MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT ON THE CHŌTĀ-NĀGPŪR PLATEAU—A STUDY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRIMITIVE LIFE.

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A.—Introduction.

The man of the lower culture is, in a sense, more spiritually-minded than his fellow-man of a higher civilization. To him things are not what they seem; everything, animate or inanimate, in this visible universe is to him merely the receptacle—the "*pind*" or seat as the Orāon of Chōtā-Nāgpūr calls it—of a spiritual energy; and man's main concern is with this world of spiritual energies or powers. As for the invisible world, it is, to the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal, as full of disembodied spirits "as a tree is full of leaves." It is not only every human being nor merely all that we call living beings, but, in fact, all things either created by God or made by the hand of man, and even such immaterial things as the spoken word, an expressed wish, a passing thought or emotion, a magic formula, certain proper names and class-names, and an odd number or an even number, that possess each its individual soul or its special spiritual energy.

Indeed, soul, spirit, energy, and power are generally convertible terms in the primitive vocabulary. To the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal the soul is not a purely spiritual intelligence, absolutely formless and unsubstantial, but it is rather what may be called a spirit-substance. This spirit-substance or soul-stuff, whether residing in aerial or in human bodies, is believed to resemble the human shadow in its form, and to influence men or cattle for good or for evil by "overshadowing" them. The soul-stuff residing in other beings or natural objects resembles animal-, vegetable-, or mineral-poison in its mode of action. It distils particles of its virtue which flow on into another person, animal, or object, either by contact or by sympathetic attraction. And the absorbing care of the aboriginal of Chōtā-Nāgpūr, as of other countries, is how best to defend himself and his family, his cattle and his crops, his house and his other belongings, against the subtle influence of such baneful energies and the poisonous malice inhering in most human and non-human souls and spirits.

Although everything animate or inanimate is, for the primitive man, instinct with spirit or spiritual energy, it is not every energy that is equally active. Some are intensely active, others less so, and yet others are almost dormant but liable to be aroused into helpful, or what is more common, harmful activity at any moment. It is only the more active energies for the time being that count.

In the human world, it is the different human groups or village-communities and Pārhā-federations around him, as also certain persons with particularly strong individuality or soul-power, or, in the words of the Orāon, men of " heavy shadow " (*Jabar Chhāin*), and persons possessing occult powers, as well as strangers in general, that the Orāon or Mūndā of Chōtā-Nāgpūr takes account of, and either avoids, defies, or forms ceremonial alliances with.

In the animal, vegetable, mineral, and planetary worlds, and even with respect to the elements and to certain artificial objects such as weapons and implements, and intangible things such as name and number, such alliance with good powers and avoidance and control of evil powers take the form of Totemism, cattle- and tree-worship, charms and amulets, and *chhūt* or touch-*tabus*, food-*tabus*, and other *tabus*. In the super-physical world, it is the disembodied spirits of the departed and the unembodied spirits of various orders of supernatural beings, which either hover about in the air or take their seats temporarily or permanently in some natural objects, that have to be reckoned with. Alliance with these is formed by sacrifices and ceremonial eating and drinking with them.

A study of the two principal aboriginal tribes of Chōtā-Nāgpūr—the Mūndās and the Orāons—inclines one to think that the same principles that underlie their social and religious systems, underlie, to some extent, their ideas as to magic and witchcraft as well. As the idea behind their social and tribal organization is alliance with the helpful village-communities around them for protection against hostile communities, and the idea behind their religious system is alliance with the highest and most helpful spiritual entities they know of, and, through them, control of the harmful ones, so the idea behind their magico-religious system appears to be the need of an alliance with the helpful forces and powers, and avoidance and control of the harmful influences and energies, of their physical and super-physical environment. In this paper I shall first briefly refer to a few points in the social and religious systems of the Orāons to illustrate this proposition, and then proceed to notice some of their practices regarding magic and witchcraft, and the principles that appear to underlie them.

B.—The Principle of Alliance.

(I.) *Direct Alliance.*

Of good powers, those of the invisible world—the world of spirits—are necessarily the most powerful. The Orāons and the Mūndās of Chōtā-Nāgpūr seek alliance with the good spirits or deities by periodical ceremonies, of which the most salient feature is the worshippers eating together the liver of the animal or fowl sacrificed to the deity, and drinking together rice-beer, after a portion of both the liver and the rice-beer has been offered to the deity. The liver is considered by the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal to be the seat of the vital principle, as is indicated by the belief that the witches sometimes mysteriously extract the liver of a person, and as soon as his liver is eaten up the person dies. The blood, for

which the rice-beer is apparently a substitute—for on certain important occasions such as a purificatory ceremony sacrificial blood is actually drunk—is identified by the Oraon and the Mundā with the soul or spirit, as is indicated by their belief that an evil spirit sometimes attacks a person by appearing as a blood-spot on his clothes. And this sacramental eating and drinking with their deities may not improbably be a modification of an older practice of offering up a member of the tribe, and ceremonially eating with the gods the human meat and drinking the human blood by way of sealing a compact of alliance and friendship.[1] Totemistic ideas may have helped in identifying the man with the animal or the fowl sacrificed. The practice of *Ōndkā* or human sacrifice, it may be noted, is said to linger to this date in out-of-the-way places in Chōtā-Nāgpūr. Whether this ceremonial eating of the sacrificial meat be a case of eating with the god, or, as is not unlikely, of "eating the god," the sacrifice being considered as partaking of something of the nature of the deity, and the consumption of the meat calculated to impart to the eaters something of the strength and other virtues of the god, such ceremonial compact or alliance with the deities through a sacramental meal is renewed at stated intervals by similar sacrifices and sacrificial meals. Delay in renewing the alliance may turn these supernatural allies into temporary enemies, and, in such a case, more than the ordinary sacrifices is required to convince them of your sincerity, and thereby placate their wrath and restore the old terms of friendship and alliance.

The principle of alliance with helpful powers may be further traced in the Oraon's social system. Ceremonial alliances of one individual with another, and one village-community with another village-community or groups of village-communities, still form a characteristic feature of the Oraon social system. The Oraon Pārhā system of federated village-communities appears to have originated in a ceremonial alliance between different local groups—originally, it seems, hunting groups, and now agricultural villages—with the object of mutual help and protection. Although nowadays the men of different village-communities of an Oraon Pārhā union do not join in common sacrifices and ceremonial feasts except on rare occasions, yet even to this day when sacrifices are offered in any village of the Pārhā to the village-deity or Gāon-deōti, portions of the sacrificial meat are distributed to other villages of the Pārhā. The eating of this sacrificial meat keeps up and cements the Pārhā alliance. Such meat is called *khāonro*, or *sandeś*. Again, on the social side, when a member of an Oraon Pārhā is fined by the village *Panch* for some sexual or other offence against tribal custom, goats or fowls are purchased with such fine, and the meat is distributed amongst the different villages that constitute the Pārhā. Not long ago the members of a Pārhā generally used

[1] It may be noted that on the occasion of the annual *Marāng Būrū* hunt of the Santāls of Chōtā-Nāgpūr, held on the Parasnāth Hill, the *Dihri* or priest and manager of the hunt has to dip grains of rice into blood drawn out of his own body and offer such rice to the spirits believed to reside at different spots on the hill. This rite, known as *bail-bichchi*, is probably a modified survival of the practice of offering human victims.

to assemble on occasions of such religious and social feasts of the villages of the Pārhā, and cement their alliance by actually eating and drinking together. But, in these days, except for the discussion of matters of unusual importance for the Pārhā, such gatherings are rarely held.

It is not only the different villages of the same Pārhā that are bound together by a ceremonial alliance, but every Pārhā enters into such alliance with some village belonging to another Pārhā. Such a village is called the *dūdh-bhāyā* (foster-brother) village of the latter Pārhā. The Orāon *Bhūinhārs* of such a *dūdh-bhāyā* village are regarded as blood-relations of those of the villages of the Pārhā of which it is a *dūdh-bhāyā*, and, as such, are not permitted to enter into matrimonial relations with them, though otherwise competent to do so. The villages of a Pārhā and their *dūdh-bhāyā* village are required to stand by each other as brothers, and allies in their struggles and wars with other Pārhās. In these days such struggles or fights can only take place over rights to game killed at the tribal hunting-excursions, and over the right to use a flag of a particular pattern by a particular Pārhā, to the exclusion of other Pārhās at their inter-tribal dancing festivals, known as *Jātrās*.

If the rites and ceremonies in connection with the formation and renewal of Pārhā alliances have now fallen into practical disuse, elaborate rites are still observed in the case of ceremonial friendship between individuals, especially between married Orāon women. Such a ceremonial friendship is not merely a matter of individual choice, but is regarded as a matter of tribal necessity. At the interval of three years or so, the ceremony known as *Sahiāro*, or the selection of *sahiās* or friends, is celebrated in the Orāon country. Information is sent round by proclamation at the different village-markets, where men from many villages assemble, that in that year *sahiā* alliances have to be formed or renewed amongst Orāon women. Each village then fixes its own day, preferably a Tuesday, for the ceremony. On the appointed day at least one female member of each Orāon family in a village must enter into *sahiā* alliance with another Orāon woman. Either her relationship with a former *sahiā* has to be renewed, or a new *sahiā* has to be selected. In the latter event, the relationship with a former *sahiā* does not, however, cease. Both in the case of the formation of a new *sahiā* and in the case of the renewal of an old *sahiā*-ship, the same elaborate and interesting rites and observances have to be gone through. The essential features of this ceremony are the ceremonial procession with which each of the two would-be *sahiās* in turn goes to the house of her *sahiā*-elect—blesses the house by sprinkling, with an auspicious mango-twig, water on the roof of the house and the doors which are closed against her—signifies her good-will and desire for alliance and friendship by putting on the door-sill marks of rice-flour, and, over these, marks of vermilion—and finally fastens sheaves of paddy to the door-frame by way of wishing prosperity to the house ; the *sahiā*-elect, thus assured of the good intentions of this candidate for friendship, then opening her doors and coming out to meet her—taking on her own wearing cloth a few drops of the benedictory water trickling down from the roof—the

two women saluting each other and addressing each other by the sweet name of "*Sahiā*"; and on a subsequent day all the newly-made *sahiās* of the village assembling at the Devi-āsthān, or shrine, of the village-deity known as Devi-māi; and after offerings to the deity, each woman exchanging her plate of flattened rice and curdled milk (*dahi-chiurā*) with her *sahiā's*, and both the *sahiās* eating together; and finally, the *sahiās* entertaining each other to dinner at their respective houses and exchanging presents of new clothes. Thenceforth the names of the two *sahiās* are *tabu* to each other, and there can be no inter-marriage between the families of the two *sahiās*. The reason why so much importance is attached by the Orāon to such artificial friendship between women of his village appears to be the necessity for such alliances between women who have been taken in marriage from different villages and different septs, and who are not, therefore, expected to be naturally friendly to one another. Men, too, enter into ceremonial friendship with each other, but in their case the ceremonies are not so elaborate, nor the alliance considered a matter of tribal necessity, although matrimonial relations between the families of two male friends are no more permissible than between those of two female friends.

Judging from an analogy with these ceremonial alliances between man and the gods, and between human beings *inter se*, one would be inclined to think that the institution of Totemism had also for its basis a similar principle of alliance. Chōtā-Nāgpūr facts would seem to indicate that when primitive man found by experience that certain animals, plants, minerals, and other objects proved particularly helpful or inconveniently powerful and hostile, he sought by ceremonial alliance with such animal, plant, mineral, or other object to become "of one blood" with it, and thereby to secure its help and protection, or disarm its ill-will and hostility. It may be noted that according to Orāon tradition, no tiger would in olden days harm a man of the tiger-sept (Lakrā gōtra) as both the man and the tiger were "of one blood," but when men became untruthful and whoever came across a tiger would aver that he belonged to the tiger-sept, tigers naturally grew suspicious of the veracity of man, and ceased to spare even an Orāon of the Lakrā, or tiger, gōtra, for the simple reason that they could not distinguish a true Lākra-gōtra man from the mere pretender.

In Chōtā-Nāgpūr, however, Totemism has long ceased to be a living institution except in its relation to exogamy, and it would, therefore, be unsafe to hazard anything like a decisive opinion based on Chōtā-Nāgpūr facts alone, especially when such an eminent authority as Dr. J. G. Frazer has on a consideration of Australian facts decided in favour of what he calls the "Conceptional" origin of Totemism. Besides Totemism, which may have originated either from an ignorance of the physiological knowledge of paternity and mistaken notions as to conception, as Dr. Frazer opines, or from the primitive man's recognition of the necessity for alliance with the helpful or harmful powers of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms around him, as Chōtā-Nāgpūr facts would seem to suggest, or from some other cause, the Orāon's recognition of the need for such alliance finds further

expression in his periodical sacrifices to the beneficent cattle-spirit called *Goensaki bhūt*, and in invocations of tree-spirits residing in the *Karam* tree (*Nauclea parvifolia*), and the *Jitia pipar*-tree (*Ficus religiosa*), and the flower-spirit in the blossoms of the *Sāl* tree (*Shorea robusta*). Such are a few illustrations of the application of the principle of alliance with beneficent powers in the social and religious systems of the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal.

(II.) *Sympathetic Alliance.*

When we proceed to a consideration of magic and witchcraft on the Chōtā-Nāgpūr Plateau, we come to another aspect of the same principle of alliance.

Instead of entering into regular ceremonial alliance, man may enter into sympathetic relations—or alliance by sympathy—with the powerful forces of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, the heavenly bodies, the elements, and so forth, and thereby secure their helpful influence for his benefit. In the lower culture we find alliance by sympathy, through actual contact or through imitation or suggestion, even more extensively resorted to than direct ceremonial alliance. This process of sympathetic magic, in its two branches of imitative or homœopathic magic and contagious magic, will be found to lie at the root of most of the quasi-religious, social, domestic, and other ritual of the aborigines of Chōtā-Nāgpūr, particularly the Orāons. Such alliance may be either temporary or permanent. Alliance by suggestion or imitation is generally temporary; alliance by contact is in some cases temporary and in others permanent. The contact required for sympathetic magic may be either direct or indirect. The contact may be with the whole or part of the beneficent power with which alliance is sought, or it may be with some other object which had at one time been in contact with the beneficent power in question.

In the instances that follow of different kinds of magic, I have referred more to Orāon than to Mūndā practices, because the Orāon is a greater believer in magic than the Mūndā. Where the Mūndā believes that a certain trouble is due to the wrath or malice of some spirit, the Orāon thinks the spirit is merely a tool in the hands of some magician by whom it has been put up to the mischief. So, if a Mūndā gets a sudden attack of headache or griping in the stomach, or pain in the legs, or falls down it a fit of epilepsy, he at once concludes he must have come in collision with some spirit, that he must have trodden some spirit under his feet, or jostled against it while walking or working on his fields or elsewhere. As a means of reconciliation with the offended spirit, he scatters a little powdered turmeric around himself. The Orāon, who suspects magic or witchcraft where the Mūndā scents a spirit, always takes particular steps to ward off the evil eye of witches or the malicious intentions of sorcerers. Such Orāons as know the proper spells, when going out on a journey, take up a handful of dust, mutter the *bandhni* spell over it and scatter the dust all around his own body to fortify it against the evil eye, and the "*bān*," or spiritual arrow-shot of the magician during the journey or during his stay outside his village.

(*a*) Imitative Magic.

A notable instance of imitative magic is the Orāon ceremony of rain-making. When rain is badly wanted in any part of the Orāon country, the Orāons of each village fix a day for the rain-making ceremony. On the morning of the appointed day, the Orāon women of the village, with the wife of the village-priest or Pāhān at their head, proceed to the village spring or tank, and there, after ablution, each woman fills her pitcher (*lōtā*) with water, and all proceed in a body to a sacred *pipar*-tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Before these women have had their ablutions and are gone with their *lōtās* filled with water towards the sacred *pipar*-tree, no one else is allowed that morning to touch the water of the tank or spring. On their arrival at the sacred tree, all the women simultaneously pour the water in their pitchers over the foot of the tree, saying, "May rain fall on earth like this." The wife of the village-priest now puts marks of vermilion, diluted in oil, on the trunk of the tree. After this the women depart, and the Pāhān or village-priest proceeds to sacrifice a red cock to the god Bārāndā at the spot. It is firmly believed by the Orāons that within a day or two after this rain-making ceremony, rain is bound to fall. And in olden times, it is said, a heavy shower of rain would even overtake the women on their way home from the sacred tree. In this case, apparently, direct alliance, by sacrifice and by anointing the tree with vermilion, have been super-imposed on what was once, perhaps, purely a ceremony of imitative magic. Such combination of imitative magic with prayer and sacrifice is a prominent feature in the chief religious festival of the Orāons. This festival, known as the *Khaddi* or *Sarhūl*, is celebrated when the *sāl*-flowers are in blossom in the month of April, shortly before the time for sowing paddy in their fields. Seasonable rain and plenty of it is a necessity to the agriculturist. And the Orāon is, above all, an agriculturist. Naturally, therefore, he leaves no expedient untried to ensure plenty of rain. Thus, when on the occasion of the *Sarhūl* festival, the village-priest or Pāhān and his assistant, the Pūjār, go in procession from house to house, the women pour large jarfuls (*gharās*) of water over the head, first of the village-priest, then of his assistant, and finally over the head of anyone and everyone; and all the Orāons revel in water on that day and splash mud on each other so as to present the mud-besmeared appearance of persons sowing paddy-seeds in mud (making *lewā*, as it is called). By this they hope to have plenty of seasonable rain for their agricultural operations.

The further custom observed on the same occasion, of all the Orāon families of a village heaping rice on the sacred winnowing-basket (*sūp*) which the Pāhān carries in procession, and the Pāhān dropping rice from his *sūp* all along the route as he proceeds, and his assistant, the Pūjār, continually dropping water from his *bātāri* or pitcher with a tube attached to it, all along the route, is another instance of imitative magic for securing plenty of rain and crops. As a further instance of imitative magic performed on the occasion of the *Sarhūl* festival I may mention

the custom observed in every Orāon house of putting a live crab into the burning hearth. As the crab crackles in the burning hearth, the women exclaim, "May our lentils and pulses burst their pods like this." Again, as the heat of the fire makes the crab hanging over the hearth stiffen its legs and bring them together so as to present the appearance of a cluster of pods, the women exclaim, "May the pods of our lentils and pulses come out as thick and full as this." When the Orāon cultivator sows his *urid* (*Phaseolus roxburghii*), he mixes with the *urid* seeds a little of the powdered legs of this crab.

If we turn from religious festivals to social ceremonies we find imitative magic as extensively applied. Thus, by a process of imitative magic the yoke of a plough, and three bundles of straw, on which the bride and bridegroom are seated at the *Khiri-tengna* ceremony at an Orāon wedding, are calculated to bring the married pair prosperity in agriculture. Another instance of imitative magic in connection with an Orāon marriage is the practice of keeping apart at the harvest preceding the marriage a few of the best sheaves of paddy, carefully selected by a young bachelor who must be ceremonially clean during the process. These selected sheaves of paddy are used in the benedictory ritual of the marriage, and are calculated to bless the newly-wedded pair with agricultural prosperity—with abundant sheaves of paddy as full and fine as those. A minor instance of such imitative magic is the practice, prevalent in some Orāon villages, of an Orāon woman breaking a small thin reed (*kharika*) into one very small bit and two larger pieces, and throwing these on the open space (*āngan*) before her house, in the belief that this will cause the menstruous flow to cease after two days and a-half.

(*b*) Divination.

The principle of sympathetic magic appears to be further illustrated by the practice of omen-reading or divination. If an intentional imitation of some desired result produces that result by something like spiritual attraction, an unintentional and accidental imitation, real or fancied, of something fortunate or calamitous—of some human event, or physical phenomenon—may, it is believed, attract such thing, event, or phenomenon by a similar spiritual sympathy. Thus, during the ceremonial ablutions at the village spring or tank where all the Orāon villagers assemble for the purpose on the occasion of the *Sarhūl* festival, if the Pāhān or his assistant, the Pūjār, happen to touch any part of his body with the hand, it is apprehended that fleas and mosquitoes will prove particularly troublesome to the villagers that year.

The cawing of crows is an evil sound which bodes misfortune through sympathetic attraction, So is the sight of a jackal crossing the path of an Orāon or a Mūndā on a journey.

Anything abnormal is an evil power which sympathetically attracts some evil or misfortune. Thus, the birth of a child with one or more teeth portends the

death of either of the parents in a short time. Orāons, it is said, generally put such a baby to death by secretly making it swallow a large quantity of salt. An Orāon girl whose canine teeth grow out of the line, finds it difficult to get a husband, for the girl is fated to be a widow within a short time of her marriage.

If a present event or phenomenon attracts a like event or phenomenon in the near future by sympathy, conversely does a future event or phenomenon sometimes cast its shadow before it in the shape of an analogous event or phenomenon. Thus, at about 2 a.m., on the morning of the *Sarhūl* festival, the village-priest's assistant has to carry to the sacred grove four earthen jars filled to the brim with water from the sacred spring called Sarnādāri. The jars are left there, arranged like a square, till after sun-rise; the village-priest and other village-elders proceed to the sacred grove to read the omen indicated by the water in the jars. If all the jars are full to the brim there is sure to be plenty of rain in all directions for agricultural operations. If one or more of the jars are not so full, it is taken to be an augury that there will be insufficient rain-fall towards the points of the compass indicated by the position of such jar or jars. If the jar on the north is not full to the brim, there will be insufficient rain in the north, and so on.

(*c*) Contagious Magic.

If in some instances of beneficent imitative magic, as in the case of the rain-making ceremonies, we perceive an attempt at control of, rather than alliance with, the powerful forces of Nature, the principle of alliance is more clearly in evidence in the case of beneficent contagious magic. The Orāon and Mūndā practice of wearing rings and armlets (*bera*) made of iron previously exposed to the influence of an eclipse of the sun, so that the wearer may offer to the "evil eye" of witches, and the evil attention of ghosts and spirits, a resistance as strong as that of iron so hardened, is an instance in point. The person wearing the armlet is believed to acquire the strength of the iron; and the iron itself is believed to have acquired greater virtue through the sympathetic influence of the eclipse. Such rings and armlets are believed to be most effective in averting a thunder-stroke. A more striking instance of beneficent sympathetic magic is the Orāon practice of eating certain things to imbibe their virtues. Thus, an Orāon sometimes eats the eye of a hare to obtain keenness of vision, and the liver of a fox to acquire a musical voice.

The Orāon tradition as to the origin of the power of the snake-charmers and snake-doctors (Nāg-mātis) of his country, furnishes us with another instance of a similar contagious magic. The first Nāg-māti, it is said, had twenty-two eyes, and was a past-master in his art, who could even restore to life persons bitten to death by snakes. By a strange irony of fate, however, this father of snake-doctors himself met his death by snake-bite. Before he died, he instructed the twenty-two disciples whom he had taken under his tuition, that on his death they should eat

his flesh to acquire the powers he possessed in life. Accordingly, on his death, his disciples cut his corpse to pieces, stewed the flesh and divided it amongst themselves in twenty-two leaf-cups. When the disciples sat down, each with his own leaf-cup of meat, each asked the other to begin eating. Now Dharmeś (the Supreme God), when He saw the twenty-two disciples about to eat the flesh of their deceased master, thought within Himself that if so many men acquired the powers of their late master, there would be no death by snake-bite, and the occupation of the serpent-kind would be gone. To prevent the possibility of such an undesirable state of things, Dharmeś at this juncture approached the disciples of the late snake-doctor in the guise of a venerable old man and inquired of them what they were doing. On being told what they were about, the old man exclaimed with an air of indignation and horror, "Fie! fie! my sons, what a sin you are about to commit!" "No," added he, in a compelling tone of authority, "you must abstain from this unprecedented act of impiety. Go, now, and commit the meat to the burning fire." The disciples of the deceased Nāg-māti, who had already felt a natural disinclination to swallowing this human meat, now thought this old stranger must be right, and proceeded to throw the meat into the fire. One of the men placed his *dōnā* or leaf-cup on his head before consigning its contents to the fire, and a drop of meat-juice trickled down his cheeks and entered the corners of his mouth, and thus this man alone acquired a fraction of the powers that his late teacher had possessed. It is through this more fortunate disciple that the Nāg-mātis of our days have inherited what little knowledge of snake-charming and snake-bite cure they still possess.

A similar story is related of the powers of the present race of witches and sorcerers.

To return from ancient tradition to modern practice. A further curious instance of contagious magic is furnished by the Orāon's belief in the effects of wrestling. If a man, it is believed, engages in wrestling exercises for twenty-one consecutive days with another possessing greater strength than himself, and on the twenty-first day succeeds anyhow in bringing the stronger man to the ground even for a moment, all the strength of his opponent is forthwith transferred to himself, and thenceforth he becomes the stronger of the two. On a somewhat similar principle, Orāon children besmear their own cast milk-teeth with cowdung and saliva, and then throw these teeth on the roof of their own huts. As they thus throw away the teeth, they call on the mice to exchange their milk-white teeth with their own cast milk-teeth, saying, "Nighāi pachchā, enghāi pūnā"—[May] mine [be] new, [and] yours old."

The custom of every passer-by throwing with his feet a stone on certain cairns called *pāthal-pūnjis*, appears to be an instance of ceremonial alliance with the spirit of the cairn to avoid swelling of the legs. Of such cairns, I may mention the one at the border-line between villages Sakra and Prayāgū (*thānā* Māndār), and another on the border-line between villages Dārkānā and Tigūāl (*thānā* Chainpūr). The cloth on the person of a man killed by a tiger, as also the hair or the bone of

a person drowned in a rushing stream, are valued by the Mūndā and the Orāon as powerful remedies against certain diseases of men and cattle. In these cases the fierce tiger and the turbulent stream are believed to have imparted their own powerful energy to the cloth, hair, or bone. And perhaps the touch of the mighty hand of Death has added to its efficacy. Death, as a most powerful energy which imparts its power to whatever it comes in contact with, is clearly illustrated by the following instances of contagious magic amongst the Orāons and the Mūndās. A fragment of the charred remains of the funeral pyre on which a man dying on a Sunday or a Tuesday has been cremated on the very day of his death, is valued as a powerful charm against many diseases. Such a piece of charcoal is hung on the neck of a sick man with fresh thread which has never come in contact with water or other liquid. But such charm, to be efficacious, must have been brought from the burning-place the very night following the cremation, and the person bringing it must have gone to the cremation place stark naked. Many Orāons do not observe these conditions. To them the charred remains of the wood used in cremation is efficacious under any circumstances, provided the thread with which it is suspended on the patient's neck is fresh from the spinning wheel. Again, a piece of bread baked that very night on the very spot on which such a corpse was burnt is believed to be impregnated with great potency. The house in which such a piece of bread or charcoal is preserved is believed to be immune from a variety of diseases. Similarly, a mushroom growing on the remnant of a log of wood used in burning a corpse is believed to be a powerful remedy for hysteria. Such mushrooms gathered from a burning-place are pounded, and administered to a hysteria-patient along with molasses and a few other substances. There is a popular saying in Chōtā-Nāgpūr, "Jãhā masān tãhā apsān,"—"Where there is a burning-place there is [the remedy for] *apsan* or hysteria."

A sword with which human blood has been shed and death caused, is believed to acquire a most powerful energy through contact with blood and death. In fact, the Orāons and the Mūndās say that a powerful spirit "rides" on such a sword. Thenceforth the sword becomes an object of religious awe. It is carefully suspended against the inner wall of the owner's house, and at every festival a few drops of liquor are offered to the sword. It is believed that if the sword is taken out of the house, it will not rest until it has drunk some blood.

Of all blood, it is the sacrificial blood that is believed to possess the greatest potency. A few drops of the blood of an animal or fowl sacrificed to Dharmeś or the Supreme Deity, have to be drunk by an Orāon or a Mūndā outcast by way of purification when he is re-admitted into the tribe. Such sacrificial blood has also to be drunk by a man returned from jail, before he can be admitted even into his own house. The evil influences of contact with strangers during his stay in the jail are thus removed by the stronger power of the sacrificial blood. If, however, the theory of the original totemistic identification of the sacrificial animal with the totem-spirit be correct, such drinking of sacrificial blood may be regarded as a renewal of tribal kinship.

Water and fire, are, like sacrificial blood, beneficent powers, with the aid of which the mischievous influences of many an evil power may be neutralized. Thus, people who have touched a corpse get rid of the evil influences of such contact, first by bathing in the water of a spring, well, tank, or stream, and then by the following process of fire-lustration or rather fumigation : a few handfuls of husks and broken grains of rice are placed on the ground, and over them a few pieces of burning charcoal; a little oil poured over it makes the husks quickly take fire, and over the wreaths of smoke thus produced, the persons contaminated by the touch of a corpse hold portions of their garments by way of purification. Again, after the annual *hārbōrā* or bone-burial ceremony in the month of *Pūs* (December–January), when the bones of all deceased persons of an Orāon village who died during the preceding year are ceremonially buried in the family burial place, the village-priest or Pāhān has to purify each individual Orāon, by sprinkling water on such person with a few blades of a long grass known as *phūtchirā*. The Pāḥān has on this occasion to perform a ceremony known as "village-purification" or "paddā-kāmna." The principal feature of this ceremony is the ceremonial procession, in which the Pāhān, at the head of the whole body of villagers, traverses the village from one end of it to the other and ceremonially sprinkles water from a pumpkin-gourd on every suspicious-looking nook and corner and every bend and turn on his way. Between the bone-burial ceremony and this "village-purification," no person in the village may undertake a journey, nor may a wedding or other auspicious ceremony take place in the village. There is a suggestive resemblance between this death-tabu on the village-community, and a somewhat similar tabu observed in every Hindu family for a period of one year from the death of its master or mistress.

Water-lustration is employed by the aboriginals of Chōtā-Nāgpūr on various other occasions besides death. Thus, purification by ablutions in cold water is required in the case of women who have attended a delivery, in the case of a priest or other person who has to offer sacrifices or make other offerings to a deity or spirit, and in the case of a bride and a bridegroom just before the actual wedding ceremony. Such ablutions are believed to remove all supernatural evil influences. Even the ceremonies of washing the feet of guests just arrived, and of members of the family on their return home from a distant place, though these may appear to us as only delightful exhibitions of Orāon and Mūndā hospitality and domestic affection, may not improbably have originated in the supposed efficacy of water in removing all possible supernatural evil influences of strange places and strange roads.

Water under certain circumstances acquires more than ordinary energy or soul-power. Thus, rain-water collecting in old hollow trees is a beneficent power which cures fever that has baffled the art of the medicine-man. An Orāon fever-patient goes to such a tree with a handful of rice, a pinch of red-lead, a few yards of thread, and a small new earthen pitcher (*chūka*). Arrived at the tree, the patient puts with his own fingers three vermilion-marks on the tree, sprinkles a handful of rice on it, and ties the thread in three folds round the trunk of the tree.

Finally he bathes in water taken in his earthen pitcher from the hole of the tree. After this the man is expected to get well in a short time. Here, again, we come to direct alliance with the energy or spirit of the water, or rather of the tree. The red-lead mark is probably the reminiscence of a blood-covenant, and the tying of thread round the tree is evidently meant to symbolize the bond of friendship thus formed. It may be noted that in this case the power belongs to the hollow tree rather than to the water. For, among the Mūndās and the Orāons, any weed or other plant growing on such a cleft tree is used as a medicine for various diseases. The unusual appearance of the tree invests it with such power in the minds of these people.

On various occasions Orāon and Mūndā women are required to renew their alliance with the village spring, well, or tank from which they ordinarily draw water for drinking and cooking purposes. Thus, a few days after child-birth, the new mother has to put three vermilion-marks with her fingers on the stone slab standing by the side of such spring, well, or tank. This ceremony apparently symbolizes the renewal of the woman's alliance with the spring, well, or tank, after the critical period of delivery and the perils of the blood connected with it have been tided over. Here, again, we come to the principle of Direct Alliance. On the same principle a newly-married girl on her first arrival at her husband's village, has similarly to put three marks of vermilion on the stone slab attached to the village spring, well, or tank, the very first time she goes to draw water from it. If the new mother or the new wife draws water from such a spring, well, or tank, before such ceremonial renewal of her alliance with the spirit of the water, either maggots will breed in the water or the water will otherwise get polluted. Such unclean water is at once baled out, and the village-priest, on behalf of the village-community, renews their alliance with the spring, tank, or well by ceremonially putting vermilion-marks on the stone slab by its side. Such are a few illustrations of the application of the principle of alliance, both direct and sympathetic, in the magico-religious system of the Orāons and the Mūndās of Chōtā-Nāgpūr.

THE PRINCIPLE OF AVOIDANCE.

As good powers help either through actual alliance, or through contact or imitation, so do evil powers harm, either through contact or through the long-range influence of sympathy. The contact necessary to produce harm may be either direct or indirect, it may be either with the person or other thing sought to be harmed, or it may be with something which has or had any real or supposed connexion with that person or thing.

(I.) *Direct Contact.*

As instances of harm through direct contact with evil powers, I may mention the following Orāon and Mūndā superstitions. As a snake is an evil power, people wearing necklaces made of snake-bones (*ner khochol poon*), as well as Nāg-mātis or snake-doctors whose business is to handle snakes, become through contagious

magic, themselves evil powers. Necessarily, therefore, seed sown by such people will either not germinate at all, or, at any rate, yield an unsatisfactory return.

Some roots and other vegetable compounds are believed to possess power to attract, and others to repel, men, beasts, and birds through contact. These substances are brought into contact with a girl's clothes to make her love someone or hate someone, as may be desired. It is said that if you touch a dog with this love-charm, and forthwith conceal yourself, the dog will trace you out wherever you may go; and similarly, if you once touch a dog with the hate-charm, the dog will run away from you however much you may seek to approach it.

Witches and sorcerers often harm through direct contact. Thus, they generally have with them small rag bundles in which they carry small thin knives and nail-parers, besides nails, bones, and legs of chickens and other birds and animals, as also small quantities of rice, *urid* pulse, mustard-seeds, oil-seeds, and some other grains. These are known as *nāśans* or mischief-making agencies. A witch or sorcerer desiring to cause harm to a person, manages unobserved to mix with such person's food a small piece of a leg or bone, or some nail-parings from his *nāśan* bundle, over which spells have been pronounced. This bit of nail, or bone, or leg, is believed to grow gradually inside the person's stomach, and finally kill him, unless another magician is called in to counteract the power of the *nāśan*. A magician, thus called in, stands face to face before the patient so that the mouth and navel of the sorcerer respectively touch those of the patient; and in this posture he goes on reciting his *mantrams* or spells until the bone, leg, or nail-paring comes out of the mouth of the patient into his own mouth.

The *tikli* and the *singhi* which are employed by a sorcerer to transfer evil spirits from the flame of his own magic-lamp, or from the body of a possessed individual to someone else, further illustrate the method of harming by direct contact. The *tikli* is a very small, thin, circular bit of silver or copper. When a *māti* or ghost-doctor is engaged in exorcising a spirit, he heats this *tikli* over burning frankincense, fixes it on a copper coin, and places the copper coin with the *tikli* on it in front of the patient. When the evil spirit is exorcised, it is transferred to this *tikli*, or, as the Orāon would say, it is given the *tikli* for its seat. The *tikli*, thus charged with an evil power, is then secretly carried by the *māti* to some market, or fair, or *jātrā*, where crowds of people assemble. There he throws it unobserved on the garments of some unmarried girl. The *māti* slinks away from the place as quickly as he can for fear of detection. The girl on whose clothes the *tikli* sticks is sure before long to be possessed by the evil spirit in the *tikli*. Sometimes such a *tikli* laden with a disease-spirit is attached to the wings of a pigeon or other bird belonging to an enemy. The bird carries the evil spirit to the house of the enemy, and some member of the family falls dangerously ill. The *tikli* affixed to a pice or other copper coin is sometimes left on a public road, so that the spirit may harm the person who takes up the coin. Sometimes when an Orāon or a Mūndā seeks the help of a *māti* or sorcerer to wreak his vengeance on an enemy, the *māti* gives his client a *singhi*, or small tapering iron tube, in which is confined

either an evil spirit from the flame of his own magic-lamp, or an evil spirit exorcised from the person of one obsessed. The client secretly carries the *singhi* at night to his enemy's house, and pins it down into the wall, plinth, or some other part of the house. Sickness and other troubles are believed to follow this operation.

Contact with a witch's soul moving about at night is productive of the greatest misfortune. Whereas the soul of an ordinary human being leaves the body automatically in sleep, trance, or death, and wanders about like the wind, not as he chooses but as other forces determine, the soul of the wizard or witch can assume a material form, leave the body at will, and go wherever it chooses. It is, however, the night-time that the wizard and the witch choose for their excursions out of the body, and the material shape their souls generally assume is either that of a black cat or that of a human pigmy no higher than the height of the thumb of a man. Such a cat or pigmy is called a *chōr-deva*, or thievish spirit, by the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal. The favourite *modus operandi* of the cat-shaped *chōr-deva* is to enter a bachelor's dormitory in an Orāon village at the dead of night, and either lick up the saliva trickling down the corners of the mouth of a sleeping person, or nibble at the dead skin on the soles of a person's feet, or bite off a portion of the hair of a sleeping woman. Not long afterwards the person concerned falls ill, and sometimes the illness caused by the magic touch of the *chōr-deva* proves fatal. But in case such a *chōr-deva* is caught in the act, it is paid back in its own coin, for the injury inflicted on the cat-shaped soul or *chōr-deva* hurts its physical body, lying at home, and if the cat is killed or wounded the body of the wizard or witch lies dead or similarly wounded at home. Many an instance of such an occurrence has been related to me with circumstantial details by Orāons and Mūndās who obviously believed in what they said. Thus does contagious magic, which is the favourite weapon of the wizard, recoil on his own head. The procedure adopted by the wizard or witch when it is intended to cause harm to a man's property is different. In such a case the *chōr-deva* assumes the form of a pigmy no bigger than a man's thumb, and carries a small carrying-pole made of the twig of a castor-oil (*erndi*) plant, with two carrying-nets made of human hair suspended at its two ends. On each carrying-net is placed a diminutive basket in which the witch carries away grain from people's granaries. From the moment a witch thus touches a man's granary, even though the grain stolen be but a mere handful, prosperity bids farewell to the owner of the stolen grain, his granary is soon exhausted, and even his fields cease to yield their wonted harvest. Such is the powerful sympathetic magic of the touch of the witch's hand. Such instances take us from direct to indirect contact.

(II.) *Indirect Contact.*

We have seen how through contact with their spittle or hair or dead scarf-skin, men are injured in health by a witch or sorcerer. Among instances of harm caused through more indirect contact may be mentioned the contagious magic of the dust of a man's feet, his blood, and his urine.

The Orāons and the Mūndās believe that some evil spirits are always on the look-out for a drop of the blood or urine of a pregnant woman, and that when such blood or urine is found and licked up by an evil spirit, the woman is sure to have difficult labour, which may end in death. As for blood, not only a woman but also a man, promptly effaces with the feet or covers with dust any blood that may fall from any part of the body; for it is believed that if a witch licks up such blood or a spirit overshadows it, or ants or some particular species of birds lick it up, the person whose blood is licked up is sure to fall sick. Blood falling on the ground at midnight is particularly dangerous, as at that time evil spirits roam about in all directions. Sometimes a witch or sorcerer wishing to harm a man secures a little dust of his footprints and effects his mischievous purpose by uttering some magic spell over such dust.

A witch or sorcerer can, however, harm a man even without the instrumentality of any such tangible thing. By the mere uttering of a man's name and pronouncing some suitable spell or incantation over the name, a magician is able to effect his mischievous purpose.

To the Orāon and the Mūndā, as to most people of the lower culture, a name is an integral part of its owner and consequently offers a suitable handle to the sorcerer for his magical operations. This supposed intimate connection of a name with its owner explains the reason why the Orāon and the Mūndā avoid naming certain persons and certain places at certain hours. Thus, after night-fall, any Orāon or a Mūndā will not use the words "serpent" or "tiger," but describe a "serpent" as a "cord" (rassi) and a "tiger" as "the long-tailed thing" (lām-pōchhia). Should the actual names be used, their owners—the serpent and the tiger—would, it is believed, be attracted to the place. Again, in the morning, an Orāon avoids naming certain persons or certain villages—sometimes all villages except his own—for fear of ill-luck following the uttering of such names. The chance of ill-luck may, however, be avoided if he utters the magic words "lūpūng lupūngā" before he pronounces those inauspicious names. It is probably to prevent magicians from easily finding out the real name of a person, that the Orāon parents give two names to each child. One is the name given to a baby at birth, and known as the *janam nām* or birth name, and the other the real name called the *bichchal nām* or name selected by some supposed supernatural process.[1] The *janam nām* is selected according to the day or the week or the month of the year in which a person is born. As, for example, a baby born on a Monday is called Somra or Sumri, according as it is a male or a female child; and a baby born in the month of Aghān may be called Aghnū or Aghnī, according to its sex. There is reason to believe that the *bichchal nām* or real name was formerly known only to near relatives and friends, but, nowadays, the birth name or *janam nām* is very often dropped when the *bichchal nām* is selected, and an Orāon is known to relatives as also to outsiders by the real name.

[1] Compare the *rāshi nām* and the *dāk nām* of Bengali Hindus.

A remarkable instance of contagious magic is the Orāon belief in the powers of the *chhāin* or shadow. The soul or spirit of a man is indeed sometimes identified with his shadow; and a man of strong individuality is said to have a *iabar chhāin* or "powerful shadow," and a weak or nervous person to have a *hālūk chhāin* or light shadow. The shadow of a man of the former type falling even on a venomous snake is believed to be able to hold the snake spell-bound at the spot and make it unable to budge an inch. An evil spirit often harms a person, particularly a child, by what Orāons and Mūndās call "*chhai-ānā*" or over-shadowing it.

As a further instance of contagious magic I may mention what is known in Chōtā-Nāgpūr as *langhan*. When an Orāon gets a pain and swelling in his legs, he ordinarily attributes it to his having crossed either some stray evil spirit (*bhūlā*), or some mustard or other things impregnated with the force of some powerful spell pronounced over it by a sorcerer. Again, if he happens to walk across a person suffering from such pain, he becomes liable to a similar attack. Similarly if he happens to walk across a leaf-cup (*dōnā*) or leaf-plate (*pātri*) from which some other person, particularly a stranger or a man of another caste or tribe, has eaten or drunk anything, he runs the risk of contracting pain in his throat. The evil power with which all strangers and aliens are credited, has through contagious magic passed on to the remnant of his food or drink, or to the plate or cup from which the food or drink was taken, and is again transferred by sympathetic magic to the throat of the person crossing it. The idea of pollution by contact with the leavings of other people's food now widely prevalent all over India, may not improbably have its roots deep down in such primitive fear of contact with evil powers, and may have been borrowed by the so-called Aryan Hindu from the animistic aboriginal. Subsequently indeed the ideas of physical cleanliness, hygienic necessity, and even internal purity, have been super-added so as to transform the original idea beyond recognition, but it is amongst such animistic tribes as the Mūndās and the Orāons of Chōtā-Nāgpūr that we meet with the beginnings of the idea of *chhūtkā* or *touch-tabu* in its original naked simplicity.

(III.) *Long-range Influence of Evil Powers.*

To retrace our steps, then, and go back to the sorcerer and the witch of Chōtā-Nāgpūr. We have seen that these magicians sometimes seek either direct or sympathetic contact with their intended victims in order to effect their mischievous purpose. But the evil touch is not more effective than the evil eye. The evil eye of witches who are particularly averse to the sight of the gaudy dress or ornaments of others, make the well-dressed Orāon beau or belle dancing at the village *ākhrā*, or dancing ground, sometimes fall down in fainting fits. At times more serious consequences flow from the evil eye of a witch. A drop of blood mysteriously appears on the gala dress of a young man or woman, and serious illness overtakes the person in a short time. Food, like dress, is a favourite target for the evil eye. Orāon women are particularly anxious about the rice-flour they prepare on some

festive occasions to make bread with. If the rice-flour happens to attract the evil eye of a witch, or the "shadow" (*chhāin*) of a ghost, the bread prepared out of it will either be imperfectly baked, or emit a foul smell, or cause diarrhœa or other sickness to those who partake of such bread. Similarly the evil eye of a witch or sorcerer directed against food or drink is believed to poison it. It is, however, not witches and sorcerers, alone, that possess the "evil eye." Anyone may possess it by nature. The glance of some people has naturally a mischievous potency in it which causes harm to other people's food, drink, cattle, and crops. A curious instance of the power believed to reside in the human eye is the following custom in vogue amongst the Orāons.

When two women of the same Orāon village give birth to children in the same half of the moon, they are not allowed to see each other for the first twenty days after delivery. On the twenty-first day, the two women are led blind-folded from opposite directions to a spot fixed beforehand, and then the coverings over the eyes of the two women are taken off simultaneously. It is believed that if the cloth over the eyes of one of the women is taken off before that over the eyes of the other, the glance of the former will forthwith attract to her own breasts all the milk in the breasts of the other woman, so that the child of the latter will pine to death for want of mother's milk. If ever the eyes of either of the women are by chance uncovered in this way before those of the other, the two families fall out at once. The help of sorcerers and witches is secured by each family to harm the other; and thenceforth no love is lost between the two families.

It is, however, not human eyes alone that may possess such evil power. The eyes of some animals and reptiles, too, are credited with the same mischievous energy. Thus the Dhōra snake—a huge snake with black and white stripes on its skin—is believed to have a particularly "evil eye" which is able to cause disease and death through its glances. The sight of this serpent in the month of Asārh (June and July) is particularly dreaded. Whenever an Orāon meets such a snake, he forthwith goes home, takes a handful of paddy or urid-pulse and fries it with his own hands, so that the "evil eye," or rather its poison, may by sympathetic magic burst as these grains do on the frying pan. This fried grain is not eaten by any adult man or woman, but is distributed among the children.

If the evil touch (*chhūt*) and the evil eye (*najar*) are powerful in working mischief, most potent of all mischievous agencies is the evil sound, the word of power, the evil-working *mantram* or spell. Unlike the evil eye and the evil touch, the evil sound or *mantram* may be aimed at the intended victim from any distance in space and without the least chance of detection. It is called the *bān* or arrow-shot of the witch and the sorcerer. The Orāons believe that with the help of a powerful *mantram*, a magician is even able to extract unperceived the liver of an intended victim, wherever the victim may be. The liver is, as we have already noticed, regarded as the seat of the vital principle. The extracted liver is carefully preserved and watched by the magician for the following

twenty-four hours. If in the meanwhile the man whose liver has been thus extracted calls in the aid of another magician, and if such magician by means of counter-spells succeeds in keeping the ants from touching the extracted liver within the said period of twenty-four hours, the liver at the end of that period has to be restored to its owner, in which case the latter gets well again. If, however, ants succeed in eating at the liver within twenty-four hours from the moment it has been taken out, the patient gets worse and worse, and finally the witch or the sorcerer eats up the liver and the patient forthwith dies.

(IV.) *Modes of Avoidance.*

The different methods by which protection against the various Evil Powers is sought by the aboriginals of Chōtā-Nāgpūr are: (1) *tabu*, or simple avoidance; (2) avoidance by diversion; (3) avoidance by threats or by mimetic repulsion; and (4) avoidance by actual expulsion through the help of beneficent powers.

(1) Simple avoidance, or *tabu*.

Tabu, or negative magic, furnishes us with numerous illustrations of the principle of simple avoidance. The best way to safety is to keep yourself out of harm's way—to avoid contact, direct or indirect, with the harmful powers. Such an idea appears to lie at the root of the various *tabus*, or prohibitions which men of the lower culture impose on themselves—*tabus* in connection with names, birth, death, sex, food, blood, and a number of other things.

We have already referred to certain *tabus*, such as name-tabus, observed by the Orāons and the Mūndās of Chōtā-Nāgpūr. The idea of the perils and powers of blood appears to have given rise to the prohibition against contact with a woman at child-birth and for a few days after it. By sympathetic magic things used by her—the furniture, utensils, and other things in the lying-in room, and, in fact, the house itself—are under a temporary *tabu* to persons not belonging to the family. The reason for the supposed ceremonial uncleanness of persons who have touched a corpse, or taken part in a funeral ceremony, is apparently the supposed contact with the disembodied spirits of the dead. It is believed that when a person dies, the spirits of his pre-deceased kinsmen crowd round the death-bed, in order to take him to their abode in the underworld.

The sexual act is a mysterious power, and is consequently tabued during and immediately before such auspicious occasions as a religious festival, the first sowing of one's rice-field, and a hunting expedition. It may be noted that amongst the Mūndās and the Orāons, whereas in most religious ceremonies it is the sacrificer alone, and in sowing it is only the man actually scattering the seeds, on whom continence is obligatory, in the case of a hunting expedition not only the men who have gone out to hunt but also all the stay-at-home members, male and female, of their families have to observe the sex-tabu. A further *tabu* they have to observe is that no animal or fowl must be killed in the village, nor any fish or flesh eaten in

the village by a Mūndā or an Orāon, so long as the party of hunters does not return home. An infringement of these *tabus* on sex, food, and killing, is calculated to prevent success in the chase.

Some interesting illustrations of the Orāon's idea of *tabu* are furnished by certain observances in connection with their principal religious festival—the *Sarhūl*. Although the actual *pūjā* or sacrificial feast takes place on one day alone, the festivities and subsidiary ceremonies extend over about a week. All that time, no one in the village is permitted to engage in any agricultural work, or to dig the earth, climb a tree, pluck fruits, or gather edible roots and leaves. The reason the people assign for this *tabu* is, to use their own language, "now that the duties are up, anyone doing such a thing is sure to sustain some injury or meet with some mishap."

Again, actual contact with a person in whose village the *sarhūl* has been celebrated is *tabu* to the Orāons and the Mūndās of a village in which it has not been celebrated—such a person is not allowed to enter the houses, or draw water from or even touch the wells or springs of the village of the latter. If accidentally such a person touches the spring or well of the village, its water will have to be baled out before it can be used by the villagers, and if he has touched any article of food or drink, or even such articles as tobacco or lime, these articles get contaminated through his touch and have to be thrown away. Even if a married daughter in whose husband's family the *sarhūl* festival has been celebrated, happens to visit her father's village before the *sarhūl* has been celebrated there, she is not allowed admittance into her father's house, but is treated like a person of a different caste, accommodated in the outer veranda of a hut, and there someone serves her with food and drink without touching her; and the mats and utensils that may be used by her are not taken inside the house until the *sarhūl* festival is celebrated in the village. Ordinarily, therefore, an Orāon or a Mūndā who has not yet had the *sarhūl* celebrated in his village, avoids going to a village where it has already been celebrated. Even if urgent necessity takes him to such a village, he leaves it as quickly as he can, and rigidly avoids touching any food or drink from that village, or even sitting on the same mat with the people of that village. Any accidental contact is believed to entail such serious consequences as the failure of crops in his village where the *sarhūl* has not been celebrated. It is no pollution to people of the latter village to touch any person or thing belonging to a village where the *sarhūl* has yet to come. The reason why persons and things belonging to a village where the *sarhūl pūjā* has been celebrated is avoided by persons where it has not, appears to be the idea that through the renewal of their alliance with the village-deities and other spirits, including the Spirit of Vegetation represented by the sal-flowers, the people of the former village have been invested with a mysterious spiritual energy which may harm the people or the things of another village where the people have not yet similarly associated themselves with those spiritual agencies.

Again, in some Orāon villages, a married woman during her visits to her father's place is not allowed entrance into the cattle-shed of her father. The

reason for this seems to be the fear of harm to the cattle through some spirit of her husband's village, which may have accompanied her.

As an instance of the *tabu* on number, I may mention the Orāon custom of three, five, or seven women coming out to wash the feet of guests at their arrival at a house on a ceremonial business, such as settling a marriage contract. If an even number of women happen to come out of the house for the purpose, it is considered a bad omen.

As regards food-tabu, cooked food touched by a person not belonging to his tribe is *tabu* to a married Orāon. The origin of this *tabu* is obviously the fear of evil powers connected with alien people. To a similar fear of strange gods or spirits is to be attributed the fact that meat of animals and fowls offered to the sept-spirits of any one Orāon sept, is *tabu* to people of other septs; for although such spirits are helpful to members of the particular sept concerned they may be harmful to people of other septs. That is again the reason why a married woman, who necessarily belongs to a sept other than her husband's, may not partake of the meat of the fowls and animals sacrificed at the sacred grove of her husband's village in honour of the gods and spirits of that village. Another circumstance that may probably be partly responsible for the exclusion of women from participation in the *pūjās* or sacrificial feasts in honour of genuine Mūndā and Orāon village deities, appears to be the frequent occurrence of spirit obsession amongst women, which, together with the periodical occurrence of the menstruous flow, appears to have led to the belief that women are by nature deficient in *mānā* or spiritual energy, and, consequently, it is not safe for them to have dealings with the spirit-world.

(2) Avoidance by Diversion.

A second method of avoiding evil powers is to divert their attention.

Thus, to divert the "evil eye" of spirits or sorcerers and witches, and of malicious persons, the Orāon cultivator plants in the middle of his standing upland crops a wooden pole, over which is placed upside down an earthen vessel with its upturned bottom painted black and white. The magic of the colour diverts the "evil eye" from the crops. Again, some of the amulets worn by Orāon children are meant to divert the attention of an evil spirit or of malicious persons, witches and sorcerers: such are the *cowrie* shells worn on the neck or waist of a child.

(3) Avoidance by Threat, or Mimetic Repulsion.

Another method of avoiding evil powers is to make a mimicry of driving them away, not so much by physical terrorism as by the cumulative spiritual force of a body of persons acting ceremonially. A most interesting instance of this is the periodical devil-driving ceremony amongst the Orāons and the Mūndās of the Chōtā-Nāgpūr plateau. Once in the year, in obedience to information sent from one village to another throughout the plateau, each village fixes its date for this

ceremony of driving away the evil spirits that cause cattle-disease. At about midnight of the date so appointed, all the young bachelors of the village assemble at the village *akhrā* or dancing ground. Bachelors, who are supposed not to have any carnal knowledge, are, it may be noted, believed to possess greater soul-power than married men. And that is why they are thus able to put disease-spirits to flight. At the *ākhrā* the *pāhān*, or village priest, hands over to them a chicken and a few annas of drink-money. The village *Ahir* or cattle-herd, too, comes there with a *tharki* or wooden cow-bell. The *Ahir* and the young men all now strip themselves naked, and the *Ahir* with his cow-bell hanging from the back of his waist, and the young Orāons and Mūndās each with a stick in his hand, proceed towards the boundary of an adjoining village. The *Ahir* runs ahead and the rest of the party run behind him as if chasing him. As the young men run on, they go on uttering shouts of "*Hāmbā-hāmbā*" in imitation of cows, clapping their hands, and breaking to pieces with their sticks all the earthen pots, one or two of which every family has taken care to leave in front of their house. All the time everyone else in the village must keep absolutely quiet, and as far as possible remain indoors. Should any person be heard talking, or even laughing, these young men would belabour such a person with their sticks, and the latter would have to submit to the flogging without protest.

As soon as the *Ahir* reaches the limits of the adjoining village, he silently drops his cow-bell and quickly retires. The young men then enter a few steps into the limits of the other village, and the fowl, on which marks of oil and vermilion (*sindūr*) are now put, and all the clubs, are left there, and the party return to their village, bathe in some tank or stream, and then put on their clothes, drink liquor, and return home. The village to which the disease-spirit is thus driven, in its turn, performs the same ceremony, and transfers the spirits to the next village, and so on. To drive away disease-spirits that affect human beings, a different ceremony is gone through. Once every year, early in the month of Māgh (January), on a day appointed beforehand, the women of each Mūndā or Orāon family cleanse the floors and courtyard of their house with cow-dung and water, and then sweep the ground with their old brooms. This is done early in the morning. Then the women of each family take up on the lower half of a broken earthen vessel the sweepings, the earthen receptacle in which the cow-dung diluted in water is kept, the old rag which is used as a brush to rub the ground with diluted cow-dung, and the old broom with which the floors and courtyard have been just swept. With these they all go in a body to the boundary of an adjoining village and there deposit the broken earthen vessels containing the sweepings, old rags and brooms, saying "Eka tarti barchke atram kalae, kirra bar anke," "Go to the direction from which you came; don't return to our village." But in reality the disease-spirit is sent to the direction opposite to that from which it came. If the sweepings, etc., have been left in the limits of one village by the women of the village adjoining it on the west, then the women of the former village will leave the sweepings of their houses in the limits of the village adjoining theirs on

the east. Again, when there is actually an epidemic in the Orāon country, the people of a village take a goat or a fowl to the limits of the next village. Arrived there the feet of the fowl or goat are washed, a handful of *arua* rice is put down on the ground for it to eat, the forehead of the fowl or the horns of the goat are besmeared with rice-flour diluted in water, and over it is put a mark of vermilion diluted in a few drops of oil. The fowl or goat is left there with an admonition not to return to the village: "Kālāe, ennā bidā nānālāgdanennāntim amke kirrā. Atram bedke mokhke." "Go, I am bidding you farewell. Henceforth don't come back. Search (for your victims) in that direction and eat (what you get there)."

In cases like these the fowl or goat is supposed to be charged with the spirit of the disease.

There is another curious ceremony also known as *Rāg Khednā*, or disease driving, in vogue among the Orāons of Chōtā-Nāgpūr. A rumour is set afloat, generally in the winter months after the harvest, that in some distant village a woman has given birth to a baby-horse or a baby-giant (*rāksas chōā*), or some other monstrosity. Then a number of women (usually one from each family) leave their village one morning and go to as many villages lying in one direction of their village as far as they can walk by noon that day. In every village they go they beg rice, pulse, vegetables, etc., from house to house. By noon they cook the things thus collected, eat them and then return to their own village. A party of women of the next village then follow the example thus set. In this way the evil spirit that has produced such an imagined monstrosity is supposed to be driven away from the country.

Another ceremony of mimetic repulsion of evil powers is the flea-driving ceremony performed by Orāon young men in the month of Sohōrai or Kārtik (September–October). A number of young men strip off their clothes, cover over their body with straw from head to foot, and stick flowers all over the straw covering and go from house to house in the village shouting "Maśā danśā, jā jā," "Gnats and fleas, away, away." They get small doles of rice, pulse and vegetables from the girls of the different houses. With these alms they finally go to some open space outside the village *basti*, and there boil the rice and cook the vegetables and pulse thus obtained, and enjoy a hearty meal.

A further instance of the magic of imitative repulsion is the following: When a *bāghout*, or the mischievous ghost of a person killed by a tiger, is supposed to haunt its old home, a man belonging to a different family is made to assume the shape of a tiger. He is provided with a tail and his limbs are painted to resemble the striped appearance of an actual tiger. Thus disguised, he is made to walk on all fours like a quadruped, and is led by two men with strings tied to his hands and legs. As he is thus led forward, the *māti* goes on reciting his *mantrams* and makes a show of chasing away this sham tiger. While this counterfeit tiger is being thus driven away, the *bāghout* spirit is believed to take its flight.

A minor instance of mimetic magic is the following: When an Orāon or a

Mūndā has to pass through a village in which some epidemic is raging, he places on the road a twig of some thorny plant, and puts a piece of stone over it in order that the disease-spirit may lie there similarly pressed down and unable to pursue him. The object of the thorn may also be to prick the feet of the spirit.

A clearer instance of mimetic magic is what the Orāons call the *neochhana* rite. When a child is sick, and the sickness is believed to have been caused by the "evil eye," the mother or some other near relative of the child takes up a few mustard seeds and three peppers in her right hand, waves the hand round the head of the sick child, and then, in a broken bit of an earthen-vessel, puts the mustard seeds and peppers on the hearth. As the mustard seeds crackle over the fire, the woman exclaims, "May the evil eye which has caused the harm burst like these mustard seeds!"

The last instance of mimetic magic that I shall refer to is known as the *Dāndā Kāttā* or *Bhelwā-phāri* ceremony, observed particularly by the Orāons at every important agricultural operation and every important socio-religious festival. An important part of the ceremony is the splitting up the end of a *bhelwā* twig (*Semicarpus anacardium*) and the breaking up of an egg of a fowl into two, so that the "teeth and the mouth," as the Orāons say, of the evil powers may be deprived of their venom—that their teeth may be broken as the egg has been broken and their mouth may be rent asunder as the end of the *bhelwā* twig has been split.

As an instance of avoidance by threat, may be mentioned the custom by which the father of an Orāon bride puts a small iron spear with a handle made of the *chār* plant, into the hands of his daughter before she starts for her husband's house. She carries the spear in her hands during the journey to protect herself from evil spirits on the way. On reaching her husband's house, she inserts the spear into the roof of the house as a threat to such spirits of her father's village as may have shadowed her. Here, again, we may probably trace a survival of the same custom in the practice of putting a knife (which is a sword in miniature), and a miniature shield, into the hands of a Hindu bridegroom when he starts in marriage-procession for his would-be father-in-law's place, and of putting a knife into the hands of a Hindu bride when she is taken to her husband's house.

(4) Avoidance or Exorcism of Evil Powers with the Aid of Beneficent Powers.

Of avoidance of evil powers through the help of beneficent powers, I have already cited a few instances. Such are the use of the magic armlet made of iron hardened through exposure during a solar eclipse, and the cinders of logs of wood used in burning a corpse.

Here is another typical instance. To avert mischief to his paddy crops through the evil eye or through evil spirits, the Orāon cultivator plants twigs of either the *bhelwā* (*Semicarpus anacardium*) or the *pial* (*Buchania latifolia*) trees on each of his paddy fields on the morning of the *Karam* festival in the month of *Bhādo* (August–September). To these twigs is fastened, enclosed in a leaf, a

handful of rice-offering made at the *Bhelwa-phāri* ceremony. In some villages a handful of such rice is buried in one of the fields. This rice is evidently intended to give fertility to the fields.

The aid of the *mantram*, or the word of power, is also sought to avoid mischief through evil powers. Thus, when an Orāon starts on a journey, he sometimes takes a little dust in the palm of his hand, pronounces over it a *mantram* called the *bāndhni*, blows with his mouth over this dust, and finally scatters the dust all round his body. This is believed to protect him against the evil eye of sorcerers and witches and the evil attentions of mischievous spirits. Again, when an Orāon is afraid of the evil designs against himself of some witch or sorcerer, he fortifies his house not by any bulwark of earth or stone, but by the *bāndhni mantram* in the same way. But in these transition times, it is not many Orāons and Mūndās who know these *mantrams* or can use them properly.

When the attempt at avoidance fails, and evil powers actually cause harm to an Orāon or a Mūndā, he seeks the aid of some beneficent power to remedy the harm and to deliver him from the power of the spirit that has caused the harm.

We have already seen instances of water, fire, and the sacrificial blood being employed as means of lustration. Amulets are extensively used as a protection against evil powers. Thus, a small perforated stone, called *rāti-jara*, is worn on the neck to cure fever brought on by the evil eye of some witch or sorcerer. Before it is worn, its virtues are sometimes augmented by placing it for a few minutes on the ground and putting molasses and burning-charcoal over it.

The aid of the *mantram*, or word of power, is invoked not only to forestall but also to exorcise evil powers. In cases of such sickness as fever and rheumatism, the *māti*, or spirit-doctor, takes a peacock's feather or a broom made of the *sohorai* grass, and with this feather or broom makes gentle passes over the patient's limbs and goes on reciting his *mantrams*. These *mantrams* are generally in the dialect known as Gā̃wārī or Chōtā-Nāgpūri Hindi; but some of them are in a jargon made up of Gā̃wārī and Orāon words. They may be described as a curious combination of suggestion, abjuration, coaxing, and threat.

These *mantrams* reveal in the clearest light the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal's idea of a spirit. We shall describe briefly how exorcism is performed in the case of a female patient whose children all died very young—of course, under the evil influence of some mischievous spirit. The process of exorcism in such a case consists of several distinct stages. The first stage is known as *sumirānā*, or the invocation of helpful spirits to expel the evil spirit concerned. Every good spirit, indigenous or foreign, that the *māti* can think of—even spirits of various places and of powerful ancient kings and sorcerers—are summoned to his aid. Among such names one finds the Hindu god, Mahādeo; the Hindu epic-heroes, Rām and Lachman, the "Kālikātā Kāli-māi," or the famous goddess of Kālighat (near Calcutta), "Dhantar guru"—apparently the Chōtā-Nāgpūri's name for Dhannantari; the father of Hindu medicine, Basia tānr Rājā—apparently some ancestor of the Mahārājā of Chōtā-Nāgpūr; and Perōā-Ghāg—a waterfall in the Rānchi district.

The next stage after *sumirānā* is the *rijhānā* or *rasānā*, or tickling the spirit. Song after song is sung in chorus by the *māti* and his disciples in accompaniment to music, to tickle the spirit into self-revelation. This goes on for hours, until the spirit, being thoroughly pleased with the singers, manifests its presence in the patient by making her shake her head. When the woman thus begins to shake her head, the *māti* declares that the spirit is now well pleased and is expressing its joy by dancing. Then the *māti* inquires, "What is thy name?" The patient, or rather the spirit through the mouth of the patient, says, "I am so-and-so. I require such and such sacrifices." Then she is asked, "Where will the *singhi* go?" The answer may be, "To so-and-so who set me on this woman at such and such a place."

The next stage in this process of exorcism is known as *rasnī-utārnā*, the exorcism proper. By singing strings of long-winded *mantrams* of a suggestive nature the spirit is conducted from the hair of the patient to his face, from the face to the neck, from the neck to the shoulders, from the shoulders to the armpits, from the armpits along the elbows and wrist down to the palms of the hand, and thence out through the nails into the earth below. Lest any portion of the spirit-substance may be left behind in other parts of the patient's body, the same process is repeated in another direction, namely, from the head down into the collar-bone and thence through the ribs into the waist, and thence along the legs into the heels, thence along the toes and toe-nails into the earth again.

The fourth stage is known as the *singār-saparnā*, or getting hold of the spirit. Again songs are sung in which tempting promises of sacrifices are made to the spirit, which is thus induced to enter the flame of the *māti's* lamp. The next ceremony is the *bāndhni*, or confining the spirit. The *māti* now intently examines the flame of his lamp to make sure that the spirit is there; and then, with a knowing look, as if to say "So, here you are," brings an oiled wick into contact with the flame of his magic lamp. The new wick thus lighted is quickly put into a new *singhi* which is at once closed up with an iron stopper. It is believed that the spirit passes into the flame of the wick, and is thus imprisoned along with the wick in the *singhi*. Some mud is then plastered over the stopper of the *singhi* to make escape impossible for the spirit. The *māti* and his disciples now go to the limits of an adjoining village with the necessary sacrifices, and there a little blood of the fowl or animal sacrificed is dropped on the *singhi*, which is then carried at dead of night to the house or a field of the person who had instigated the spirit, and there it is buried. The Mūndās and Orāons believe that witches and *mātis* perform their magic feats with the help of some powerful spirits with which they have entered into compact and alliance. Such familiar spirits of the magician and the witch are called their *sādhak bhūts*. And the control exercised is really not that of the magician over the evil spirit harming a client but of one powerful *bhūt*—namely, the magician's *sādhak bhūt*—over another. As the witch and the *māti* exercise their art for their own benefit and for harming others, they are believed to die invariably a miserable death. The *māti's sādhak*, or familiar, is an

evil spirit which he holds under control; as soon as this spirit gets out of hand it brings ruin on the *māti* himself. Whereas the *pahān*, or village-priest, the director of beneficent public magic, is respected and looked up to as the natural leader of the village, the sorcerer and witch are shunned and looked down upon as enemies of humanity. Here we see the tribal conscience of even such backward tribes as the Mūndās and the Orāons of Chōtā-Nāgpūr, recognizing the immorality of anti-social private magic. And the brutal persecution of a suspected or declared witch, of which we now and again hear rueful stories in Chōtā-Nāgpūr, however much we may condemn it, is due not to any perversity of nature but to a lamentable ignorance of the causes of phenomena, and to a laudable desire to punish the anti-social mischief-maker.

At present, as we have seen, the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal's conception of the universe is that of a battle-field where a ceaseless, though often silent, struggle is going on between himself and the powers of Evil, where he has to ally himself with the powers of Good to contend successfully against the powers of Evil, and where the evil powers are far more numerous, though not indeed more powerful, than the good ones. The prime care of every Orāon or Mūndā is, as we have seen, how to avert, control, or conciliate these evil powers, not for any spiritual benefit to himself—in the sense in which the man of higher culture understands spiritual benefit—but for securing the only treasures he cares for—his crops and his cattle and his own health and that of his own wife and children—from every possible harm. In this view of the matter, the man of the lower culture may appear to be grossly materialistic, and his spirituality, to which I referred at the outset, may seem to consist only in his theoretical recognition of the soul as the real man, his belief in the mysterious power of thoughts, words, and desires, and his haunting sense of the presence of spiritual forces emanating from various beings and objects on earth, water, and sky, and of a spirit-world surrounding him on all sides. But we should remember that to him everything, including even his crops and his cattle, are centres of spiritual energy—that the Orāon and the Mūndā believe that it is really the soul of the rice that gives them nutriment, and that, in their eyes, their cattle represent the cattle-deity to whom sacrifices are regularly offered once in the year. Thus we see that the man of the lower culture does not lose his essential spirituality even in pursuing his materialistic desires. Though material welfare pleases him, and poverty, want, and disease distress him, as they respectively please and distress his more civilized fellow-men, his serious thoughts rest on other things. As we have seen, the serious thoughts—the hopes and fears—of the Chōtā-Nāgpūr aboriginal, centre round the invisible presences and powers that fill all space. And his magical rites—his religious practices—his ceremonial observances as to periodical fasting, abstinence, and purificatory ablutions—and the special semi-religious training which an Orāon young man has to undergo in the secret society of the *Dhūmkūriā* (now gradually falling into disuse) are all meant to augment his own soul-power through alliance with beneficent powers.