss the preparations. This is the time when they decide if a new budvont should be appointed. The budvont as we shall see occupies a central place in the life of the kunbi. Every male member of the clan has the potential to be a budvont. If there are four modkeo in a clan and if the budvont of the vangod belongs to a particular modki, the next budvont also comes from the same modki then a member from another modki takes his place. The everyday life of a budvont is the same as any other man in the community. When a new person is appointed a budvont, sacred characteristics come to be bestowed upon him. A person knows that by virtue of his being appointed the budvont, he now has several other responsibilities towards his clan. Though his entire personality changes, his life does not change at all. He still continues to do all other activities as before. He may even seek employment as a wage labourer in the nearby fishing industry in Betul or with some Charddes families in adjoining Velim.

The budvont gains extreme importance only at certain places and at certain times. His functions are: (1) To lead all rituals, connected to all aspects of social life of the kunbi. (2) To make all political decisions for the clan. (3) To mediate on behalf of the vangod. (4) To decide for the whole community together with the other two budvonts. (5) To mediate between ancestors and the people. (6) To heal the sick. It is his role as the healer and mediator between ancestors and people that will be
given attention here.

When a men becomes a budvont there is a simultaneous change in this body. The biological body remains the same, but now his social body acquires a new dimension, it gets the sacrency required for all the functions of the budvont. He now becomes the head of his clan. The entire vangod becomes embodied in his person.

In some communities the shaman is responsible for new-house ceremonies, agricultural rituals, and averting epidemics.[4] The budvont shares these responsibilities among the Bārādkars. His performance during the Mell helps avert illness in the community. Widespread illness in a community (such as an epidimic) can be averted only through the rituals of the budvont.

During the Mell the budvonts most important function is to perform the rituals to the ancestors on behalf of the clan, and to heal the sick. He does the rituals because the people cannot do them on their own. The offerings have to come from the hands of the budvont. During the three days of the Mell the budvont gets the role of a healer. His position is accepted both within and outside the community. People with ailments queue to the budvonts for his healing touch. The budvont prays over them and rubs the head the legs and arms with a little oil from the lamp, from the maand.

The budvont is healer only for four days in a year. For this he has to remain a vegetarian during the Mell. He drinks cowdung
water inorder to cleanse himself. he offers prayers and
invocations to the deities. All these are preparations for the
new personality that the budvont acquires for four days.

On the fifth day i.e after the Mell the budvont is once
again the political leader. Although he gets the special powers
of healing for four days in a year, the time period does not
matter. Even if it means a short time. Because within this short
while the budvont can exercise his healing power over the entire
community. Even during the Mell it is not at all times that the
budvont is a healer. He gets the power to heal only at certain
times at certain places. The Maand which is otherwise just a
small area outside the Voqlo Ghor, becomes a sacred place for
healing after the lamp has been lit at it. The men of the
community chant the invocations which have to be lead by the
budvonts. (See Mell). It is only after the budvonts have lead the
Mell around the maand that it becomes sacred. The men move out
and the space is now open for patients to be healed by the
budvont. The patients that come to the budvont are with ailments
such as bodyaches, fevers, even cases of dist with prolonged
illness.

The budvont symbolically represents the head of the body
social. He is the medium through which medicines can reach the
body. He is the unified body. The community together form the
unified body. The unified body is accentuated only during the
Mell. The behaviour of the budvont affects the health of the
community. He has to perform all the devosponn with great care.
If the head is not healthy the body cannot remain healthy too.
For healing the social body, the sick persons come to head of their social body. Even though they may continue to take medicines from the medicine woman.

Apart from the four days when the budvont is a healer for excellence, he is the person who has to be notified if there is a suspicion of illness due to spirit possession. Being the head of the clan he has to accompany sick people to the ghadi.

e) The Super-Human Agents of Healing:

The Hapshi - The people of Bārādi believe there is a being who guards the people and its village boundaries. He is not defined as a God or as a spirit. Deo, is a God. Otmo is the spirit of a human being who has died. The Hapshi is neither a God nor is he a spirit. He is referred to as the devchar. He was thought to have been residing in the village before anyone else. Nobody can say if he was a human being once upon a time.

The Hapshi is described as exceptionally tall, well built, and moves about with a walking stick. He can appear in many forms: A cow, a buffalo, a dog, a pig, an old man but never as a woman. The Hapshi stalks the roads, mountains and forests only at night. He has an abode in the hills. The Hapshi has two opposite characteristics. He protects his people jealously, and punishes offenders very severely. His revenge can even be fatal to the Bārādkars. He has no real name. He is known only by metaphors such as Vate Simeño Dhoni, Rakhno, Devchar, Hapshi, Vataro, Ratcho Bhonvtato, or Zagyacho, or just 'Tho'. Since he has no real name, for convenience I shall choose to call him Hapshi. The
name cannot be uttered by any man or woman in vain. Because the Hapshi takes offense to this that's why the people do not even know his real name. When talking about him the various names are uttered as whispers. This is a symbolic manner in which the Hapshi is talked about. Even if talking in a loud voice, the name has to be said in a low voice.

The Hapshi has many places, where he appears. They are usually lonely spots in or around the village. There is an area just at the border, where runs a beautiful spring. The water comes from a low natural cave. Inside this cave is a raised flat portion which is the house of the Hapshi. There are vivid descriptions about him. One day a man chanced to enter the caves, because he had spotted a number of tortoises inside. He was about to take them when he spotted a man, tall, almost a giant, sitting on the raised rock. He was about to eat, in his vatli he had served rice and curry, and bhaji. He asked the man to take only one tortoise and leave the rest. He also requested him to share the meal with him. The man thanked him and left hurriedly. Another woman was making rice flour on the dantem late in the night. Her family members had gone to relatives houses. She was alone at home. it was time for the Hapshi to do his rounds. As the women explained later, obviously the noise of the dantem disturbed the Hapshi. The woman was not supposed to be grinding at that hour. The Hapshi came up to the house and threw an iron hook (goro) from over the wall. This hit the woman. He ordered her to stop grinding and to put out the lamp. The woman did so immediately. She was so terrified that she put out the lamp and
remained sitting until day break.

There are cases where the Hapshi helps people to reach home safely. Men returning home from work late, would often claim to be followed by a tall man. He would even show them the path with a lantern, and then mysteriously disappear as they reached their houses. If anyone unknowingly cursed or abused him, the Hapshi would punish them by making them ill or even by killing them.

There are several cases of death caused due to punishment by the Hapshi. Persons have got attacks of paralysis, they have been plagued with strange recurring fevers. The Hapshi is extremely harsh on women. The punishment method out to erring women can be very severe compared to the men. The Hapshi can cause women to become childless, he can make them miscarry. Women have to be very careful about him. The Hapshi has to be appeased by the Bārādkars very regularly. He is offered liquor, poli (crude bread), dry fish. Even so, once the person abuses the Hapshi, very little can be done to effect an immediate cure. The victim has to make offerings and also offer prayers, ask for forgiveness. Patients have to say 'Saiba bugos' (Forgive me) to him. Thus the Hapshi is not a curative agent, but a causative agent of illness. He is feared the most because, there are seldom cures, when the Hapshi causes diseases in people, he can only be prevented from causing harm. He is not a spirit and thus the ghadi too cannot help in cure. Since the Hapshi is neither a spirit nor a deity the Ghadi cannot influence the spirits. They cannot make contact with the Hapshi. Though blood sacrifices are
offered to the Hapšhi, they cannot be used as a means to make him undo what he has done. The people can only hope to seek protection from him through the rituals during the Mell. The shimo bandop ceremony done on the last night of the Mell is most serious. It ensures protection from the Hapšhi for the following year.

The Hapšhi can be appeased through such collective ceremonies. Offerings to this deuchar can be made only by the men, particularly the budvont. Since the Hapšhi is not a spirit or a God there is no possession (of the body) by him. However there is a continuity between his body and that of the Bārādkars, that's why he can cause them to be ill. It is not a continued influence on the body. The Hapšhi just affects the body, and the sick person either has to endure the disease, or if it is a severe attack, he may even die. When the Hapšhi attacks, or gives a disease, it should be treated with herbal medicine. The disease follows its normal course before a cure. When the hapsbeies are the head there is very little that can be done. The patients family can just wait and hope that the Hapšhi will not cast his wrath when the patient gets well. The patients cannot appease the Hapšhi to cure the illness. He can cause disease and he can be prevented from cause harm to people.

The Bārādkarn Saibin : This is a Saibin the Bārādkars fear and respect the most. The name of this Saibin is shenvetem. She lived in Bārādi much before the people came to live there. The land belonged to her. The Bārādkars are living on her land. The home of the Bārādkarn was a 'Roen' (termite mound). This roen was
situated at a place called the Muxer. Which was an arched bridge linking Bārāḍī to the adjoining khazan lands. Bārāḍkārn was a tall well built woman, with ankle length hair, so much so that it swept the roads. She often sat on a huge rock that stood next to her roen. That was her favourite place. She bathed at the spring, which lies near the Muxer, at the foot of the Baradi Hill. Bārāḍkārn was a powerful deity. She protected her village very jealously. Even when the people came to live there she protected them like her own children. When she walked down the road her hair swept away all evil that could possibly affect the people. She took away all illness along with her. Bārāḍkārn had absolute control over nature. She could keep floods at bay, by just kicking the water. Her presence kept the soil fertile and the people healthy.

Some people began 'boshtepoń' (pollution) they would carelessly, pass her abode after consuming alcohol, menstruating women would pass her roen. Some people decided to rear pigs. Since she could not stand the pollution of her area, she decided to stay at Canacona. Though she left Baradi, she still loved all her people. Now she comes every year during the Meļļ, and during the 'Alma fest', or 'Feţe'. The people of Bārāḍī too, maintain her spring and her abode as her original home. Today her roen no longer exits. In its place people have made a small cemented enclosure. This place is forbidden to the Baradkars to avoid Boshtepoń. Only the budvonts can go there to place offerings during the Meļļ. On the rock stands a cross erected in her honour. Though the symbol of the cross dominates, the people
still address it as the Saibīn, or Bārādkanicho Hūris. The Saibīn plays a significant role in the health beliefs of the people. She is the protector of their health. Women in particular have deep faith in the healing power of Bārādkarn. Newly weds give special offerings, to ensure the birth of a child. If due respect is not paid to her, she may even make women barren. There are several examples cited by the people to show how she can punish erring people.

Once some women were returning home from collecting firewood. One of the women noticed another woman following them. She used abusive language asking her why she was trying to hide behind them. The woman was actually the Saibīn. She never forgave the woman abusing her. The victim was immediately paralyzed and died a few years later. Another girl of marriageable age, saw a woman sitting on a tree. Taking her to be a naughty girl, she abusively told her to come down at once. The Bārādkarn, cursed her, by making her childless after marriage. The woman died childless.

Bārādkarn can cure people whom she curses too, provided they appease her regularly and have truly atoned for their misdeeds. Even when there are patients who are sick due to other reasons like roge, Nadrečē, or Varyāčē, she helps to cure. Though there are specific remedies for specific types of diseases, the Saibīn ensures over all protection for her people. With her power she keeps away many spirits who could have caused harm.

Now inspite of being in Canacona she still protects the
people. The Bārāḏkars still maintains their strong links with her. Every year after the Meḷḷ the budvont or representative take offerings to her (See Meḷḷ). The group that goes there to Canacona, go on behalf of every Baradkar. On their way back from Canacona they take the same path through the forests. The women sprinkle the road with sweet laḍḍus and grams. These are the prasad from the Šaibin. The food strewn along the path is for the - 'rosto tond korpak'. (To cool the paths). The terms signify pacification of the paths. The lonely roads are often ridden by malevolent spirits. when Baradkarn was living in the village, the roads all around Baradi were safe for the people, the women frequented these roads, more than the men, because the collected fire wood and medicines from the forests. Now through the offerings given to her, she still exercises her protection power over her people. The entire worship of Bārāḏkarn is divided between Canacona and Bārāḏi. Though she has shifted her abode the Šaibin still has just the same significance as she did when she was at Bārāḏi.

The Pirvaṇṇi, Odupaik, and Funṭirkarn: The Pir or the Babbar Pir, as he is known is considered a Muslim Saint (See Meḷḷ). The people of Bārāḏi called him Pirovoṇi. He was brought up from the waters by the Bārāḏkars, and therefore he is believed to protect the people. The saint has been incorporated into the religion of the Bārāḏkars. The Baḏhi invokes the Piravoni as one of the deities. He does not directly cause harm, but as one of the Saints he can assist in the Varvaṇṇi. Odu Paik is a deity who has his abode at one border of the village at this place, Odu Paik
vomited jewels. But if he sensed people approaching them, he would swallow them back. The Funtirkarn Saibin is another deity at another border. She too is invoked during the Meil. The Piravoni, the Odu Paik and Funtirkarn along with the Baradkarn and Hapsi are invoked, for the collective well being of the community. These deities have to be called upon in the presence of the three budvants, and the men of the village. Individual invocation to the same deities have no therapeutic or religious significance, hence it is only during the Meil and in the presence of the three budvants that the invocations bring importance. The Ghaqi can also ask for their assistance to heal patients from Varyaaze.

If people do the hoshtepon, the deities however punish severely, sometimes even with death. Among all the human agents of healing, there are those who are the causative as well as the curative agents of healing, others can only heal but they cannot cause disease. The Voftakarn and the budvont are healers who can cure illnesses but cannot cause them. A budvont being symbolically linked to the body social, i.e. the community cannot harm his own people. It becomes an act of self destruction. The budvont is like the self of the body social. He is responsible to some extent, for maintaining a healthy body (social) of the community. A budvont however can cause harm to another community member just as any other man can if he finds him harming the Baradkars.

The Voftakarn cannot cause disease. She cannot even cause
dišt. It’s because as a Voktakarn she has the special haat gunn for healing. Therefore she cannot possess the power to cause disease. She cannot possess the two opposite qualities. If she can cause dišt then she does not possess the haat gunn. The presence of haat gunn in a woman automatically eliminates the other quality, namely that of possessing the ability to cause disease. Whereas the Ghadi and the dištikarn are different from the former two. Both can act as causative and curative agents of disease. The two qualities exist as one in both of them. The distikarn and the Ghadi are both responsible for healing the social body, and consequently the biological body too. Hence they become the cause and the cure for the disease.

There also seems to be a clear division between Male and Female healers according to the type of disease. The ‘roge’ cures and the ‘dist’ are in the hands of female. The Varyaçe, and collective healing is in the hands of the male.

Among the super-human agents of healing, again the Hapšhi is male and his worship is entirely in the hands of the male. Bārādgkarn is female but of late it is being taken over by the male. The rest of the deities are all through the hands of the male. It appears that the cures of the biological body, lie within the domain of the female, and the social body cures lie within the domain of the male. The Hapšhi does not really heal a disease although he can cause it. He can only restrain from causing illness to people.

References:
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