CHAPTER VII

AGRICULTURAL RITES
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I. Garbha Sankranti

(a)

On the last day of Aswin (normally the 14th or 15th of October), the agricultural community of Cachar observes the Garbha Sankranti ceremony. It is essentially a female rite and peasant women perform it by offering Sadh (desired food) to the paddy field.

Now, Sadhbhakshan is a popular female rite of local Hindus observed by feeding ceremonially a pregnant woman when her conception reaches its seventh or eighth month. The would-be mother is fed with all her favourite food amidst great merriment. It is believed that unless this rite is observed the unborn child would not grow properly in the womb and the delivery would be delayed and difficult.

The same idea operates when the peasant women perform the Sadhbhakshan of the paddy field on the occasion of Garbha Sankranti. The corn-bearing field is imagined as a would-be-mother, who must be fed with her favourite food to ensure the proper growth of the plants and corns. Paddy ripens in Agrahayan and this ceremony takes place in Aswin, just two months before harvest.
The Jadhbhakshan of the field is performed in the following manner. The peasant women paint a leaf of the *chalta* (shaddhock, an indigenous tree whose fruits are sour but of medicinal value) with vermilion and turmeric and inserts in it a shoot of *binna* (a kind of wild grass). At daybreak she takes a bath and carries the chalta leaf to the field where, in a corner, she digs a hole and places the leaf and the shoot there. She then recites:

M 1  a 2  l  a  d  1  a  k  s
M 1  a  l  a  b  a  r  e  a  s  a  i  h  a  t

(Turmeric, vermilion and chalta leaf, please cause the plant to grow two and a half cubits high).

The combination of chalta leaf, vermilion and turmeric is believed to be the favourite food of the field. Peasants, on enquiry, cannot explain the reason for such a belief.

It appears that equivalent rites are being observed in many districts of West Bengal. In Birbhum the rite is known as *Nal Sankranti* or *Dak Sankranti*. Instead of chalta leaf and grass-shoot reed, arum and mustard seeds are offered. In Midnapore, it is known as *Guma Dewa* and

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1. Amalendu Mitra, *Farher Samakriti* O Dharma Thakur, p.10
mango leaf with scented spices and reed are offered.\(^2\) Also a rhyme is recited which should remind the one quoted earlier:

\[\text{Aswin jay, Kartik asa,} \]
\[\text{Sankal asaver karbha asa.} \]
\[\text{Ramar hater gum,} \]
\[\text{Dhan hoi tin duna.} \]

(Aswin has gone, comes Kartik, all corns are conceived properly; Ram offers the gum and three times taller the paddy grows).

A similar rite is observed in Howrah with the recital of a similar rhyme.\(^3\) The ceremony is known as Sadhbhakshan of Lakhsmi. In Purulia and Bankura also a similar rite is observed.\(^4\) Everywhere in these districts the rite is performed on the last day of Aswin.

It appears that in these communities there is a widely diffused notion which equates a rice-bearing field with a child-bearing mother. The logic behind this primitive notion is explained by Robert Briffault. "The


\(^3\) Amalendu Mitra. \textit{Ibid}, pp. 10-11

\(^4\) Sudhir Karan, \textit{Simanta Banglar Lokayan}, p. 59
same means," he says, "which fertilize the earth are also thought to fertilize women and vice versa." He further tells us: "In New Zealand, the same precautions and tabus apply to a woman who is with child and to one who has a patch of sweet potatoes under cultivation. The Kicobers Islanders consider that seed will germinate and prosper best if it is planted by a pregnant woman. Similar ideas are current in Europe. The peasants of Southern Italy believe that whatsoever is sown and planted by a pregnant woman will increase as the foetus in her womb. The fecundity of earth and the fecundity of women are viewed as being one and the same quality." James Frazer informs us that some tribes of Indonesia treat the corn-bearing field with all tender considerations normally attributed to a child-bearing mother. Survival of a similar attitude amongst the Hindu peasants of Eastern India is a pointer to the fact that they have still retained a primitive attitude to agriculture in spite of the steps taken by different agencies to modernise their methods of production. Not fertilizers and mechanical implements, but magical rites

6. Ibid.
are still considered as more effective for ensuring a good harvest.

(b)

In some villages of Silchar subdivision, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, is invoked on the same occasion. Normally, in each house, there is a domestic abode of Lakshmi. A ritualistic drawing representing her divine footprints is painted with a solution made of powdered rice and water from this household abode to the adjacent paddy field of the house owner. It is believed that Lakshmi treads down this track to the field where she sojourns and looks after the well-being of corn till the harvest is over. It may be mentioned that if a peasant does not have his fields just adjacent to his house, he would not take the trouble of painting such footprints, because he cannot allow his personal goddess to take a sojourn in another man's field and thereby confer good luck on the latter at his cost. Under the pressure of changing social and economic circumstances, majority of the peasants to-day do not possess any paddy field at least around their homesteads and so, this
practice of painting the track for Lakshmi's guidance is gradually dying out.³

But this dying practice, significantly, throws illuminating light on a widely diffused aspect associated with a popular rite of Bengal. Annual ceremonial worship of Lakshmi is held on the fullmoon day of Aswin or Kartik following Durgapuja. The rite is performed in almost every Hindu house of Bengal. On this occasion it is customary to draw a particular kind of ritual art or alpana. In the fashion of a long track such alpana is drawn from the main entrance of the home-stead to the domestic altar of the goddess Lakshmi. Essentially this track is decorated by small foot-prints and rice-plants. It is believed that Lakshmi treads over these marks to enter one's house to bestow fortune and good luck.

The practice prevalent amongst the peasants of Silchar subdivision suggests that drawing of such foot-prints was perhaps intended to guide the goddess of wealth to follow the track to have a sojourn at the nearby paddy-field where she is supposed to look after

³ In Mexico, figurines representing the Mother of the Maize used to be placed in the granary to guard the harvest (Le Sejourne, The Burning water, p. 52)
the well-being of the growing corn. Perhaps after the harvest her return visit used to be arranged in the same fashion. It is worth mentioning here that a custom is prevalent among some American Indian tribes to draw or mark a trail from the corn field to the homestead for the benefit of the corn-spirit so that it would not mistake its way and enter someone else's house. These people believe that the corn soul or corn-spirit resided in the last few stalks of corn and before they cut and bring them home, such a trail is scratched out with a spade or shovel or drawn with water. It may be assumed that from this custom of marking track for the guidance of the corn spirit the more sophisticated form

9. (Among the Cherokee Indians) "A clean trail was always kept from the field to the house, so that the corn might be encouraged to stay at home and not go wandering elsewhere. Further, the Cherokee precaution of leaving a clear path from the field to the house resembles the Egyptian invitation to Osiris 'come to thy house'. In the east Indies to this day people observe elaborate ceremonies for the purpose of bringing back the soul of the rice from the field to the barn."


of drawing foot-prints has gradually developed. That the drawing of foot-prints is always accompanied by designs of rice plants also suggests such association. The goddess Lakshmi may be regarded as an anthropomorphic form of the corn-spirit and it is quite likely that the agricultural communities would regard her as the goddess of wealth. 11

The custom of sending Lakshmi, the deified form of corn-spirit, to have a sojourn in the field to look after the well-being of the paddy, also has its parallel in other places. In different regions all over the world the idea is prevalent that the spirit of the corn is driven out of the corn last cut or last threshed and lives in the barn during the winter. 12 Moreover, Frazer says, "at sowing time he goes out again to the fields to resume his activity as animating force among the sprouting corn." 13

11. The association of the goddess Lakshmi with corn-spirit is evident. All over Bengal, some stalks of ripe paddy or some pots full of rice—usually preserved from the corn last reaped—are kept on the altar on which the image of Lakshmi is installed and where she is being worshipped daily. Frazer cites ample examples to show that amongst the agricultural people of different region there is a common belief that the corn-spirit resides in the last sheaves of corn. (J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, pp. 525-557

13. Ibid.
So, the widely diffused custom of drawing foot-prints as a ritual art on the occasion of Lakshmi worship is nothing but a developed form of an earlier practice, i.e. drawing of tracks for the guidance of the corn-spirit. There is a vague idea still exists that the foot-prints have something to do with the visit of Lakshmi, but the original motive that associates such drawings with the sojourn or the arrival of the corn-spirit has been lost from the memory. With the gradual growth of population, paddy-fields had to give way to the pressing demand for more dwelling houses and in the majority of cases, habitable villages and cultivable fields are set apart. When fields no longer remained attached to the homestead, the practice of sending Lakshmi there for a sojourn becomes redundant. But the practice of drawing tracks with the designs of foot-prints and rice-plants survives even in the changed circumstances and all over Bengal it assumes the form of a pure ritual art associated essentially with the worship of Lakshmi. But devoid of the original context, it has lost its real significance. So even in the urban centres non-agricultural families draw such alpana as a composite part of the Lakshmi worship. Some peasant families of Silchar subdivision are fortunate enough to retain their cultivable lands attached to
their homesteads and naturally they have also preserved the practice of drawing foot-prints of Lakshmi true to its original context and motive.

II. Bhola Sankranti

(a)

The last day of Kartika is called Bhola Sankranti. It is the day on which the village folks observe a ritual to make their houses free of dirt and filth, mosquitoes and flies. It is, in fact, a very elaborate cleaning ceremony.

The homestead including the courtyard and outer area is cleansed with water and cowdung. The dwelling rooms and cowsheds are cleared out of accumulated dirt, filth and rubbish. Utensils and implements are washed. All refuse or rubbish is piled in a heap outside the house preferably on one side of the village path and in the evening the inmates would make a bonfire of this heap. An effigy of Bhola (the evil spirit) made of straw is often burnt along with it. Four large torches improvised of bamboo and tattered rags would be lit and placed on the four corners of the outer bounds while an winnowing fan stuck with some dead flies and mosquitoes would be
vigorously beaten with a stick. Meanwhile, an inmate of the house, usually a servant, would go round the house along its outer boundary with a blazing bamboo torch, this too, stuck with some dead flies and mosquitoes, in his hand. This man would not be allowed to enter the house until he has taken a bath and left the remains of the torch in the pond. In some places a burning effigy often supplant the torch. All these rituals would be accompanied by the harsh recital of a doggerel:

_Bhola chhar, Bhuli chhar,
Bara maiya pichaiya chhar,
Masha mar, machhi mar,
Dhaney chauley ghar bhar_  
_Out with Bhola and out with his spouse!
Out with the evils of the last twelve months!
Die mosquitoes, die all flies!
Let the granary fill with paddy and rice!)

The obvious association of the rite with harvest is suggested by the last sentence of the rhyme. The Sankranti day coincides with the fifteenth or sixteenth November. The harvest of sali crop, the major crop of the district, starts after a week or two in the month of Agrahayan. This ceremony can be regarded as the preparation for the long-awaited harvest. New crops must be received with solemnity; houses should be cleaned and the places where this crop will be stored or threshed must be cleaned too. There is an obvious awareness of the necessity of the
physical well-being of the members of the household and cattle in the context of the busy days of the harvest and hence this emphasis on sanitation.

(b)

Apart from this, installation of torches on four corners and circling the house with one may have a magical significance. It is perhaps an attempt to draw a protective line around the house to prevent evil spirits from entering it. The month of Kartik is regarded as an evil month by the rural folk and hence it is called Perat Kati (the month Kartik which is dominated by evil spirits). It is believed that evil spirits have a sojourn in the house during this month and so all these cleaning and rituals associated with it are aimed at ousting these spirits. Bhola is considered to be the principal of these evil busybodies and his effigy is burnt on the occasion to symbolize the death or ouster of this evil. After expelling Bhola from the house, an imaginary magical line is drawn by installing and circling blazing torches just to prevent its re-entrance. The man who goes round the house with a blazing torch is believed to have an encounter with this spirit and hence he is considered contaminated by its evil association. So, he must enter the house
house after taking a bath. It should be mentioned here that in this locality, people believe that every house is protected from the evil influence of spirits by an imaginary magical line. Whenever a death takes place in a house, it is believed that this protective line of the particular house has been broken. So, on the day of the Sradh ceremony following any death, a protective line is again drawn with blazing torches in the fashion already mentioned.

Sir, J.Q. Fraser\textsuperscript{14} cited a number of rituals from all over the world which may be considered as close parallels to Bhola Sankranti. He termed these ceremonies as "the expulsion of Evils" and showed their diffusion all over Europe. Striking similarities of these rites with Bhola Sankranti are interesting though perhaps the rites have their respective independent origins.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Besides this agricultural and magical significance, the ritual also aims at ridding the house of flies. This aspect of the ritual seems to have a very wide diffusion. In Chhotanagpur, for instance, on the new moon day in the month of Kartika, the Oraon lads "go from house to house playing on drums and dancing, begging for gifts of rice}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{14} J.Q. Fraser, \textit{Ibid}, pp. 716-763
and other grains and vegetables as also coins and driving away flies and mosquitoes. These boys are called Dundru and their begging and flea driving is known as Dasa masa.\footnote{15} In Kamrup, Goalpara and Darrang districts of Assam, both tribals and non-tribals observe Moho-ho (Mohe-mosquito) rite on the full moon day of Agrahayan which amongst other things aims at outsting those insects.\footnote{16} On Aswin Sankranti, in Jessore a young lad of a house strikes a winnowing fan with a stick and peeps into every corner of his house saying, "O insects and spiders who infest this house, go to the woods."\footnote{17} The Kacharis of Western Assam observe Thamgoi hasa naik with the same intention.\footnote{18} In Bikrampur and other parts of Dacca, people rise early on Aswin Sankranti day and light fire with jute sticks with which they go round the house of the village saying:

\begin{quote}
Out ye vermin and worms, Come, O Lakshmi, into the house.\footnote{19}
\end{quote}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{15} S.C. Roy, Orcon Religion and Customs, p. 232
\item \footnote{16} P.C. Bhattacharyya, Assam Loka Utsav, p. 38
\item \footnote{17} A.R. Sanyal and S.L. Mitra, On the cult of the goddess Caral, Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay, Vol. XII, p. 829
\item \footnote{18} S. Endle, The Kacharis, p. 49
\item \footnote{19} S.P. Das, Folk Religion of Bengal, Part I, p. 27
\end{itemize}
With the same aim, boys in the district of Faridpur light a bundle of jute sticks at dusk on the Kartik Sankranti and go round the house beating a winnowing fan. Striking similarities of all these ceremonies aimed at the common objective of ousting mosquitoes and other insects and their wide diffusion over a vast portion of central and eastern India strongly suggest that the people who observe these rites might have had a closer cultural association in the past than what we think plausible at present.

(d)

From another point of view, the name Bhola Sankranti is also significant. To the people of this region, Bhola is considered to be the guardian spirit of all irritant insects, filth, dirt and evil. Now, in Chhotanagpur, the Oraon Tribals use the term 'Bhola' to denote an evil spirit. In West Bengal, Bhola or Bhulo is the evil spirit who eludes and misguides passers-by at night, sometimes even to the snares of death. In Barpeta the Moho-ho ceremony is also known as Bhaol-Dia (out with Bhaol) while in North Kamrup it is known as Bambal-pita (beating of Bambal). Both these names Bhaol and Bambal

20. Ibid.
21. S.C. Roy, Oraon Religion and Customs, p. 96
22. A. Mitra, Barher Samakriti o Dharmaikur, p. 29
23. P.C. Bhattacharyya, Asamar Loka Utsav, p. 69
are presumably the variations of the same root word 'Bhola'. The Khasis burn the effigy of an evil spirit called Thang Bula in the month of November just before the harvest.\textsuperscript{24} So it appears the word 'Bhola' is widely used in eastern India to denote evil spirits.

Now 'Bholanath' is one of the many names by which Shiva is known. But though this name is found frequently in Sanskrit texts, the term 'Bhola' is not shown as having a Sanskrit origin. Could it be that 'Bhola' was an aboriginal term used to denote evil spirits in general in one or more primitive languages which eastern India spoke and Shiva came to be known as Bholanath just because he was considered to be the lord of Bholas or evil spirits? Shiva is also known as Bhutanath but that could be simply the Sanskrit way of saying Bholanath.

III. The grain exhortation rite

(a)

After harvest, just before the first threshing of crops takes place, local peasants resort to a rite purported to exhort grains from all sides and quarters. The first threshing of crop is always held to be an suspicious

\textsuperscript{24} H. Berek, \textit{The History and Culture of the Khasi People}, p. 366
occasion and a suitable date is fixed earlier. On that
day, the threshing-yard is cleansed properly and before
bringing the bulk of paddy for the purpose, a small
bundle of paddy is brought and placed in the middle.
Then the headman of the family takes his position in
front of the bundle with a winnowing fan in his hand and
undulates the fan high up in the air while reciting an
incantation which runs as follows:

Aay dhan aay,
Pub taney aay,
Pachim taney aay,
Uttar taney aay,
Dakhin taney aay,
Rajar sat bhav bhangia aay,
Indurey nila, bandarey nila
Marar samay ani dila
Dhan uthey phaley,
Kher uthey chaley,
Ma Lakkir bazeey,
Amar bharar ek maray bhaerey.

(Oh paddy, come, come from the east, come from the west,
from the north and the south. Come by bursting out
of the seven granaries of the king. Grains which have
been taken away by rats and monkeys are being returned
back at the time of threshing. Paddy increases by leaps
and bounds, straws jump up to the roof. By the boon of
mother Lakshmi, let my granary be full after only one
threshing.)
The rite is observed scrupulously and without fail by the local peasantry till this day whenever the first threshing of the new crop is about to take place in spite of the fact that the rite does not have the least material efficacy. It illustrates how deep the grip of primitive magic over these people is.

(b)

It is worth mentioning that a neighbouring tribal community observes a rite which appears strikingly similar to that of the Cachar peasants. The Purum is an old Kuki tribe of Manipur. T.C. Das describes one of their agricultural rites in the following words: "In the month of Mera (October-November) the paddy stalks all appear and in some upland fields of the early crop they ripen. At this time the Purums exhort the grains to come to their fields in a magico-religious ceremony ... On a particular day of the month of Mera fixed beforehand by the elders, each village officer goes to his respective jhum field and collects a bundle of paddy leaves and brings it back to his house. He next hangs it up on the chhatra post of his house and recites a laiba (prayer or incantation) in which he exhorts the paddy grains to come to the jhum fields of his village from all directions and from all
The Karens of Burma invoke the soul (Kelah) of the rice to visit their field with a rhyme whose spirit, contents and wordings are strikingly similar to that of the Cachar rhyme: "O come, rice-kelah, come! Come to the field. Come to the rice. With seed of each gender, come, come. Come from the river Kho, come from the river Kaw; from the place where they meet, come. Come from the West, come from the East. From the throat of the bird, from the maw of the ape, from the throat of the elephant. Come from sources of river and their mouths. Come from the country of the Shan and Burman. From the distant kingdoms come. From all granaries come."26

From these similarities, it can be suggested that these rites might have had a common origin. Besides the fact that Janipur is situated close to Cachar and Sylhet and Karens are the neighbours of Manipuris, we can also take into account the suggestions made by scholars that the Tibeto-Burman people to which ethnic group the Kukis and Karens also belong, had inhabited this region for a considerable period of time in the remote past and the

25. T.C. Das, Purum: An Old Kuki Tribe of Manipur, p. 194
native population of the locality still bears traces, both physical and cultural, of this earlier association. The rite may be remnant of a primitive rite used to be performed by the Tibeto-Burman people who dwelt in the region in the remote past.

IV. Rituals of the last sheaves

(a)

Some kind of sacredness is being attached to the last sheaves of corn by the peasants of Cachar and bringing home the last corn has attained a sacramental form in this region.

Normally at the time of reaping, some stalks of corn are selected and these are left untouched for the time being. When the reaping is virtually over it is time to cut the last handful of corn, which has been left standing on the field. An auspicious day is selected and on that day the headman of the family takes his bath at daybreak and goes in a wet dress to the field with a sickle. A helper follows him with a bucketful of water. The headman cuts the last stalks as neatly as possible and walks solemnly straight to the house. Throughout the journey he is forbidden to look back even for a while.
His companion throws water on the track he is to tread on last he steps on anything filthy or dirty which may defile the sheaves. A portion of the last sheaves is kept in the domestic abode of Lakshmi whereas the major portion is kept for threshing.

When the harvest activities are completely over, these last sheaves are threshed separately. Before that the threshing floor is cleansed with water and cowdung. This threshing of the last sheaves is called Buri-mara (Buri - the old woman, mara - threshing). The grains thus acquired are husked with special care and extreme precaution is taken to prevent their mixing up with other ordinary grains. On the day of the new-rice ceremony when ritual partaking of the new corn takes place, these grains are prepared separately in a new vessel. Only the blood relations having a patrilineal link with the householder are allowed to partake of this specially prepared rice.

(b)

The attitude of the Cachar peasants towards the last sheaves of corn is not a novelty, rather a number of agricultural communities all over the world share the same. Fraser furnishes examples from the harvest customs of the European peasantries where a similar ritual
importance is attached to the last sheaf or sheaves of corn. It is generally believed by the less advanced peasants of the East Indies that in the fibres of the plant there is a certain vital element which may be called the soul of the plant or the corn-spirit. The European peasants of to-day are intellectually advanced enough not to give any cognizance to the idea of a corn-spirit but still the harvest customs which have been practised within living memory by European peasants reveal the fact that they too believe in a corn-mother who "is believed to be present in the handful of corn which is left standing last on the field." This corn-mother is nothing but a developed variation of the corn-spirit who, it is believed, resides in the last sheaf. The peasants of Cachar, like their advanced counter parts of Europe, are not consciously aware of the existence of a corn-spirit, but when they attach sacredness to the last sheaves of corn and carry them ceremonially to their household, unknowingly they tread the path of their primitive ancestors to whom the spirit of the corn was almost a reality and of vital consequence.

27. J.C. Fraser, The Golden Bough, pp. 525-551
28. Ibid., p. 545
29. Ibid., p. 526
In the circumstances, it is no wonder that one can find striking similarities between the harvest rites of the different agricultural communities of the world. Particularly interesting is the fact that whereas the Cachar peasants call the last sheaves Buri or the old woman, the majority of European peasant communities also call the last corn by a name that denotes either old woman or old wife. Some examples may be cited from Frazer's account. In East Prussia, the last sheaf is called the Grandmother. In Germany, "it is frequently shaped and dressed as a woman and the person who cuts it or binds it is said to 'get the old woman.'" In Scotland, "it was sometimes called the Carlin or Carline, that is, the old woman." "In the Island of Islay the last corn cut goes by the name of the Old Wife (Cailleach)." In Poland the last sheaf is called the Baba, that is, the old woman and in Lithuania, it is Baba, having the same meaning. The Cachar term Buri is (literally meaning the threshing of the old woman) has its exact parallel in some places where "the last corn to be threshed is called the Mother corn or the Old woman."

30. Ibid., pp. 528-533;
31. Ibid., p. 534
All these similarities do not necessarily signify that these notions were diffused from a common centre of origin. It is more likely that these resemblances are "the effect of similar causes acting alike on the similar constitution of the human mind in different countries and under different skies." So, in the majority of cases, beneath the surface of the folk-rites and customs of different peoples, a kind of uniform primitive logic often operates.

(e)

Again, the custom of partaking of the rice made of the last sheaves has its parallel in the harvest feasts of Europe. "In Wermland, Sweden, the farmer's wife uses the grain of the last sheaf to bake a leaf in the shape of a little girl; this leaf is divided amongst the whole household and eaten by them." As it is believed that the corn-spirit resides in last sheaves, so it can be surmised that to eat something which is prepared from the last corn is equivalent to eating the corn-spirit itself. Frazer suggests two probable reasons behind this sacramental eating of the corn-spirit. First, the intention might be to guard the corn-spirit from the enfeeblement of old age by transferring the spirit to the person of a

32. Ibid., p. 508
33. Ibid., p. 630
youthful success. 34 This suggestion does not fit in the present case, because all genuine members of the family, young and old alike, take the sacramental rice. Secondly, Fraser suggests, there might be some influence of Homoeopathic magic. "The savage commonly believes that by eating the flesh of an animal or man, he acquires not only the physical, but even the moral and intellectual qualities which were characteristic of that animal or man; so when the creature is deemed divine, our simple savage naturally expects to absorb a portion of its divinity along with its material substance." 35 This contention is supported by the finding of Albert Reville who observes that the Aztecs used to regard a sacrificial victim as an incarnation of the deity itself and partook ritually its flesh with the belief that thereby they were uniting themselves in substance with the divine being. 36

The same primitive notion no doubt operates when the Cachar peasants partake sacramentally of the rice produced from the last corn. Thereby they consume the spirit of the corn itself with a view to absorbing at least some of its

34. Ibid., p. 648
35. Ibid., p. 649
36. Albert Reville, Native Religions of Mexico and Peru, p. 89
vitality. It is natural that they do not allow any outsider to share the sacramental meal lest they snatch away some portion of this divine quality. This tabu on the participation of the outsider is perhaps the real key to unfold the mystery that is hidden behind this sacramental meal. Such a tabu would not have been imposed if there is no fear of losing something really precious. Here this precious object is nothing but the supposed soul or *soul vital* of the corn which they must keep and preserve within themselves. Here one may feel the force of the primitive logic which still dominates in spite of modern innovations and scientific approach in the field of agriculture.