Unlucky and Lucky Children, and Some Birth Superstitions

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shrine, nailed her hair to the tree, and then cut it from her head. The woman was free then, and the hair remained there. On the third day they resurrected the Madu Sami doll, and peace reigned as before. This was done after the rice-harvest was over. Mooni-andi Sami is always propitiated by a sacrifice or thank-offering or scapegoat. They say : " Here, devil, is your portion, or sacrifice, now leave us alone, you have had your share."

R. J. DRUMMOND.

Belgravia, Talawakelle,
23rd March, 1902.

UNLUCKY AND LUCKY CHILDREN, AND SOME BIRTH
SUPERSTITIONS.

(*Supra*, pp. 63, 188, 197.)

THE FIRST-BORN.—In the Punjab the first-born son of a wife is peculiarly uncanny, especially subject to magical influences and endowed with supernatural powers. On the one hand his hair is useful in witchcraft, and on the other its possession would give a wizard power over him. He himself possesses considerable magical powers, for he can stop hail by throwing a stone backwards from, or by cutting a hailstone with, a knife; and he can stay a dust storm by standing naked in front of it. He is also peculiarly subject to lightning, and is not allowed to go out on a rainy day. Snakes also become torpid in his presence. (Fuller notes on this or similar ideas would be welcome.)

A first-born child, whether a boy or a girl, should not be married in Jeth¹ (or, one account adds, in Māgh), nor should the mother eat first-fruits in that month, because as she devours them so too will the fates devour her first-born. The position of the first-born is probably due to the fact that, if a son, his father is born again in him, so that the father is supposed to die at his

¹ But according to the *Mātha-Khatra Granth*, *sloka* 15, of Bhardwaj Rikhi, it is only necessary to avoid marriage in Jeth, if *both* parties be *Jethas*, i.e., born in Jeth, or if it is not possible to avoid Jeth the ceremony should not be held in the *Kīrti* Nakshatra during that month.

birth; and in certain Khatri sections, *e.g.*, the Kochhar,¹ his funeral rites are actually performed in the fifth month of the mother's pregnancy. Probably herein lies an explanation of the *dev-kāj*, or divine nuptials, a ceremony which consists in a formal re-marriage² of the parents after the birth of their first son. The wife leaves her husband's house and goes, not to her parents' house, but to the house of a relative, whence she is brought back like a bride. This custom prevails among the Khanna, Kapur, Malhotra, Kakar, and Chopra, the highest sections of the Hindu Khatri.³

These ideas are an almost logical outcome of the doctrine of the metempsychosis, and it inevitably results that if the first-born be a girl she is peculiarly ill-omened.

TWINS.—There appear to be no superstitions in the Punjab connected with twins (*dūld* or *jonkri*); but in one part of the Kangra district the child born *after* twins is called *lauhka* or "little."

THE SEQUENCE OF BIRTHS.—There is little to be added to the notes already given (pp. 63, 68), but the following details may be of interest. In Kangra a child of one sex born after *two* of the other sex is called *trelar*,⁴ and with that primitive confusion of thought which makes no distinction between that which is holy and that which is accursed, we have the proverb: "*Trelar rele ya sangele*," *i.e.*, "a *trelar* either brings evil or good fortune."

In the same district a child of one sex born after three of the other is called *cholar*, and is, especially if a boy, propitious. As such he is presumably an object of jealousy to the fates, and his nose is drilled, like a girl, or he is given away to a low-caste man (a Barar or a Chuhra), from whom the child is redeemed by the parents by paying money or grain.

¹ According to one account, a Kochhar wife in the sixth month of her pregnancy pretends to be displeased and goes away from her home. Her husband shaves his head, beard, &c., and goes after her with a few men of his brotherhood. On finding her, he entreats her to return and promises her a present of jewellery, whereupon she consents to come back home.

² Should a wife bear twenty children (!), she must also be remarried to her husband. The ceremony of remarriage is precisely the same as that of a first marriage, but it is performed on the roof of the house.

³ The Mohammedan Gadhiok Sheikhs of Jhelum also retain it. It costs about half as much as a real marriage.

⁴ *Trel*=a third ploughing; Jukes, *Western Punjabi Dictionary*, *s.v.*

The *Pokhū*.—(i.) Of three male children born one after the other, the middle one is said to be lucky. Of three successive female children the middle one is considered unlucky.

(ii.) A boy following and preceding a girl is regarded as inauspicious. A girl following and preceding a boy is believed to be lucky.

An inauspicious child is termed *bhārd-pokhū-wāld*,¹ while an auspicious one is called *halka-pokhū-wāld*. When a woman commences to grind wheat, to spin, or to churn milk she will not allow one of the former to stand by her, because she believes that the presence of such a child will render the work difficult or impossible. She will either send him away or ignore his presence. On the other hand, the presence of one of the latter children is considered a good omen, and women believe that their work will be easily finished, if such a child be sitting by them.

BIRTH SUPERSTITIONS.—There are some curious customs connected with births at particular times or after certain periods. For instance, a child born in the month of Bhādon is lucky (unlike a calf), while one born in Kātik is inauspicious. In the latter case it is considered sinful to keep the mother in the house, and she should be expelled from it, but instead she may be made over, temporarily, to a Brahman and afterwards redeemed from him.

"According to the Shāstras" a wife who has no child for some years is called *sundh*; one who does not bear a child for ten years, *kai budhia*; and after twenty-one or twenty-four years, *sut budhia*. If then she bears a child, a fire of dried cowdung is burnt in front of the house, and the woman is sent away out of the village to live for forty days (a period called the *parsūt*) in a thatched hut, after which Brahmans are fed and she is allowed to return.

A. J. ROSE.

30th June, 1902.

AN INDIAN GHOST STORY.

The following account was given to me some years ago by Bābū Akhaya Mohana, a respectable Bengali, at that time

¹ *Pokhun* in Multani = an omen or augury; Jukes, *Western Punjabi Dictionary*, s.v.