THE DOVE AND THE LEOPARD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE BLUE GROVE: *The Poetry of the Uraons*
THE VERTICAL MAN: *A Study in Primitive Sculpture*
THE PLAINS OF THE SUN

THE DOVE AND THE LEOPARD

MORE URAON POETRY

By

W. G. ARCHER

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BOSTON HOUSE, STRAND STREET, CAPE TOWN

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO. INC.
55 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK 3

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
215 VICTORIA STREET, TORONTO 1

First Published 1948

PRINTED IN INDIA
BY THE DIOCESAN PRESS, MADRAS
FOR ORIENT LONGMANS LTD. MADRAS—1948—C4372

IN MEMORY
OF
MARIAM KANSWAR

Now the dove and the leopard are struggling

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

PREFACE

I

IN THIS BOOK, I have supplemented the examination of Uraon poetry which I began in *The Blue Grove* by translating 409 further poems and 140 riddles. Prior to 1939, I had used only my own collection of Uraon songs and those published in Hahn's *Khurukh Folk-lore*. But in 1940, the courtesy of Ram Lochan Saran gave me access to a third collection by Dharamdas Lakra and in 1940 and 1941 I published a vernacular text[1] comprising all three collections with 2,660 songs and 440 riddles. It is from this text that I have made the present translations.

The area in which the songs were collected is the western half of Ranchi district in Chota Nagpur, India. My own collection was made in Gumla subdivision, while Hahn and Dharamdas Lakra recorded their songs from the country around Lohardaga twenty miles to the east. The collection does not include every Uraon song, for new songs are being added every year, but within the limits of this area the collection is representative.

In writing this book, I have concerned myself as little as possible with the general institutions of the Uraons, for these have been fully recorded by Sarat Chandra Roy in *The Oraons* and *Oraon Religion and Customs*; and except where a knowledge of custom and ritual seemed necessary I have avoided notes of explanation. I have aimed rather at letting the poems speak for themselves and thus create their own sense of Uraon life. In the case of marriage poems a knowledge of procedure is indispensable and I have therefore supplemented the analysis of ritual in *The Blue Grove* by an account of two weddings which I later witnessed. These taken with a short summary should sufficiently explain the wedding background. For a short review of the tribe itself, I have drawn on an earlier writer, for not only is his summary still the best short account but quotation is now the only way of preserving his classic writing. I have added a detailed account of 'The Women's Hunt' since its strange ritual provides a parallel in action to the methods of the poetry.

In certain respects my earlier book now requires modification. It no longer seems to me strictly accurate to say that 'marriage is

[1] F. Hahn, Dharamdas Lakra and W. G. Archer, *Lil Khora Khekhel* (Pustak Bhandar, Laheriasarai, Bihar, 1940-1; The Bihar Research Society, Museum Buildings, Patna).

the only sexual relation which Uraons recognize ' and that ' in Uraon poems, passion is neither observed nor approved '. Access to new poetry as well as further enquiries have convinced me that pre-marital relations are as much the rule with Uraons as with other tribes of Middle and Eastern India. It is only in the sense that love affairs should remain a secret of the village youth and should not be blatantly proclaimed that they are not recognized. In other respects they are tacitly assumed and in fact comprise the background to a number of the poems.

Similarly in describing Uraon imagery, I would no longer use quite the same terms. It now seems to me that symbolism is even more widely used than I had earlier stated and that, in certain cases at least, the evident power of an image is due to its symbolic character.

In presenting this further collection, therefore, I have been mainly concerned to draw attention to symbols and to clarify the imagery by reference to other forms of tribal poetry in Middle and Eastern India. There is a sense in which Uraon poetry is the poetry of the Uraons and of no other tribe. No one, I imagine, could mistake Uraon songs for Santal, Pardhan, Baiga or Gond poems. At the same time, all these tribes draw on a reservoir of regional imagery. An image which is obscure in one poem is often clear in another and a poem of one tribe is capable of charging the poems of others with new and startling meanings. It is when Uraon poems are seen not only in terms of other Uraon poems but in the light of the aboriginal culture of Middle India as a whole, that their full significance becomes apparent.

Although I have not stressed the circumstances of Uraon life, the general relevance of the poems to anthropology will, I trust, be evident. If a tribe is regarded as possessing in some degree its own pattern of culture, its poetry and riddles are the ways in which that pattern is most clearly revealed. The Uraon bias to the dance, for example, is seen both in the ten Uraon riddles for a drum and the dance poems which refer constantly to this activity. A cursory view of the Uraons, Baigas and Santals would dispose one to regard each tribe as setting an equal value on the dance. Only an examination of the poetry can show that the Uraon interest is far stronger. Again while the youthful life of Uraons is closely parallel to that of Santals, Murias and Gonds, it is only through the songs that their joking attitude to love becomes apparent. The value of tribal poetry to anthropology is that it is the most sensitive instrument we have for diagnosing tribal differences.

II

It will make clear the nature of Uraon poetry if I compare it briefly with the poetry of the Baigas. This small tribe of the Central Provinces has been studied with great intimacy by Verrier Elwin and his book, *The Baiga*, gives not only all the facts necessary for an understanding of the tribe but sets its poetry in vivid and careful relation to tribal life.

In its general scope, Uraon poetry is clearly of the same type as Baiga for it ranges over the whole of tribal life and like Baiga poetry includes both dance and marriage songs as well as riddles. But there are several important differences.

An essential form in Baiga poetry is the dadaria or forest song. This is usually a couplet which unites two statements through a common rhyme. At their weakest, dadarias are little more than these two rhymes and just as in English it is possible to write a poor sonnet it is equally easy for a Baiga to compose a bad dadaria. Yet the test of a form is not the level to which facility can degrade it but its poetic capability, its intrinsic scope as a vehicle for poetry. From this point of view the essence of the dadaria lies in the range it affords for significant poetic parallels.

> That garland of beads does not become you
> When you are distant from my heart how sad I feel ![1]

In a dadaria such as this, the second line is an exact parallel to the first, for a girl with a wrong necklace looks as poor as a boy without a girl.

> Against the sky swings the mango fruit
> O my sweet enemy take my life and I will take care of yours.[2]

Here also the second line is an extension of the first for the mango swinging against the sky is an invitation to be taken and the boy is like the mango and wants to be picked.

> The room is freshly cleaned with cow dung
> The rat runs across the floor
> My love, you go ahead and I will follow.[3]

In this dadaria also there is no express link yet the second line is again a parallel to the first for the floor is the recumbent girl and the rat is the lover.

[1] Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1939), 440.
[2] *Ibid*, 440
[3] *Ibid*, 440.

In Uraon poetry, there is neither any two-lined verse nor is one line the parallel of the next. The most common Uraon form consists of four lines with the fourth repeating the second and the third modifying the first.

Bamboo hill is burning down
And the clouds thunder
His body is burning
And the clouds thunder

Similarly in only one poem out of four hundred are the lines in any way parallel.

The lightning is flickering
Let me look at it
Raja of Barwe
The new bride is coming
O Raja
Let me see her.

In other Uraon poems in this book images are used symbolically but the method of the poetry is the very reverse of Baiga.

But besides their differences in form and method, there is a second way in which these types of poetry diverge. If we define a love poem as the expression of rapture, Baiga poems are as obviously love songs as Uraon poems are not.

The branches of the lime trees are heavy with fruit
So sleep with me to your heart's content, O friend ![1]

Let us spend this night in sin !
She comes from her house and stands in the door
When she sees her lover, no one can check her love
O let us spend this night in sin together ![2]

O my love, you were coming, what has stopped you ?
For you, my life is wretched.
O love, you were coming and I was going with you
Why don't you hold your life and mine together ?
For you my life is melting away .[3]

[1] *Ibid*, 444. [2] *Ibid*, 449. [3] *Ibid*, 450.

Among the Baigas it is the ecstasy and passion of love which comes to a climax in their poetry.

Among Uraons, on the other hand, certain poems are, as it were, peremptory commands :

Girl, throw down your wood
My thirst is killing me
On the slope of the hill
I am dying from thirst.

Others describe with joking realism the encounter of lovers :

Girl, you went to pick flowers
And dallied in the crab hole
Young man, you set out for the Karam
And dallied in the tiger's den.

Lie with him I will, you say, girl
In a cloak of leaves you will hide
You will spread a small cloth
You will wrap a big cloth
And hide beneath a cloak of leaves.

It is the necessity of sex rather than the charm of love which dominates Uraon songs.

There is yet a third way in which Baiga poetry differs from Uraon. In many Baiga songs, sexual terms are part of the poetic vocabulary. These conventions of poetry are described by Verrier Elwin in *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh* and his account applies with equal force to Baiga poetry : 'The more intimate aspects of married life,' he says, 'are described in songs even in many songs and are sung with gusto at marriages and festivals.' I will spare the reader the majority of these, and all those which describe in detail the act of copulation, but I include a few which seem to me to reach a level of poetry. Moreover, to omit such songs altogether would be to give a false picture of Chhattisgarhi verse. The singers themselves do not regard these matters as immoral or unclean ; to them sex is a proper, healthy and natural activity, and the fact that they can sing about it so frankly does to some extent expose the whole subject to the exhilarating and purifying influence of poetry.

On your young body
Are big big breasts
Between your thighs
Is a single eye.

These attempts to express poetically the mysteries of the physical parts of sex will, I think, bear comparison with the efforts of modern poets in the same field. For example, Dylan Thomas—

A candle in the thighs
Warms youth and seed and burns the seeds of age ;
Where no seed stirs
The fruit of man unwrinkles in the stars
Bright as a fig
Where no wax is the candle shows its hairs.

Or David Gascoyne—

Supposing the sex
A cruelty and dread in the thighs
A gaping and blackness—a charred
Trace of feverish flames
The sex like an x
As the sign and imprint of all that has gone before
As a torch
To enlighten the forests of gloom and the
Mountains of unattained night.

Or Richard Aldington, in a rather different mood—

A man or woman might die for love
And be glad in dying ;
But who would die for sex ?
Die for food or drink ?—
Die for a female mammal
Two breasts and a curled slit ?'[1]

In Uraon poetry all these conventions are absent and while, as I stress later, much Uraon symbolism is sexual it is a striking aspect of Uraon culture that sexual terms should be so little used.

[1] Verrier Elwin, *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh* (Bombay, 1946),85-7.

There is another important way in which these two types of poetry are different. If to Baigas, love is at a premium, dancing is equally at a discount. For the Uraons, on the other hand, dance poems are often not merely poems sung to dances but are celebrations of the dance itself.

How well you dance
With your girl watching
In the morning as you dance
With your girl watching.

In many villages Uraons dance with almost nightly passion and it is this preoccupation which often tinges their poetry and gives it a distinctive stamp.

If these are significant contrasts, it is, above all, in its way of using symbolism that Uraon poetry differs most radically from Baiga. In Baiga poetry symbols are almost always parallels :

You catch the fish and I will cook it
The love of my friend takes me out of the world.[1]

Here the fact that the second line treats the first line as a parallel exposes the symbolism, for catching and cooking fish is a symbol of the sexual act.

In Uraon poetry, on the other hand, imagery is constantly symbolic but neither by comparison, contrast nor parallel is its meaning made manifest.

In the uplands
On the yellow mustard
The deer are grazing
One shot
Two shots
Three shots
But they only flick their tails.

In this Uraon poem the deer are girls and the shots are the attempts of boys to seduce them. To a Baiga the poem would seem to be of the same order as the following poem by Burns.

[1] *The Baiga*, 441

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer,
Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.[1]

To an Uraon, no two poems could easily be more different.

This use of unexplained symbolism is assisted by a precise social context and in Uraon marriage poems, for example, it is the presence of an audience for a marriage purpose which contributes to its use and understanding. While, however, such a social context undoubtedly creates a favouring atmosphere, I do not think that it entirely conditions this recourse to unexplained symbols, and to understand their use we must explore the Uraon view of poetry itself.

It will be obvious from the translations that Uraons do not have a conscious or even a single theory of poetry and in fact their poems are very far from conforming to a single fixed type. Yet for many of their songs it is precisely as if the act of poetry itself presupposed recourse to symbolism, as if symbolism were inseparable from the act of its creation. When the singing of a song itself implies that an image is not expected to be literal—and it is this which Uraons seem to assume—all the conditions for such a symbolism are present.

It is this circumstance which, I believe, explains why images are often used in ways which are obvious distortions of their literal sense.

Come out of the tree, girl
A big horse is coming
In the morning come down
A big horse is coming.

In this poem the excess of interest which the horse appears to excite is due to the fact that it is not an animal but a boy.

The red cocks are crowing
Crowing the whole night
Get up, sister-in-law, and light a lamp
What a heavy sleep has come on you.

[1] I take this poem to be simply a celebration of the chase.

Here the fact that the red cocks are crowing the *whole* night is explained by the fact that the cocks are symbols for the dancers.

What a grand girl you are
But you are new to the village
Do not go to the rice lands, girl
A jackal waits there in the morning
Girl, do not go down to the rice lands.

A jackal is not a good reason for staying away from the fields but a boy is. Here also the obvious inadequacy of the reason is due to the fact that the image is being used as a symbol.

Who is digging the tank
With lights burning in the corners ?
At midnight who is digging
With lights burning in the corners ?

No Uraons would dig an actual tank at midnight or burn lights in the corners.

This identification of poetry and symbolism leads to even further incongruities.

Under the tamarind I scattered the paddy
And the sparrows came in bands
I set a trap for the greedy sparrows
And into it fell the boy's father and the father of the girl.

This is a marriage poem but even without the wedding context, the fact that the boy's father falls into a trap for sparrows shows that the sparrows are boys and not birds.

I have chosen these examples of distortion because they reveal even more clearly than other poems the principles of much Uraon poetry. But there are many poems in which there is no obvious falsification yet the image, from the very fact of being used in a poem, acquires the force of a symbol.

In our courtyard, brother
The red marigolds bloom like a cock
Let them bloom, sister
I will catch anyone who tries to pick them.

Here there is no obvious distortion but the presence in the poem of marigolds raises a presumption that they are symbols of girls.

Finally a few poems explicitly refer to symbolism as the method of the poetry, and in the clearest possible terms deny a literal interpretation.

> In the little plot of maize
> There enters a thief
> No it is not a thief, sister
> It is a young lover.

Even if Uraon poetry did not reveal its symbolism in other ways, a clue poem such as this would make its methods obvious.

But besides the Uraon view of poetry, there is a quality in the Uraon temperament which also goes to explain this characteristic of its poetry. In all symbolism there is an element of incongruity which reaches back to the roots of humour. For Uraons poetry is at once an amusement and a recreation, a tribal parallel to music-hall entertainment—vivid, joking and lively.

> Take your hand away, *juri*
> My clothes are getting loose
> Let them get loose, *juri*, let them come down
> The time for dancing is almost over.

Such poems aim only at the making of jokes. But behind all Uraon poetry is a sense of social occasion. In seventeenth century England, poetry was deliberately and skilfully applied to occasional purposes. 'Births and marriages had to be celebrated, deaths to be mourned, according to well defined conventions.'[1] In Uraon society, also, poetry is a function of weddings and dances. On both these occasions there is constant interplay between boys and girls. There is a common jollity, a sense of general fun, and it is this which the songs exploit with their suppressed allusions.

> A fat rabbit sprang out
> On the slope of the hill
> In the morning, a rabbit
> On the slope of the hill.

[1] R. G. Howarth, *Minor Poets of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1931), viii.

To refer in a song to a rabbit that was only a rabbit would strike Uraons as patently silly. To sing of a rabbit and imply a girl is to exploit to the full their sense of fun. It is partly because symbolism is an aid to joking that it stalks through much Uraon poetry and imposes its distinctive methods.

To the many who assisted me at different stages of this book, I am deeply grateful—in particular to Mr R. N. Lines, M.B.E., and Mr S. K. Aikat, both of whom supplied me with accounts of 'The Women's Hunt' in Simdega and Gumla; to Mr Muni Lal Singh who made for me a careful survey of Uraon dormitories and collected much useful information; to Mildred Archer with whom I discussed much of the imagery and to Uma Prasad Das and Sachindra Nath Moitra who assisted me with the typescript. I am also greatly indebted to Bishram Trofimus Toppo through whose patient collaboration the publication of the vernacular text was made possible and who again greatly assisted me in translation. Above all, I must record my gratitude to Verrier Elwin whose enthusiasm for Uraon poetry impelled me, in 1942, to revise earlier drafts and notes and led me to attempt this further examination. At that time, it was as if:

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world;
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.

If a single stimulus can prompt a book, it is to Verrier Elwin that this sequel owes its existence.

W. G. ARCHER

CONTENTS

THE URAONS

THE URAONS

THE FOLLOWING picture of Uraon life is taken from Colonel Edward Tuite Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.* This great work was written in the eighteen-sixties and was published in Calcutta in 1872. It gave, for the first time, a general survey of aboriginal life in Eastern India and thus laid the foundations of Indian ethnology. Covering, as he did, such a large field, Dalton had, at times, to rely on secondary sources. In the case of the Uraons, however, his account is entirely first-hand. During his service, he acted as Commissioner of Chota Nagpur and gave his name to the town of Daltonganj. What he wrote on the Uraons was therefore based on what he had himself seen. Besides a faculty for exact observation, Dalton had also a remarkable power of ordering his impressions. The section on the Uraons, with its charm of style and insight into tribal character, is, in essence, the vision of a poet.

'The Khurukh or Oraons of Chutia Nagpur', Dalton states, 'are the people best known in many parts of India as "Dhangars", a word that from its apparent derivation (*dang* or *dhang*, a hill) may mean any hillmen. They were for many generations settled on the Rohtas and adjoining hills and in the Patna district, and they say that they were driven from that part of the country by the Muhammadans, but as they declare they were in Chutia Nagpur before the birth of Phani Mukuta Rai, the first Nagbansi Raja, and the present Raja of that illustrious race claims to be the 52nd in descent from Phani Mukuta, they must have been under the sway of the Nagbansis before Muhammad was born.

'Leaving Rohtas they proceeded up the Son into Palamau, and pursuing their course eastward along the Koel found themselves eventually on the highlands of Chutia Nagpur.

'They emerged on the north-western and western portion of the plateau, where they found but a few scattered colonies of the Munda race, and, according to the tradition which I have received, were permitted to settle without opposition from that people.

'The constitution of an Oraon village is the same as that of the Mundari. In each the hereditary Munda, or headman, and the hereditary Pahn have their lands on privileged terms as the descendants of the founders of the village. The hereditary estates of the two families are called " Khunts "; there is sometimes a third Khunt called " the Mahato " on all of which a very low rent is fixed, but

there are also conditions of service attached. These may now be commuted to cash payments at the instance of either party.

'There is also in charge of the Pahn the land dedicated to the service of the village gods. The priestly office does not always go from father to son. The latter may be ignorant and disqualified, he may be a Christian, therefore when vacated it is filled by divination. The magic "sup" or winnowing sieve, properly spelled like a divining rod, conducts the person holding it to the door of the man most fitted to hold the office. A priest there must be; an Oraon community cannot get on without one. The fate of the village is in his hands; in their own phraseology it is said that "he makes its affairs". He is also master of the revels which are for the most part connected with religious rites. The doctrine of the Oraons is, that man best pleases the gods when he makes merry himself, so that acts of worship and propitiatory sacrifices are always associated with feasting, drinking, dancing and love-making.

'The Munda or Mahato is the functionary to whom the proprietor of the village looks for its secular administration. In contradistinction to the Pahn who makes (*banata*) the affairs the Mahato administers (*chalata*) them, and he may be removed if he fails to give satisfaction.

'The young Oraon girls always appear on friendly terms with each other, but a custom obtains amongst them by which the ties of friendship are made almost as binding as those of marriage. It is not exclusively an Oraon practice, but it is more generally resorted to by the girls of that tribe than by other maidens.

'Two girls feel a growing attachment for each other. They work together, sing together, and strive to be always together till they grow so fond, that a sudden thought strikes one or other of them to say "let us swear eternal friendship". The formula being in Chutia Nagpur Hindi *Toi uor main gui jurabi amren phul lagabi.* They exchange necklaces and embrace, and afterwards jointly, from their own means, prepare a little feast to which they invite their friends of their own sex, who are made witnesses to the compact, and this ceremony is considered complete.

'From that hour they must not address or speak of each other by name. The sworn friend is "my gui" or my flower, or something of the kind. They are as particular on this point as are Hindu women, not to mention the names of their husbands.

'A young man makes a demonstration of his affection for a girl in a similar fashion. He sticks flowers in the mass of her back hair, and if she subsequently returns the compliment, it is concluded that she desires a continuance of his attention. The next step may be an

offering to his lady love of some nicely grilled field mice, which the Oraons declare to be the most delicate of food. Tender looks and squeezes whilst both are engaged in the dance are not much thought of. They are regarded merely as the result of emotions naturally arising from pleasant contiguity and exciting strains; but when it comes to flowers and field mice, matters look serious.

'In all the older Oraon villages, when there is any conservation of ancient customs, there is a house called the Dhumkuria, in which all the bachelors in the village must, when not absent from it, sleep under penalty of a fine. Precisely similar institutions are met with amongst the Hill Bhuiyas of Keonjhar and Bonai, and from the notes left by the late Rev. S. Hislop, I find, they are common to other Dravidian tribes.[1] I have already observed that the domiciles of the Oraons have insufficient accommodation for a family, so that separate quarters for the young men are a necessity. The same remark applies to the young unmarried women, and it is a fact that they do not sleep in the house with their parents. Where they do sleep is somewhat of a mystery. They are generally frank enough when questioned about their habits, but on this subject there is always a certain amount of reticence, and I have seen girls quietly withdraw when it was mooted. I am told that in some villages a separate building is provided for them like the Dhumkuria, in which they consort under the guardianship of an elderly duenna, but I believe the more common practice is to distribute them amongst the houses of the widows, and this is what the girls themselves assert if they answer at all when the question is asked; but however billeted, it is well known that they often find their way to the bachelors' hall, and in some villages actually sleep there. I not long ago saw a Dhumkuria in a Sirguja village in which the boys and girls all slept every night. They themselves admitted the fact, the elders of the village confirmed it, and appeared to think that there was no impropriety in the arrangement. That it leads to promiscuous intercourse is most indignantly denied, and it may be there is safety in the multitude; but it must sadly blunt all innate feelings of delicacy. Yet the young Oraon girls are modest in demeanour, their manner gentle, language entirely free from obscenity, and whilst hardly ever failing to present their husbands with a pledge of love in due course after marriage, instances of illegitimate births are rare, though they often remain unmarried for some years after reaching maturity. Long and strong attachments between young couples are common. Dhumkuria lads are no doubt great flirts, but each has a special favourite among the young

[1] Verrier Elwin has studied this institution with great thoroughness in his book, *The Muria and their Ghotul* (Bombay, 1947).

girls of his acquaintance, and the girls well know to whose touch or pressure in the dance each maiden's heart is especially responsive. Liaisons between boys and girls of the same village seldom end in marriage. It is considered more respectable to bring home a bride from a distance, but it does not follow from this that there is no preliminary love-making. Maidens of one village go frequently on visits to their friends in another and stay several days, and sisters can always arrange to have for visitors the girls whom their brothers are best pleased to see.

'The Dhumkuria fraternity are under the severest penalties bound down to secrecy in regard to all that takes place in their dormitory; and even girls are punished if they dare to tell tales. They are not allowed to join in the dances till the offence is condoned. They have a regular system of fagging in this curious institution. The small boys serve those of larger growth, shampoo their limbs, and comb their hair, etc., and they are sometimes subjected to severe discipline to make men of them.

'Immediately in front of the Dhumkuria is the dancing arena, called "Akhra", an open circus about forty feet in diameter with a stone or a post marking its centre. It is surrounded by seats for tired dancers or non-dancing spectators, and shaded by fine old tamarind trees that give a picturesque effect to the animated scene, and afford in their gigantic stems convenient screens for moonlight or starlight flirtations. During the festive seasons of the year, dancing at the Akhra commences shortly after dark every night, and, if the supply of the home brew holds out, is often kept up till sunrise. Very rakish do the dancers appear in the early morning after a night so spent. On some occasions the circus is laid down with red earth which pulverises under the many twinkling feet and rises in a lurid cloud about the dancers, till the garments, the dusky skins, and the black hair of the performers become all of brick dust hue; ordinarily on the party breaking up at dawn, they proceed from the Akhra to their usual avocations and work as cheerfully and vigorously as if their night had been passed in sound sleep. This says much for the wholesomeness of the beverage that supplies them with the staying power.

'The Oraon youths, though with features very far from being in accordance with the statutes of beauty, are of a singularly pleasing class, their faces beaming with animation and good humour. Their costume is peculiar, and shows off to great advantage their supple, pliant, light figures, which are often models of symmetry. They are a small race averaging 5′ 2″, but there is perfect proportion in all parts of their form, they have not the squat appearance or muscular

development of the short Himalayan tribes; but though lightly framed like the Hindu, they are better limbed. There is about the young Oraon a jaunty air and mirthful expression that distinguishes him from the Munda or Ho, who has more of the dignified gravity that is said to characterise the North American Indian. The Oraon is particular about his personal appearance only so long as he is unmarried, but he is in no hurry to withdraw from the Dhumkuria community, and generally his first youth is passed before he resigns his decorative propensities.

'He wears his hair long, gathered in a knot behind, supporting, when he is in a gala costume, a red or white turban. In the knot are wooden combs and other implements useful and ornamental with numerous ornaments of brass and looking glass. At the very extremity of the roll of hair gleams a small circular mirror set in brass, from which and also from his ears, bright brass chains with spiky pendants dangle, and as he moves with the springy elastic step of youth and tosses his head like a high mettled steed in the buoyancy of his animal spirits, he sets all his glittering ornaments in motion and displays as he laughs a row of teeth, sound, white, and regular, that give light and animation to his dusky features.

'His middle garment consists of a long narrow strip of cloth carefully adjusted, but in such a manner as to leave him most perfect freedom of limb, and allow the full play of the muscles of the thigh and hip to be seen. He wears nothing in the form of a coat; his decorated neck and chest are undraped, displaying how the latter tapers to the waist, which the young dandies compress within the smallest compass. In addition to the cloth, there is always round the waist a girdle of cords made of tusser-silk or of cane. This is now a superfluity, but it is no doubt the remnant of a more primitive costume, perhaps the support of the antique fig leaves.

'The ordinary dress of the women depends somewhat on the degree of civilisation of the part of the country in which you make your observations. In the villages about Lohardaga, a cloth from the waist to a little below the knee is the common working dress; but where there is more association with other races, the persons of young females are decently clad in the coarse cotton cloth of the country, white with red border. Made up garments are not worn except by the converts to Christianity. The one cloth six yards long is gracefully adjusted so as to form a shawl and a petticoat. The Oraons do not, as a rule, bring the upper end of the garment over the head and so give it the functions also of a veil, as it is worn by the Bengali women; they simply throw the end of the dress over the left shoulder, and it falls with its fringe and ornamented border

prettily over the back of the figure. Vast quantities of red beads and a large heavy brass ornament shaped like a torque are worn round the neck. On the left hand are rings of copper, as many as can be induced on each finger up to the first joint, on the right hand a smaller quantity; rings on the second toe only, of brass or bell metal, and anklets and bracelets of the same material are also worn. The hair is, as a rule, coarse and rather inclined to be frizzy, but by dint of lubrication they can make it tolerably smooth and amenable, and false hair or some other substance is used to give size to the mass (the chignon) into which it is gathered, not immediately behind, but more or less on one side, so that it lies on the neck just behind, and touching the right ear, and flowers are arranged in a receptacle made for them between the roll of hair and the head.

'When dancing in costume on grand occasions they add to their head-dress plumes of heron feathers, and a gay bordered scarf is tightly bound round the upper part of the body.

'The Oraons live generously, more frequently partaking of flesh than their neighbours, but their cooking is wretched, and they have themselves a proverb expressive of the low state of their culinary skill. Their chief food is rice and the pulse called urid or kalai. They seldom cultivate vegetables, but many wild plants and the tender leaves of the pipul (*ficus religiosa*) and other trees are used by them as pot herbs. Besides esteeming field mice and such small game as great delicacies, they eat the flesh of bullocks, goats, buffaloes, sheep, tigers, bears, jackals, foxes, snakes, lizards, most birds, all fish, tortoises, and large frogs, but prefer pork to everything, and their villages swarm with pigs. They indulge to an immoderate degree in rice-beer, which is made in every house, and it is not an uncommon event for a traveller to arrive at an Oraon village and find every soul in it drunk.

'The Oraons have adopted all the Munda dances, and improved on them. They have one called the Oraon's jadura, which is quite a refinement on the ordinary jadura, most complicated in step and figure, but the movements in it are executed with wonderful precision by girls accustomed to dance together. They commence at a very early age to learn this accomplishment. Children may be seen practising their steps whose powers of toddling are but rudimentary. They positively dance as soon as they can walk, and sing as soon as they can talk.

'The religion of the Oraons is of a composite order. They have no doubt retained some portion of the belief that they brought with them to Chutia Nagpur, but coalescing with the Mundas and joining in their festivals and acts of public worship, they to a certain extent

took up their ideas on religion and blended them with their own. There is, however, a material distinction between the religious systems of the two people. The Mundas have no symbols and make no representations of their gods; the Oraons and all the cognates whom I have met with have always some visible object of worship, though it may be but a stone or a wooden post, or a lump of earth. Like the Mundas, they acknowledge a Supreme God, adored as Dharmi or Dharmesh, the Holy One, who is manifest in the sun, and they regard Dharmesh as a perfectly pure, beneficent being, who created us and would in his goodness and mercy preserve us, but that his benevolent designs are thwarted by malignant spirits whom mortals must propitiate, as Dharmesh cannot or does not interfere, if the spirit of evil once fastens upon us. It is, therefore, of no use to pray to Dharmesh or to offer sacrifices to him; so though acknowledged, recognised, and reverenced, he is neglected, whilst the malignant spirits are adored. Here we have a savage's solution of the antagonistic principles of good and evil, happiness and misery, and not a bad illustration of what untutored man, with no aspirations beyond this life, may imagine. How, they reason, could a benevolent and omniscient Creator subject his creatures to suffering? Yet suffer they do, often without fault of their own, and to cause this there must be other powers at work, who act independently of and in opposition to the Creator. These malignant spirits afflict us, because (as children learn that dogs bark and bite) "it is their nature to do so". I do not think that Oraons have an idea that their sins are visited on them either in this world or in a world to come. It is not because they are wicked that their children or their cattle die, or their crops fail, or they suffer in body, it is only because some malignant demon has a spite against them, or is desirous of fleecing them. Their ideas of sin are limited. Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour, is about as much of the decalogue as they would subscribe to. It is doubtful if they see any moral guilt in murder, though hundreds of them have suffered the extreme penalty of the law for this crime. They are ready to take life on very slight provocation, and in the gratification of their revenge an innocent child is as likely to suffer as the actual offender. There is one canon of the Mosaical law that they in former years rigorously enforced—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." I have dwelt on this subject in treating of the Mundas, and need only say that the Oraons are quite as inveterate against reputed witches as the Mundas, and if left to themselves, the life of elderly females would be very insecure. As it is, a suspected old woman (and sometimes a young one,

especially if she be the daughter of a suspected old one) is occasionally condemned, well drubbed, and turned out of the village, and she does not always survive the treatment she is subjected to.

'Where a death occurs in an Oraon family it is made known to the village by the loud lamentations of the women, who loosen their hair, a demonstration of grief which appears to prevail in all countries, and cry vigorously. They lay out the body on the common cot, called " charpai " and after washing it carefully, convey it to the appointed burning place, covered with a new cloth, and escorted by all the villagers, male and female, who are not, for some reason, unable to attend. In some families the funeral procession proceeds with music, but others dislike this custom, and nothing is heard but the cries of the women. Arrived at the place where the funeral pile has been prepared, the body is again washed, and the nearest relations of the deceased make offerings of rice, and put rice into the mouth of the corpse, and some put pice or other coin. The body is then placed on the pile and anointed, and further offerings of rice are made, and the pile is ignited by a father or mother, a wife or a husband. When the body has been consumed notice is given in the village, and there is another collection of friends and relatives to collect the charred bones which remain. These are placed in a new earthen vessel, and ceremoniously taken to the village, and as the procession returns, parched rice is dropped on the road to mark the route selected. The cinerary urn is suspended to a post erected in front of the deceased's late residence, the guests are feasted, and the party then breaks up.

'In the month of December or January next ensuing, the friends and relations are all again collected to witness the disposal of the bones, in the place that, from the first establishment of the community, has been appropriated to the purpose. This is a point on which the Oraons are exceedingly tenacious, and even when one of them dies far from his home, his relations will, if possible sooner or later, recover the fragments of his bones, and bear them back to the village, to be deposited with the ashes of his ancestors. The burial ground is always near a river, stream, or tank. As the procession proceeds with music to this place, offerings of rice are continually thrown over the cinerary urn till it is deposited in the grave prepared for it, and a large flat stone placed over it. Then all must bathe, and after paying the musicians, the party returns to the village. The money that was placed in the mouth of the corpse and afterwards saved from the ashes, is the fee of the musicians. The person who carried the bones to the grave has to undergo purification by incense, and the sprinkling of water. It is to be observed

that this ceremony occurs in each village but once in the year, and on the appointed day the ashes of all who have died during the year are simultaneously relegated to their final resting place. No marriage can take place in a village whilst the bones of the dead are retained there. The most ardent lovers must patiently await the day of sepulture. The marriage season commences shortly after it.' [1]

[1] **E. T.** Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), 245-62.

PHAGUA POEMS

PHAGUA POEMS

1 WHO is this girl who protests against her wedding?
Soft is the ripe tamarind
It is well you told me about this girl's marriage
Soft is the fruit of the tamarind.

The tamarind with its thick clusters is both a meeting place for lovers, 'a sympathetic setting', and like the mango a symbol of a girl's form. In a Baiga poem the ripeness of a girl is implied by the thickness of its fruit:

The mangoes and the tamarind are thick with fruit in [spring.
At midnight my lover sends for me
O why does my lover send for me? [2]

A Gond poem compares a false girl to a spoilt tamarind:

This year's tamarind is spoilt
There is pity in your face
But you are false within.[3]

In a Pardhan song, the fecund clusters of the tamarind arouse in the singer's mind the image of two lovers:

The mangoes grow in clusters,
O laden is the tamarind
As near as seed to fruit,
So close should be our love.[4]

In the Uraon poem, the tamarind is the girl and her ripeness for love is in contrast to her lack of will.

2 With your milk you fed me
Mother, you fondle me
In the morning you fed me
And now you fondle me.

[1] The March festival which ends the agricultural year.
[2] *The Baiga*, 259.
[3] Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (Bombay, 1944), 95.
[4] Shamrao Hivale and Verrier Elwin, *Songs of the Forest* (London, 1933), 113.

3 What is the noise, girl
That sounds in the hills ?
Girl, it is the falling leaves
Sounding in the hills.

Hills are places for love-making. In this poem, therefore, the answer is not necessarily correct and may well be evasive—an image to conceal the boy who is the real answer.

In Baiga poems, ' hills ' and in particular the act of ' climbing hills ', are often direct references to the sexual act :

As you climb the hill
Even your lover's voice you cannot hear
You are panting so loudly
Some are breaking small branches
Some are plucking leaves,
As you climb the hill.[1]

4 Who is digging the tank
With lights burning in the corners
At midnight who is digging
With the lights burning in the corners ?

In this poem, the tank is the girl's sex and ' digging the tank ' a symbol of procreation.

A Pardhan dadaria uses the same image to describe the first encounter of two lovers :

The new tank is very deep
Let me first run away
Then tell everyone.[2]

In a Gond poem a new girl is expected to give her lover a fresh experience, and here also the tank is an image of her organ :

In the new tank the water is fresh
In a hard place I have found you ;
I will take water from your tank.[3]

[1] ' This Baiga Karma is one of those by which lovers send their messages to each other. By a certain emphasis or intonation it is possible to suggest a meeting place to go either where small branches are to be broken or to the place where one usually picks leaves. The images of climbing the hill and panting are, of course, sexual. ' (*Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 118)

[2] *Ibid*, 93. [3] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 196.

A Panka song uses the symbol to describe how appearances mislead:

In the new tank
The water was white
For all your youth, mad girl
Your nectar is dry.[1]

5 On the banks of the tank a single tree
Buds of the *champa*[2]
Go and pick the flowers, girl
In the evening no one is about
Go and pick the flowers, girl
A single flower,
Only two flowers
Go and pick the flowers, girl.

The banks of a tank like those of a river occur constantly in Uraon poems as places for love-making and seduction partly because of their actual employment for these purposes and partly from the use of 'water' and 'river' as sexual symbols.

In a similar way, although 'picking flowers' is an ostensible reason for meetings, the image itself is also a symbol for the union of lovers. An Eastern Bengal ballad narrates how 'at morning and evening the youth and the maiden plucked flowers from the sides of the tank, and always they were all alone there. None knew of their meetings.'[3]

Among Santals 'putting a flower in the hair' is a current expression for taking a lover, while a Baiga poem refers expressly to the 'flowers of sex'.

Her long hair is all scattered on the ground
I am going to pick the flowers.
At sunset her hair is all scattered on the ground,
And I am going to pick the flowers.
At bed-time her hair is all scattered on the ground.
I have picked a lovely flower.[4]

In the Uraon poem, a 'single tree' is a boy and the fact that it is evening and no one is about suggests that the girl will take his love and 'pluck the flower'.

[1] *Ibid*, 201. [2] A tree with yellow flowers (*Michelia champa*).
[3] D. N. Sen, *Eastern Bengal Ballads* (Calcutta, 1923), I, 87.
[4] *The Baiga*, 246

6 On the sides of the tank a *champa* tree
And pell mell the blossom falls
I have no half pice
I have no pice
How can I buy a *champa* flower ?
How can I wear the *champa* flower ?

The money is for buying an ornament for the girl and so winning her favour.

SARHUL POEMS

SARHUL POEMS

THE SARHUL FESTIVAL follows Phagua and corresponds to the Baha festival of the Santals.

According to Dalton, 'the Uraon idea is that, at this season, the marriage of *dharti*, the earth is celebrated, and this cannot be done till the Sal trees give the flowers for the ceremony. It takes place, then, towards the end of March, or beginning of April, but any day whilst the Sal trees are in blossom will answer. On the day fixed the villagers accompany their Pahn to the Sarna, the sacred grove, a remnant of the old Sal forest in which the Oraons locate a popular deity called the Sarna Burhi or woman of the grove, corresponding with the "Jahir Era" and Desauli of the Mundas. To this dryad, who is supposed to have great influence on the rain (a superstition not unlikely to have been founded on the importance of trees as cloud compellers), the Pahn, arriving with his party at the grove, offers five fowls. These are afterwards cooked with rice, and a small quantity of the food is given to each person present. They then collect a quantity of Sal flowers, and return laden with them to the village. Next day the Pahn, with some of the males of the village, pays a visit to every house, carrying the flowers in a wide open basket. The females of each house take out water to wash his feet as he approaches, and, kneeling before him, make a most respectful obeisance. He then dances with them, and places over the door of the house, and in the hair of the women, some of the Sal flowers. The moment that this is accomplished they throw the contents of their water vessels over his venerable person, heartily dousing the man whom, a moment before, they were treating with such profound respect. But to prevent his catching cold they ply him with as much of the home brew as he can drink, consequently, his reverence is generally gloriously drunk before he completes his round. The feasting and beer drinking now become general, and after the meal, the youth of both sexes, decked with Sal flowers (they make an exceedingly becoming head-dress), flock to the Akhra, and dance all night and best part of next day.' [1]

[1] Dalton, 261.

7 Pahan, each year
You are married like a king
On the Sarhul morning, pahan
You are married like a king.

At the ceremony, the pahan represents the sun and is married to the earth.

8 With an ear-ring and a silk cloth, brother
You look like a god in the dawn
On the Sarhul morning with a silk cloth
Like a god you look in the dawn.

9 Seeing you, girl
Has filled me with joy
You look so lovely
On the Sarhul morning
Seeing you, girl
Has filled me with delight.

10 Brightly shines the Sarhul moon
Quietly cries the married girl
In the morning the moon shines
And the married girl sobs.

In Chinese poetry, the moon was also a symbol for a boy :

Moon in the east !
This lovely man
Is in my bower,
Is in my bower,
His foot is upon my threshold.[1]

[1] Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs* (London, 1935), 22.

11 The modern girl
Is soft as a caterpillar
Feel her, girl
Soft as a caterpillar.

12 Mother, come and see
Karu Doensa [1]
The men are all cripples
The women are all buffaloes.

A similar comparison is implied by a Pathan folk-song:

Uncle elephant's wedlock is being performed
Lo ! the buffaloes are dancing and the donkeys
Are playing on the pipe. [2]

13 Woman, I am late
From combing the hair parting the hair
The boys and girls will not believe me
But the old men and women saw.

14 Witch, your mother is dead
And you do not know it
You make a hat of a tiger's skin
And you do not know it. [3]

15 A brother and sister
Brought up a monkey
They gave it hot rice
And the monkey laughed
They gave it cold rice
And the monkey wept.

Joking poems often include poems about monkeys—the monkey being sometimes literal as here and sometimes, as in poems 202 and 298, an image for a boy.

[1] A village in Ranchi district.
[2] Devendra Satyarthi, 'Song-Harvest from Pathan Country', *The Modern Review* (December, 1935).
[3] For a full account of Uraon witchcraft, see P. Dehon, 'The Religion and Customs of the Uraons', *Memoirs, Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1905.

A Pardhan poem refers jokingly to a monkey milking a cow

I have seen a wonder
A monkey milked a cow
It put the milk in an earthern pot
And took the curds to sell. [1]

16 Stupid foreigners
Keep many wives
But the clever Uraons
They marry them all.

17 Get ready, brother
The war drum sounds
Be ready in the morning
The war drum sounds.

18 The flag of the tribe is flying
The war drum is sounding
They are coming in the morning
Jhamar jhamar the bells sound.

19 After twelve years
The women's hunt
The raja ties a turban
On the heads of the girls
With the women's hunt
You have made a name, O raja
The raja ties a turban
On the heads of the girls.

20 Girl, you great girl
An axe is by the door
If you go on the women's hunt
An axe is by the door.

21 Bamboo hill is burning down
And the clouds thunder
His body is burning
And the clouds thunder.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 203.

22 Which children come
As the flute
Sounds in the street?
The boy's father is coming
As the flute
Sounds in the street.

23 Who are these children coming
When a flute is in the courtyard?
They come in the morning
As the flute
Sounds in the courtyard.

24 Choosing her steps, a girl comes
On her feet
Are golden bells
On her legs
Are bangles
On her body
Is silk
In her hair
Is a heron's feather
On her head
Is a life and death tree flower.
With a golden fan
She fans herself
And she dances as she goes
O lovely is the raja's girl
Swaying and swinging her body
As she goes around.

25 In Doensa Nagar
The loved rani
Bitterly weeps
In Doensa Nagar
Hira Raja is dead
And his rani
Weeps and weeps.

26 The enemies will come, girl
Do not dance on the banks of the river
They will seize you, girl
Do not dance on the banks of the river.

For 'the banks of the river', see poem 5. The reference in this and the succeeding poem is to marriage by capture—a custom which still survives in a mock form in Uraon weddings.

27 Enemy, from where are you coming
And looting Nagpur?
Killed is the mother
Killed is the father
Stolen is the girl.

28 Mother, beyond the Koel
Do not marry your daughter
I shall run off, mother
Whether the two boats ply or not.

The implication is that because she cannot hope to be happy at her father-in-law's, the girl will always be running home. The Koel is a big river of Ranchi District.

29 Some have only a mother
Some have only a father
Some have only a single brother
My eyes brim with tears.

30 How will you live, sister
Bartered in a cold country
What can I do, sister-in-law?
Stiff and angry is the father.

31 A cup full of scarlet in the courtyard, mother
And how lovely your girl looks
In her mother's house
She is not lovely
In her father's house
She is not lovely
Only in her father-in-law's
Is a girl lovely.

32 How well you dance
With your girl watching
In the morning as you dance
With your girl watching.

33 Bring some *jamun* leaves, brother
For me to wear in my ears
I will dance the *bhejja* with you
But you must bring me
Jamun leaves for my ears.

The *bhejja* is any dance in which a line of girls goes round intermixed with boys.

34 What a naughty world
With the boys and girls dancing together
Never trust a boy in the morning
When the boys and girls are dancing together.

35 Give me a feather, brother
And I will dance the *bhejja* with you
Give me a feather in the morning
And I will dance the *bhejja* with you.

36 Take your hand off, *juri*
My clothes are getting loose
Let them get loose, *juri*, let them come down
The time for dancing,
Is almost over.

Juri, in almost all the poems in this book, means a girl's boy-friend or a boy's girl-friend. A girl's *juri* is the boy she goes about with before her marriage and with whom she retires after the night's dancing and before each goes to sleep. It is against Uraon custom for a girl to marry her *juri* but relations between them sometimes overlap their marriage with others and last until the first child is born. Part of a newly married girl's excitement at going home to her village lies in the hours she may spend with her former *juri*.

37 How shameless you are, girl
To dance till your milk drips down
Dancing in the morning and the dawn
Till your milk drips down.

38 Thin are the clothes of the bad girl
And her clothes are coming down
She dances the *bhejja* in the morning
With her clothes coming down.

39 The red cocks are crowing
Crowing the whole night
Get up, sister-in-law, and light a lamp
What a heavy sleep has come on you.

The ' red cock ' is a gay and smartly got-up boy.

40 Like rain the grasshoppers are flying
And O the morning
July, August
And the grasshoppers are flying.

The grasshopper, jumping and chirruping, is a common symbol for a dancing boy. A Gond song uses the image for a beautiful singer with an ugly face:

Hark to the song of the grasshopper
How ugly to look at
How sweet to hear.

In which month sings the bird of sin ?
In which month sings the grasshopper ?[1]

while a Kamar song refers to a marriage party:

Tomorrow my Raja we will go to Chura Marhai
The grasshopper and the fly are going
The great drums will sound
And we will come home again.[2]

In a *hokku* of Kikaku, translated by Powys Mathers, the grasshopper is a lover calling to a mistress.

A grasshopper is singing
The little fan-seller
Climbs the tree to it.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 18. [2] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 74.

41 Five brothers
Why did you shoot the arrow?
The deer got away
Why did you shoot?

42 Blooming the gully
Thick the hillside
Dancing the brown deer comes
Shoot with the red bow
As the brown deer dances.

In almost all poetry, deer is a symbol for a lover or a girl. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* contains a charming passage in which Adonis is besought to be a deer and to graze within the pale of Venus:

'Fondling,' she saith, 'since I have hemmed thee here
'Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
'I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer;
'Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale:
'Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
'Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.

'Within this limit is relief enough,
'Sweet bottom grass and high delightful plain,
'Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,
'To shelter thee from tempest and from rain;
'Then be my deer, since I am such a park;
'No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.'

A Chinese poem in *The Book of Songs* uses the image of deer grazing on garlic as a parallel to a girl feeding her lover:

Yu, yum cry the deer
Nibbling the wild garlic of the fields,
I have a lucky guest.[1]

while the manner in which a Japanese *tanka* refers to young deer implies that they are lovers:

[1] Waley, *op. cit.*, 192.

The under leaves of the lespedeza
When the dew is gathering
Must be cold:
On the autumn moor
The young deer are crying.[1]

In a Dogra folk-song, the girl is a field which is continually visited by the deer who are her suitors:

Tonight my love!
Tonight, my love, you stay with me
At dawn you'll begin your journey.
Many a deer comes to my field
And eats away the corn.
While alone my heart trembles with fear
Tonight, my love, you stay with me.[2]

A similar use occurs in a Gond poem where a captured deer is a boy caught with a girl:

Someone is crying aloud,
In the field of wheat a deer is caught.
The man is running after it.
Go slowly, or you too will break your leg.[3]

In Baiga weddings, on the other hand, the deer is the bride and the act of consummation is 'the shooting with an arrow'. 'The Baiga make a rough representation of a deer out of sticks and leaves, and the husband shoots at it with a bow and arrow. If he hits it first shot they say his bride will stay with him; if he misses it they say she will run away.' [4] Equally, in Uraon betrothal dialogues, the bride is a deer whom the boy's party have wounded.

This use of 'deer' is by no means confined to Uraons, for Gonds, Pardhans and Baigas all use it constantly as a symbol for a girl.

[1] Arthur Waley, *Japanese Poetry* (2nd Edition, London, 1949), 95.
[2] Devendra Satyarthi, 'Dogra Folk-Songs', *The Rural India* (April 1942), 182.
[3] *Songs of the Forest*, 78.
[4] *The Baiga*, 280.

A Gond poem runs:

My pet deer looked at me with loving eyes
But I killed my deer with a bullet from my gun.[1]

In a Pardhan poem, the wild deer running into the forest is an image for a girl hurrying to her lover:

Do not talk to me so much,
The whole world knows you for a rascal.

As the wild deer runs into the forest,
So I will make you run after me,
I will bend you like a new bamboo.[2]

And a Baiga poem treats a village beauty as spoil to be trapped and taken:

O girl, you torment me, you are so deceiving!
And you stand there beautiful as the moon,
Yet as a deer is snared and killed
So I will snare you, for I have caught a thousand so.[3]

43 Where are you going, O pretty *juri*
On the cart with a tooth brush?
O *juri*, you are going to your father-in law's
On a cart with a tooth brush.

44 Who is the girl
Who watches cows
Calling *hio hio*
Below the hills?
It is a young girl
Tending cows
Calling *hio hio*
Below the hills.

45 What, Parbatia
What makes you go to a foreign land?
Here you have your *juri*
Here you have your lover
What makes you go to a foreign land?

The foreign land is Assam or Bhutan where the Uraons go for working in the tea gardens.

[1] *Songs of the Forest*, 106. [2] *Ibid*, 138. [3] *The Baiga*, 446.

46 Famine on the hill-side
And the girl does not talk
If she does not talk this year
If she does not talk next year
I must get myself another.

Compare a Gond Karma:

O you dumb girl, I would like to shake you.
Even a cat says *maiow maiow* !
Even a fox cries *feh feh* !
But you dumb girl say nothing,
and I'd like to shake you.[1]

Another Gond song says:

How close is the bamboo to its parts
If you can't talk to me, what can we be to one another ?[2]

47 Your daughter has gone on the loose, old woman
Don't you think it will reflect on you ?
It will reflect on you
Go and get her a husband at once.

48 Which is that street that is not to be visited
Where a young man was smothered in a cloak of leaves ?
The daughter of the old widow
Covered a young man with a lid.

49 Girl, who will scold you
Going always with your grandfather ?
The aunt and the uncle will scold you
For going about with your grandfather.

[1] *Songs of the Forest*, 102. [2] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 106.

MEETINGS

50 Hail is beating down
Come into the hut, girl
In the morning the hail
Oh come inside the hut.

51 What a grand girl you are
But you are new to the village
Do not go to the rice lands, girl
A jackal waits there in the morning
Girl, do not go down to the rice lands.

Jackals are common symbols for mischievous boys. In an Uraon play-song a monkey and a jackal are boys who wait for girls:

Watching the palm
Watching the *karanj*
The monkey and the jackal
Watching, watching.

In an Ahir birha, a wolf plays an equally sinister role:

Rats nibble the flour
Cats lap up the milk
Girls, look to your little bosoms
A wolf lurks in the *rahar*.[1]

While a Gond dandar pata has a similar implied meaning:

On every side is the great forest:
The foxes are running to and fro,
But even so, friend, I shall go into the forest.[2]

52 Who hit you with a fig?
Nephew, you are very quiet
In the morning, a girl hit you
Hit you with a fig
You are keeping very quiet, my nephew.

[1] An Ahir birha in Bhojpuri from the Shahabad district of Bihar. Original in *J.R.A.S.* 1886, Vol. 18, 228, article by Sir G.A. Grierson.
[2] *Songs of the Forest*, 99.

53 Haere that headstrong girl
Off to the fig tree
That wilful girl
Off to the fig tree.

The fig is a common image which at times symbolizes the breasts and is elsewhere a symbol for a girl's sex. Compare the Ahir birha :

Friend, the young mangoes swell on the tree
And the fruit forms on the fig
Her budding breasts
Strain on the fair-skinned girl
To be the toy of her lover.[1]

In the two Uraon poems, ' hitting the boy with a fig ' means the girl's effect on the boy while ' running off to the fig tree ' is for meeting a lover.

Campbell in his account of Santal marriages notes that when a Santal couple return to the village after an elopement, the headman says that ' the fig-eaters have returned '.[2]

54 A fat rabbit sprang out
On the slope of the hill
In the morning the rabbit
On the slope of the hill.

Rabbit is here a term for a girl.

55 Kaila, go and cut some grass
The horse of the girls is coming
In the morning cut some grass
The horse of the girls is coming.

56 Come out of the tree, girl
A big horse is coming
In the morning come down
A big horse is coming.

[1] An Ahir birha in Bhojpuri from Shahabad. Original in *J.R.A.S.* 1886, Vol. 18, 223, article by Sir G.A. Grierson.
[2] A. Campbell, 'Santal Marriage Customs', *J.B.O.R.S.*, II (1916).

In the Maikal Hills, write Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale, "the horse is not only an object of religious veneration, connected with the ecstatic trance, lucky and pure, but it also has important sexual properties. The stallion scares away the demon of barrenness. In the Ramayana, Kausalya touches a stallion in the hope of getting a son, and a king and queen smell the odour of the burnt fat of a horse with the same purpose. During the Ashvamedha the queen lies at night beside the slain sacrificial horse. To the Gond and Pardhan a horse is full of sexual associations. "When we look at a horse we think of sex." The marriage songs are full of references to the animal, most of them very coarse. It is said that a woman will always be one of the seven kinds of horse—*argal*, which carries its rider quickly to the law-court; *nangin*, in whose presence wealth soon leaves the home; *tanhi*, which kills its owner; *rikarshin* with a longtooth, a devil which should be sold as soon as possible; *jeher*, which kills any companion; *godda*, which is quarrelsome and cannot be tamed; and *padam*, the lotus horse which has white marks on the legs and is lucky and auspicious.'[1]

In the poetry of Middle India, the horse is usually a symbol for a girl while her lover is the rider. A Gond poem says:

> A young mare won't let herself be saddled
> Your jealous husband won't let you smile at me.[2]

In a Gond dadaria, the saddling of a colt is a symbol for the act of sex:

> The blue colt
> Won't let you saddle it
> The new bride
> Won't let you do it.[3]

In a Kafir song, a mare competes in beauty with a girl:

> Your eyes are black like water-melon pips,
> Your lips are red like the red flesh of water-melons
> Your loins are smooth like smooth-rind water-melons
> You are more beautiful than my favourite among mares
> Your buttocks are sleeker and firmer,
> Like her your movements are on legs of light steel.[4]

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 210-1.
[2] *Ibid*, 106.
[3] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 85.
[4] Powys Mathers, *Love Songs of Asia* (London, 1944), 72.

Baiga poetry also refers expressly to the girl ridden by her lover:

Cut a green bamboo
Pull off the bark,
Get a bed ready;
A bed with four legs,
At midnight there's a lovely girl
Sleeping on the bed.
At midnight her lover
Mounts his horse and rides away.[1]

And again:

Your horse is like the moon,
Its rider shines as the lightning.
Your body is bright as the sun
My heart weeps for love of you.[2]

In Uraon poems, on the other hand, as also in certain poems of other countries, the horse is a symbol of the male. Lorca in his *Dialogue of a Manikin and a Young Man* makes the cloth woman say:

You lie! It is your fault.
You could have been to me
leaden colt and foam
the air broken in the brake
and the sea tied up in the croup.
You could have been a neighing stallion
and you are a sleeping pond,
with dry leaves and moss
where this dress rots.[3]

A Geisha song translated by Powys Mathers speaks of

A horse tied by the bridle
To a flowering cherry.
When he shakes his head
There falls a snow of flowers,
Flower snow,
A snow of flowers.

[1] *The Baiga*, 263. [2] *Ibid*, 249.
[3] Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili, *Poems*: *F. Garcia Lorca* (London, 1939), 87.

While a Chinese poem from *The Book of Songs* uses a colt as a parallel for a lover:

Unsullied the white colt
Eating the young shoots of my stack-yard
Keep it tethered, keep it tied
All day long.
The man whom I love
Here makes holiday.[1]

In Uraon society, a horse with erect member is sometimes a village emblem and I recall one village with a massive dormitory, gloomy with towering trees, in which such an emblem sinister in its virility, looked down on the smooth-swept dancing floor.

57 Girl, at the water fall
The green fishes are coming
Cast the net, girl
As slowly they come.

58 As you go to the cattle
Do not leave the door wide open
The girl's mistress is in the room
Do not leave the door open.

Just as in poem 308, the brown cow is a girl, ' cattle ' is a term which often means a group of girls.

59 The shining girl
Has gone to pick *champa* blossom
For the bhandi jatra the shining girl
Has gone to pick *champa* flowers.

60 The *koel* and *dhichua* go together [2]
In the midnight, the midnight
The *koel* and the *dhichua* go together.

The *koel* and the *dhichua* are common symbols for a boy or a girl and like the parrot, they refer sometimes to the boy and sometimes to the girl.

[1] *The Book of Songs*, 194.
[2] *Koel*, the Indian hawk-cuckoo.
Dhichua, the king crow.

61 You will laugh and joke
But the thing you want, brother, can't be done
In the morning you will joke.
But that thing can't be done.

62 Brother, where have you been ?
The girl's tears are falling
In the morning, brother, O younger brother
The girl's tears are falling.

THE ENCOUNTER OF LOVERS

63 Girl
The white blossom in the ear
Will it last ?
The scarlet on the brow
Will stay till death
Will the white blossom in the ear
Last ?

Scarlet is the marriage mark while a flower in the ear means the years before marriage when a girl can go with a boy as much as she likes.

64 A crab has bitten you, girl
Who will tend you ?
Your *juri* is not here
Who will tend you ?

65 Bitten by a crab, girl
Who will dress it for you ?
Your husband is away in Bhutan
Who will dress it for you ?

' Biting by a crab ' is intercourse with a lover.

66 In a small *bar* tree
Grows a *pipal*
How shall I cut the *pipal* branches
Give me, mother, a knife of gold
I will cut down every branch
I will carry off every leaf.

Bar and *Pipal* trees often grow together. The *pipal* growing in the *bar* tree is the girl in her parents' house. The knife is obviously phallic.

67 Flowers of the *bar* tree grow in clusters
Flowers of the *champa* grow alone
I went for picking
How was it I was overwhelmed ?

For ' picking flowers ', see poem 5.

KARAM POEMS

KARAM POEMS [1]

THE KARAM festival occurs in August and is described by Dalton as follows:

'On the first day of the feast the villagers must not break their fast till certain ceremonies have been performed. In the evening, a party of young people, of both sexes, proceed to the forest, and cut a young Karma tree, or the branch of one, bearing which they return in triumph, dancing, and singing, and beating drums, and plant it in the middle of the "Akhra". After the performance of a sacrifice to the Karma Deota by the Pahn, the villagers feast, and the night is passed in dancing and revelry. Next morning all may be seen at an early hour in holiday array; the elders in groups, under the fine old tamarind trees that surround the Akhra; and the youth of both sexes, arm-linked in a huge circle, dancing round the Karma tree, which, festooned with garlands, decorated with strips of coloured cloth and sham bracelets and necklets of plaited straw, and with the bright faces and merry laughter of the young people encircling it, reminds one of the gift-bearing tree so often introduced at our own great festival. Preparatory to the festival, the daughters of the head men of the village cultivate blades of barley in a peculiar manner. The seed is sown in moist, sandy soil, mixed with a quantity of turmeric, and the blades sprout and unfold of a pale yellow or primrose colour. On the Karma day, these blades are taken up by the roots, as if for transplanting, and carried in baskets by the fair cultivators to the Akhra. They approach the Karma tree, and, prostrating themselves reverentially, place before it some of the plants. They then go round the company, and, like bridesmaids distributing wedding favours, present to each person a few of the yellow barley blades, and all soon appear, wearing, generally in their hair, this distinctive decoration of the festival. Then all join merrily in the Karma dances, and malignant, indeed, must be the Bhut who is not propitia-

[1] Frazer in *The Golden Bough* (abridged edition, London), 342-3, links the barley blades to the gardens of Adonis and states, 'The meaning of planting these barley blades and then presenting them to the Karma tree is hardly open to question. Trees are supposed to exercise a quickening influence upon the growth of crops. Therefore, when the Mundas bring in a tree and treat it with so much respect, their object can only be to foster thereby the growth of the rice and the custom of causing barley blades to sprout rapidly and then presenting them to the tree must be intended to subserve the same purpose, perhaps by reminding the tree-spirit of his duty towards the crops, and stimulating his activity by this visible example of rapid vegetable growth.'

ted by so attractive an ovation. The morning revel closes with the removal of the Karma; it is taken away by the merry throng and thrown into a stream or a tank, but after another feast, dancing and drinking are resumed; and on the following morning, the effects of the two nights dissipation are often, I fear, very palpable.

'At the Karma feast the children are all presented with new garments, but lightly clad as they are, the expense of this to pater familias is not ruinous.'[1]

[1] Dalton, *op. cit.*, 259.

68 Today came the Karam
And was grand in the stream
Karam, tomorrow you will go
To the banks of the Ganges.

69 While you were here, Karam
The boys and girls were full of joy
Now you are going, Karam
All the boys and girls are sad.

70 Yesterday you came, Karam
Today you go
To the banks of the Ganges you go
Yesterday you came, Karam
Today you go.

71 In the mother's country
The Karam has come
The house of the father-in-law
Has gone far away.

The meaning is that in the general joy of Karam the girl has forgotten the father-in-law's house and all its cares.

72 Come, pahan's wife
The pot shines
The scarlet flashes
I have no oil
I have no scarlet
The pot is shining
The scarlet flashes.

73 In the Karam days it does not rain
Only a drizzle falls
I have put the white dhoti in a box
And the rain drizzles.

74 On the Karam day it does not rain
The rain is the shining water
The rain is the glittering water.

The water is the drenching given to the pahan.

75 Girl, in the Karam basket
Your baby boy is crying
Your baby boy is crying
The boy is his father
The girl is his mother
The baby boy is crying.

76 Whose husband is coming
On the sides of the tank ?
It is my husband I say
My husband
No it is not your husband
It is not my husband
It is the Karam drunkard coming.

77 Within the garden a tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers [1]
Ankle deep the tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers
Knee deep the tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers
Thigh deep the tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers
Waist deep the tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers
Chest deep the tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers
Neck deep the tank is dug
Seven wives wash with the seven brothers.

78 Seven the brothers
Planting the seven Karams
Seven the wives
Tending, tending
The brother is hanging the drum
The sister is tying her hair
The cloth at the waist
Is dangling to the ground.

[1] For an account of the Karam legend of the seven brothers, see S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), 244-5. Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale give further accounts of the legend among the Bhuiyas of Keonjhar and Bonai States (*Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 4-6).

79 Raja, you cleared an akhra at a distant place
Shining the Karam comes
At a distant place you cleared the akhra
The seven sisters walk together
The seven cobras wave their hoods.

Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale have pointed out that some symbols which might be expected to depend on obvious sexual associations actually refer to quite different matters. 'It is woman, not man who appears as a snake in the songs. The conventional phallic meaning is lost beneath an accumulation of legends about the snake damsel and the poison-maid.'[1] A Pardhan song uses cobra as an image of beauty:

Enchanter, for what fault of mine
Are you beating me
Lying on their bed the two embrace
The girl is lovely as a cobra
Why are you beating me?

And in Uraon poems, 'cobra' is always an image of a woman.

80 You planted a Karam, sister
For your brother, your brother
Your brother gambled and lost
O girl, he has lost you
It is you he has lost.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 113-4. [2] *Ibid*, 152.

81 From where have you come, *maina* ?
And where were you born ?
From Rohtas fort you came, *maina*
In Nagpur you laid your eggs
From the father's loins you came, *maina*
From the mother's womb were you born.

For Rohtas fort and its place in Uraon traditions, see the introduction. In a Gond song, a *maina* or starling is also a girl :

O playful *maina*, don't go to that village
She shouldn't go there, should she, parrot ?
The Raja's son there is too free a lover.[1]

82 Your little sister
Is weeping for a heron's feather
Brother, buy it for her you must
Who else will give it to her ?

83 When I was small, elder brother
Where is my sister ?
You used to say
Now you have a beautiful wife, elder brother
You do not answer me
You do not even speak to me.

84 Brother, the flower the girl gave you
Keep it till tomorrow
At a flower that the girl saw
You can keep on gazing
Keep it till tomorrow.

85 A dish of crab
Is enough for some
But not enough for all
For the aunt kill a fowl
For the uncle kill a pig
For some it's enough
But not enough for all.

[1] *Ibid*, 37.

86 Haere
My daughter's hair dangles
I will not marry her to a Tirki
The Tirkis dazzle the girls with their flutes
I will not marry her to a Tirki.[1]

87 Tiko O Tiko Manatu
From Tiko Manatu you went
With the sound of trumpets
With the sound of drums
With the sound of flutes and pipes.

88 In every house
Sound the drums and the trumpets
My house is silent
No son no daughter have I
My house is silent.

89 The bamboo, the bamboo
And its shoots sprout with rain
The stupid mother
What trouble she has in bearing a son.

The meaning is that bamboos can multiply easily, so why should not a woman? Bamboos are a common symbol for a woman, the swaying of their stems corresponding to a girl's swinging walk. Uraon mothers normally bear children with very little fuss or trouble.

90 O you smart young man
How lucky your forehead
In only six months to be getting a son
In Magh you gave the scarlet
And in only six months you have a son.

The meaning, of course, was that the girl was already pregnant when he married her.

91 O my lack of luck
O my fate
To be a widow
And so young.

92 Korwa of the jungle
You kill tigers with the seeds of flowers
O Asur and Korwa, you have made a name
For killing tigers with the seeds of flowers.

[1] An Uraon sept, meaning 'young mice'.

THE MOTHER AND FATHER

93 While the mother lives
And the father lives
I shall dance and play, mother
The mother is dead
The father is dead
As gold is my trouble
As silver is my care.

94 While the father lived
While the mother lived
I played with a fan of gold[1]
I played with a fan of silver
The mother died
The father died
The golden fan is lost
The silver fan is lost.

[1] A fan for winnowing.

95 She is only a little girl
Do her hair well
Inside is the elder brother-in-law
Outside is the father-in-law
Do her hair well.

96 Beyond the Koel you married your sister
Do you ever visit her ?
One day I went and they did not kill a fowl
Since then I never go.

97 Mother, from the father-in-law's
I will go to a foreign land
If I live I will send you a letter
If I die I will send you dreams.

98 Beating me, mother
Scolding me
Where can I go now, mother ?
Let only the month of Magh come, mother
And I shall take the train to the other land.

99 In the garden a cat is mewing
Mother, the mice are dancing
Husband, if you will keep me I will stay
If you do not keep me, I will go away
I will stay at the door of my brother.

In this poem, the cat is a boy and the mice are girls.

MARRIAGE

100 Mother my darling, father my darling
How much longer must I stay a bachelor ?
Slowly, slowly, my boy
In Baisi Nagpur we will marry you.

101 Brother, the enemies are coming
They are asking for a bride
From State to State
They are asking for a bride
From country to country
With what pain you bore me, mother
And now you give me to the soldiers.

' Enemies ' and ' soldiers ' are stock images for the party and envoys of the bridegroom.

102 The king, the enemy
The enemy is coming
How shall I sleep, mother
How shall I sleep ?

103 Under a tamarind
I spread some paddy
And the greedy sparrows come
Drawing the bow I shot
Would you kill me by drawing your bow ?
With my wings I shall fly away
Would you kill me by drawing your bow ?
I shall fall on the banks of the Jamuna.

The paddy is the girl and the sparrows are boys or suitors. The meaning is that the girl's father will try to ' kill ' a suitor so that her marriage may be finished.

In English poetry also the sparrow is a common symbol for a lover and in Skelton's lament it acts as a lover substitute:

Alas, mine heart it sleth,
My Philips doleful death!
When I remember it,
How prettily it would sit,
Many times and oft,
Upon my finger aloft!
I played with him tittle-tattle,
And fed him with my spattle,
With his bill between my lips.
It was my pretty Phips!
Many a pretty kuss
Had I of his sweet muss!
And now the cause is thus,
That he is slain me fro,
To my great pain and woe.

Dylan Thomas in *The Map of Love* tinges 'sparrow' with a similar significance: 'The madman remembered the inflections of her voice, heard again her frock rustling, and saw the terrible curve of her breast. His own breathing thundered in his ears. The girl on the bench beckoned to the sparrows.'

In much Indian poetry, on the other hand, the sparrow is a symbol of a girl. Devendra Satyarthi states: 'The sparrow has its own place in Pathan village life. The Pushto word for it, *chanchana*, is often given to a girl as her name. Little girls have a peculiar taste for the sparrow's chirping notes. Thus the sparrow has become an emblem of an unmarried girl, free from all worldly anxieties.'[1]

A Punjab marriage song compares a girl to a sparrow leaving its land:

We are a flight of sparrows,
Father, we'll fly away:
Far is the distance we must go a-flying;
Father, tell us to which land we are going.[2]

In a Gond song, a sparrow is a girl who has captivated a boy but is not responding to his looks.

[1] Devendra Satyarthi, 'Song-Harvest from Pathan Country', *The Modern Review* (1935), 579.
[2] Devendra Satyarthi, 'My Village Still Sings', *Man in India*, xxiii, 44.

Sparrow, you have bewitched me
If you do not understand the message of my eyes
I will poke you with my stick.[1]

104 They say my daughter has no tail
Will she be married ?
They say she has no tail
Do they pad their girl with a switch ?

The switch is the bushy tail of a yak which young Uraons often tie to their shoulders when dancing.

105 Go I will, mother
Go I will
I will start at the sound of the buffaloes
I will start at the sound of the cows
Sad and poor is my brother
Where shall we hear the sound of buffaloes
Where shall we hear the sound of cows ?

The ' buffaloes ' and ' cows ' are the girl's party arriving at the house. If the family is too poor there will be no wedding and therefore no arrival. ' Starting at the sound ' is the boy's party going to meet them.

[1] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 198.

106 Reared by the mother the dove
Reared by the father the pigeon
Is in a cage of gold
Is in a cage of silver
From the cage it came out
And perched on a banyan
In the kingdom it calls
In the country it calls.

The dove and the pigeon are symbols of the girl.

107 Reared by the mother the peacock
Reared by the father the peacock
The peacock has gone to the jungle
The peacock has gone to the forest
O peacock, why are you hiding ?
The lovely brother is beaten
The lovely brother is beaten.

108 Small is the river, mother
But the sand is sent crashing away
As the sand goes
So does time.

109 Small is the river, mother
But the sand is whirled
Away to the sea.

110 The storm has come, girl
And is whirling away the brother
Say a prayer, girl
And God will give him back.

111 Every one else's girl has come
Has our girl come?
In the morning the girls have come
Has our girl come?

112 Like a red flower
Sounds the drum
In the dark
Sounds the flute
Sleep does not come
At the drum's sound
The drowsy girl
Comes to look.

113 Sister, let us dance
The father and mother
Will come and watch
At night no one saw
But in the day
The father and mother
Will come and watch us
They will come and watch us
In the day.

114 Light the lamps, the lamps
Light the green lamps
The boys and girls
Have forgotten themselves in dancing
And the lamps are going out.

115 Brother
The *bhejja* dance was too much for you
The cattle are within
In the morning you yielded to the *bhejja*
And the cattle are within.

116 Young man, in dafadar's service[1]
You are always after the girls
With the company's money
And the Sahib's service
You are always after the girls.

117 In the Las upland they hunt
In the Ruko ghat they fire their guns
The big deer has got away
The little one has been shot.[2]

118 Brother, in our courtyard
The red marigolds bloom like a cock
Let them bloom, sister
I will catch anyone who tries to pick them.

Marigolds are often worn in the hair by aboriginal girls and a Gond song asks

Who can give oil for your marigold-beautiful hair?

But besides being aids to beauty, they are also symbols in poetry for lovely girls. A Santal song warns a youth:

Boy, you are walking in the village street
You are strolling up and down
To right and left of you are marigolds
But do not take them in your eyes.[3]

In a Gond Karma a girl is addressed as a marigold.

My marigold, you made me love you
Then you forget me, filling your hair with flowers
When I remember your dear ways
Pain fills my heart
My diamond
Your pure body will one day be mixed with dust.[4]

[1] Dafadar, a head chaukidar or watchman. The company is the recruiting agency which arranges for the supply of labour to the tea gardens in Assam and Bhutan.

[2] Compare poems 41 and 42.

[3] W. G. Archer, 'Festival Songs', *Man in India*, XXIV, 74.

[4] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 55.

This connection of marigolds with sex is not confined to India for according to an Elizabethan song attributed to Hunnis,

Marigold is for marriage
That would our minds suffice,
Less that suspicion of us twain
By any means should rise.[1]

In a similar but more elaborate vein Carew also writes

Mark how the bashful morn in vain
Courts the amorous marigold
With sighing blasts and weeping rain,
Yet she refuses to unfold
But when the planet of the day
Approacheth with his powerful ray
Then she spreads, then she receives
His warmer beams into her virgin leaves.

119 Basia and beautiful girls
Let us go to Basia
In Basia the autumn paddy is almost ripe
Let us go to Basia.

120 Under the tamarind, mother
Is a lovely girl
Go and look, mother
At the firefly girl.

121 It has rained and grown muddy
And a girl stands below the *karanj*
Go and look at her
She is like a firefly.

122 Drizzling drizzling the rain falls
And the heart of the fair-skinned girl is sad
Why is your heart sad, O fair-skinned girl ?
Come into our country
And the rain is drizzling down.

[1] Norman Ault, *Elizabethan Lyrics* (London, 1928), 67.

In almost all poetry 'rain' is a symbol of the male act while the sight of falling rain heightens the pangs of absence. In a Japanese *hokku* by Kikaku, rain reminds a woman of her lover:

A rainy day
The lonely woman
Looks from her window.[1]

In an English ballad, wind and rain evoke 'memory and desire':

The wind doth blow today, my love
And a few small drops of rain
I never had but one true-love,
In cold grave she was lain.[2]

In a Chinese poem, there is similar symbolism:

Oh, for rain, Oh, for rain!
And instead the sun shines dazzling
All this longing for Po
Brings weariness to the heart, aching to the head.[3]

While an Arab camel-boy song uses thunder without rain as an image of frustration:

The poison wind has blown all day
As the sun went down
It swelled the silks of Lubna
Like the breast of a dove,
But she did not move her veil
Or turn her head.
The cloud has passed above us without granting water
Its thunder has grumbled without spreading rain.[4]

In a similar manner a Baiga poem runs:

Take me to some country that I have never seen
Where, O my love, the thunder roars
Where, O my love, the lightning flickers
And the rain pours down.[5]

[1] Translated by E. Powys Mathers.
[2] Quoted by Herbert Read, *Phases of English Poetry* (London, 1928), 23.
[3] Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs*, 50.
[4] Translated by E. Powys Mathers.
[5] *The Baiga*, 447.

123 Girl, from Dandu comes a drum
A starling girl
A peacock girl
Is coming
Girl, look over your shoulder
A starling
A peacock girl
Is coming.

124 Walk in the streets
Walk in the streets
But do not go to the girls
In the girls' quarter
Are love charms
Do not go to the girls.

125 On the steep hillside, girl
Is a virgin pumpkin
Don't tell any one, *juri*
Or we shall blush with shame.

Baiga poems also use the pumpkin as an image for the breasts:

Long, long are the pumpkins
They are milky and long.
He sleeps all night with me,
But in the day he calls me sister
Often, often he plays with my firm breasts.
They are his playthings.[1]

[1] *The Baiga*, 266.

126 I have come to fetch you, girl
Will you come or not ?
I may or may not come
I have a boy, *juri.*

127 Mother, for my *juri* I am breaking my anklet
When I see my husband, the tears fall
When I see my *juri* my heart is soothed.

128 You are always running away, girl
In the grove of jackfruit you hide
In the plantain grove you stay
I will beat you with a stick, girl
You will feel as if your life had left you
You will feel as if your life had gone.

A Binjhwar Baiga told Verrier Elwin that ' he had dreamt that he had pushed a stick into a small earthern pot and splashed the water violently and that this dream symbolized intercourse with a virgin.'[1]

A Gond Saila makes a similar use of the stick symbol.

Roly Joly ! Roly Joly !
O love, the moon has risen, how happy we may be
The little well sinks down,
The stick rises into the air
Roly Joly ! Roly Joly ! [2]

Compare also a Baiga poem :

He is whirling his stout stick in the air
Without a wife, a man pines away, O friend.[3]

and a Pardhan dadaria :

My stick is caught in the mango tree
And all the branches shake
But of the stick there is no sign.[4]

[1] *The Baiga*, 420.
[2] *Songs of the Forest*, 125.
[3] *The Baiga*, 440.
[4] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 109.

129 Girl, you are always meeting trouble
Now you are going to pick *munga*
They will tie you up and beat you
And you will feel as if your heart were dead.

The *munga* tree (*Moringa pterygospherma*) has white flowers half an inch in size with orange stamens and soft white lips. Its leaves are like a tamarind's and its fruit lengthens out into a long ribbed pod about a foot in length like a stick. These pods hang in bunches from the boughs. Leaves, flowers and fruit are all eaten. 'Going to pick *munga*,' possibly because of its phallic pods, is always a synonym for a love intrigue.

130 Give him water, mother
Give him water
The flirting boy
Dances the jhumar all the night
And thirsty he comes.

Compare poems 272 and 296 where 'thirst' is also a synonym for desire. In the following Baiga poems, there is an even clearer connection:

O my love, drink as much water as you can
And enjoy me.
As much as anyone could enjoy in all his life time.[1]

In the middle of the court grows the *pipal.*
Pick the fruit and eat it.
And now, my girl, I feel very thirsty.
Tell me where I can get water.
My love is going to the well for water.
Her lover catches her and steals her water.[2]

131 Sister-in-law
Come and fish with me
Brother-in-law
I will not go
I shall get muddy
Sister-in-law
Come and fish with me
Like gold is the heart
Like blossom the clothes
O sister-in-law come with me and fish.

Among Uraons, to ask a girl to come fishing is to ask her to accept a lover.

[1] *The Baiga*, 263. [2] *Ibid.*, 449.

132 ' Let me have you, girl ' I say
' It is muddy ' you answer
' Come later, *juri* ' you say
Coming I shall come
But where shall I wait ?
Under the *karanj* tree
I will wait
Water drips through the *karanj*
Under the tamarind I will wait.

The Uraon use of the ' mud ' image is very close to English. Dylan Thomas writes :

> ' For shame of the half-liquid plants sprouting from the bog, the pen-drawn poisons seething in the grass, and the copulation in the second mud, the children blushed.'

Among Uraons, also, mud is tinged with sex, the term referring to the girl who is damaged or deceived by a lover or is exposed to tribal penalties from being caught. The place is muddy not because it is full of slush but because the act will besmirch her character and ruin her reputation.

A Baiga dadaria employs the image in a way exactly similar :

The village street is deep in mud
The girl's chin is smeared with dirt
For her lover has deceived her.[1]

While a Gond song suggests that mud itself should cover the girl whom a lover has betrayed :

The rain is drizzling slowly,
But it brings down the mud on the river's bank.
O river-bank, bury me beneath that mud,
For now I never more desire a lover.[2]

In another Gond song, mud and slush provide ' a sympathetic setting ' :

Softly, softly the rain is falling
The yard is full of mud and slush
Beloved, here is water, wash your feet
And softly creep into my bed.[3]

[1] *The Baiga*, 441. [2] *Songs of the Forest*, 88. [3] *The Baiga*, 254.

133 Brother-in-law
Come to the plot of brinjals
Sister-in-law
I will not go
The thorns will prick.

In Uraon poetry, brinjals are symbols for the breasts and also for a girl, while a garden of brinjals is both a trysting place and a girl herself.

Thorns are equally symbolic, the thorn serving as an image of the lover's sex. A Kamar marriage song, for example, exhorts the bride:

When you see the long thorn
Lift up your legs
To save yourself, work hard
To save yourself.[1]

A Santal song records a dialogue:

O mother's brother
Through the great forest we went together
A thorn stuck in my left foot
O mother's brother
Take my thorn out
O my girl
Where has the thorn stuck?
What has happened to you?
O mother's brother
Take out the thorn from between my thighs.[2]

A Gond poem refers to what may happen when a girl goes to her lover.

Under the dark tree grows a thorn,
The drum is dangling at my waist O
In whom shall we hope?
In whom shall we trust?
Trust no one but your friend.
A new drum is dangling at my waist O.[3]

[1] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 87.
[2] W. G. Archer, 'Santal Poetry', *Man in India*, XXIII (1943), 105.
[3] *Songs of the Forest*, 54.

Yet another Gond song employs the brinjal setting and implies an encounter, 'unreproved and undesired'.

She went to pick brinjals
A black thorn pierced her
She went to pick brinjals
The black heifer pierced her
Bring a knife, bring a thorn
To remove the thorn from her—
Run, folks, run to remove it from her.[1]

In a poem translated by George Reavey, Paul Eluard links the sexual symbol of thunder with the symbol of the thorn:

In one corner the nimble incest
Hovers round the virginity of a small dress
In one corner the sky unbridled
Abandons white balls to thorns of thunder.

134 You went to cut bamboos
O smart young lover
With a clasp in your hair
You climbed the hill
You started to ogle
O smart young lover
Waving your hand
Circling round.

135 Brindaban has a bamboo hedge
I will keep you, girl, during my bachelor days
If only I had known my friends would leave me
And you such a big deceiver.

136 Go, *juri*,
Go, girl,
Go you must
Come again at Karam
Go I will but where shall I stay?
You will stay below the *karanj*
You will spread a small cloth
And wrap a big one round you
Your cloak of leaves will shield you.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 128.

137 To the Karam dancing you do not come
At the Japi dances, you come and pinch me
Once you are with child, girl
You will stay at home and watch the house
How long will your youth last?
Come and see a ghost, girl
You say a girl's life has no joy.

138 My lover has gone to the foreign land
How can I go with my dewar?[1]
My dewar is like my eldest son
How can I go with him?

[1] Dewar, husband's younger brother. Shamrao Hivale has made a detailed study of this relationship in his paper 'The Dewar-Bhauji Relationship', *Man in India*, XXIII (1943), 157-67.

139 In the Jhail hills, brother
The elephant is climbing
Let him climb, let him climb
He climbs to see the land
He climbs to see the country.

140 Where is the big horse tethered ?
Where is my friend left ?
The big horse
Is left in the forest
Where is my friend ?

141 Where is the big horse left ?
Where is my brother left ?
The big horse is left at the door
My brother is left at the window.[1]

142 On the head a pad
On the pad a pot
Elder sister
Come and fetch water
You have no sister
You have no neighbour
Who has put the pot on your head ?

143 In the courtyard you have sunk a well, elder brother
How shall I drink water
The rope is broken
The pot is broken
How shall I drink water ?

'In India', Devendra Satyarthi has said 'the well is a social institution. Here the women, escaping briefly the narrow routine of domestic life, gather to fill jars of red earthenware that roughly follow very ancient models, and to exchange the gossip of the day. If the poets and story-tellers are to be believed, many a romance has begun at the well. For though she may be closely veiled . . . .

[1] For a note on the 'horse' as a symbol for a lover, see poem 56.

a woman looks her best as she walks erect, with her jar on her head erect with stately dignity, for she would not waste a drop. The jar is heavy and fragile. The face under the heavy vessel often shows the strain of its weight and the ground about each fountain has its tale of broken pitchers . . . . And the eyes of the young men turn toward the village maidens as they pass to the well.'[1]

What is true of Dogra society is equally true of aboriginal. A Baiga poem says:

> When she draws water from the well,
> She has to struggle with the heavy bucket.
> But how beautiful to watch her doing so.[2]

And a Gond song declares:

> How shapely is the pitcher on its stand
> How sweet my water-girl down by the well.[3]

It is partly for this reason that village boys like to linger by a well.

> O the water of the well
> And your pot by the well
> How they envy you and me
> Stand a little way away
> From far your friend
> Helps you in drawing water
> Afar afar your watcher watches you.[4]

But besides assisting a girl to show off her figure, a well is also a convenient trysting place for lovers for not only does it provide a girl with an excuse for going out but it often takes her out of view of the village street:

> O water girl with tinkling anklets,
> You are walking to and fro
> Go and fetch water, for the dusk is falling,
> I will meet you at the lonely well.[5]

[1] Devendra Satyarthi, 'Dogra Folk-Songs', *The Rural India* (April, 1942), 182-3.
[2] *The Baiga*, 250.
[3] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 134.
[4] *Ibid.*, 265.
[5] *The Baiga*, 261.

It is not surprising therefore, that in tribal poetry the well is both a setting for lovers and a symbol of the girl's sex. A Gond dadaria, for example, upbraids a girl:

O little well, you give no water
Your youth is past.
Think well, your youth is ended.[1]

while a Dhanwar song says of a girl who is now of age:

She still
Looks like a parrot
But the well
Is full of water now.[2]

144 In whose courtyard are the swings?
The swings are the lover's beauty
In the courtyard are the swings
The swings are the lover's beauty.

In a comment on a Kangra painting in the collection of Samarendra Nath Gupta, O.C. Ganguly states: 'The vital feelings of delight of the youthful damsel find appropriate expression in the pleasures of the swing (Hindora),' and in support of this contention he appends a poem by Padumakar:

Swelled with elation like a shrub in flower is this damsel of sixteen
swinging to and fro as in the 'play of love-union'
Says Padumakar: Each push sends her jingling, which fills the air
with the music of her girdle.
Her busts heave as she goes up and down. Her waist dances and
begets a fill of desire.
Sometimes she pictures the manner of the 'play in reverse'
And sometimes of the attentive student who swings as he recites
his lessons.[3]

Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale have also stressed the erotic character of the swing in Gond poetry.[4]

[1] *Songs of the Forest*, 86. [2] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 16.
[3] O. C. Ganguly, *Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*, comment to plate XXXIX.
[4] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 145-6.

145 The new girl
Has gone to pick berries
Has gone to pick berries
Whether she picks them or not
She will stand with a hook
She will stand with a basket.

146 The two gotnis
Go for water to the spring
Go for water to the spring
The younger rani
Is weeping gold
The elder rani
Is shedding
Diamond tears.

147 To buy a drum
You go in the dark night
The black night
Sister-in-law, do not scold him
The streams and rivers glitter.

148 The daughter of the rani of Sambalpur
Makes garlands of sun-flowers like the moon
I made a garland
I wore the garland
But as I wandered to the spring
A lover stopped me.

149 A crab has bitten you, girl
Who will save you
Who will save you ?
Your husband has gone to a foreign land
Who will save you, girl ?
You will fret in your heart
Who will save you ?

150 I went to pick flowers, mother
But I am coming with an empty basket
When they will ask for flowers
What shall I offer them and
What shall I not ?

151 Girl, you went to pick flowers
And the crab hole tempted you
Now you are struggling
Struggling in the crab hole.

152 You went to pick flowers, girl
And yielded to the crab hole
The crab caught you
Who will free you ?
Your boy is in the other land
Who will save you ?

153 You went to pick flowers, girl
But you yielded to the tiger's den
In the tiger's den
You struggle and tumble.

154 You went to pick a flower, girl
But the flower was faded
When you were in your parent's house
How lovely were the flowers then.

In Western literature the tiger is often a sexual image symbolizing the wild passion of a lover or the onset of desire. Frederic Prokosch, for example, refers to ' tigerish desires ' and, in *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, Theophile Gautier describes the birth of a lecherous son to a docile mother : ' The dove has given birth to a tiger who looks upon the whole creation as his prey.' In a similar manner, George Barker invokes ' my nine-tiered tigress in the cage of sex '.

In Uraon poetry, also, the tiger and leopard are symbols of the ferocious lover.

155 You set out for the Karam
But the den of the leopard lured you
In the crab's hole you tumble a girl
In the crab's hole you rock with her.

156 Girl, you went to pick flowers
And dallied in the crab hole
Young man, you set out for the Karam
And dallied in the tiger's den.

In English popular poetry, the crab is sometimes used to suggest a slightly sinister horror.

Her beauty was all she had,
She'd a mouth like a soft-shell crab,
And an india-rubber lip
Like the rudder of a ship,
And I tell you she was mad.

In Indian tribal poetry, on the other hand, a crab's hole is always to some extent evocative of sex, and in *The Legend of Rasalu Kuar* the crab waiting outside its hole is a parallel for the chastity of the lovers.

'After the marriage Rasalu Kuar stayed for some time in that city. But when they slept at night he placed a sword between him and his bride. The fish did not enter the trap, though now all the fields by the river were flooded; the hare did not hide in its burrow nor the crab in its hole; the koel did not sit in the little nest, and all the storebins of the place were empty of grain. "I had a friend," said the boy. "He was so close a friend that we agreed that when one of us was married, he would not fulfil it until he knew that the other was married also. Now I must go to see my friend and discover whether he is married or not." '[1]

157 The boy has gone to beat the drum
The girl has gone to pick the flower.

158 Girl, you will comb your hair
And loosen your clothes
In the Jitia upland, girl
You will loosen your clothes.

[1] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 270.

ELOPEMENT

159 Girl, your heart and mine are fixed
Let us go away together
I shall be a servant
You will be a maid
Why should we not be happy ?

160 All this shaving bores me
This year, girl, I must marry you.

161 The young girl of Nagpur
Goes to work in Darjeeling
Let it cost a hundred
Let it cost fifty rupees
But I will marry you, girl.

SUPPLEMENTS TO KARAM POEMS

DHURIYA KARAM

BESIDES the main body of Karam songs which are sung to the Karam dances, there are eight groups of supplementary songs. These are distinguished either by their content, by the time when they are sung or by the type of dance which accompanies them.

Dhuriya and Asari Karam are songs with their own tunes which often deal with the landscape when the rains have started.

162 Every day, girl
I make myself lovely
But not a single day do I dance
Not a single day
Is it good or bad, girl
To have a husband?
Not to have a husband is best, girl
Not to have a husband is best.

163 The grove you planted, father
Is lovely with branches
The scarlet on the brow, mother
Is graced with a husband
Is lovely with a man.

164 What is the flower in your hair, girl
That you look like a firefly
As you come swinging your body?
A tilai bloom is in your hair
And you look like a firefly
As you come with your hips swaying.

165 Do not go to that widow woman
The widow woman is a great witch
She has shut a door with a winnowing fan
And locked it with a basket.

166 The boy is carrying a load
The girl has gone to Bundu and Tamar[1]
For the boy the girl has gone
Has gone to Bundu and Tamar.

[1] On the eastern part of Ranchi district.

167 Go away, *juri*, go away
That time is past
The days of ornaments in the ear
Those days are over.

168 The rain is falling
Mud is all around
Where shall I stay?
Let me lie with you, girl, you say
We will spread a small cloth
We will wrap a big cloth
And hide under an umbrella
If you get a daughter, she will look to the house
If you get a son, he will go and plough.

169 Which is the corner where the rain drizzles?
Which is the corner where the clouds gather?
The rain drizzles in the east
The clouds gather in the west.

170 The rain falls
The plots fill with water
The frogs are singing their songs.

171 The sun scorches
The *mahua* falls
Let it fall, brother
Let it fall
The girl does not tire of picking.

A Pardhan poem also associates 'falling *mahua*' with love-making:

When the fruit burdens the mango
The *mahua* flowers fall
At midnight all are sleeping
Come then when all the world is sleeping.[1]

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 170.

172 Behind me is a *pipal* tree
And the green leaves are shaking
O mother, listen
O father, listen
As the green leaves shake.

173 Behind the house on the *pipal* tree, mother
How the green leaves shake
In a house with a grown-up daughter, mother
How can sleep come?

The meaning is that just as the leaves are shaking, the girl is trembling with desire for a lover.

174 Little is the wife, brother
But how she scolds
By the big spring
By the little spring
Comes the noise of her scolding.

175 In the corners the clouds gather
In the corners the rain falls
In the corners the rain falls
In Nagpur the clouds gather
In Nagpur the rain falls
In Nagpur the rain falls.

176 In the Kansi field I ploughed
But my bhauji[1] does not want me
All the night long she dances
And does not want me.

177 For whom do you plough ?
For whom do you carry ?
Your mother and father
Will never marry you
Only a girl *juri* can you have.

178 Lie with him I will, you say, girl
In a cloak of leaves you will hide
You will spread a small cloth
You will wrap a big cloth
And hide beneath a cloak of leaves.

179 The ridge the lover raised
The shining water
With a rope the girl draws water
The rope has snapped
The pot has broken
O how shall I go home ?

[1] Elder brother's wife.

As in Victorian painting, so in tribal poetry the broken pitcher is everywhere a symbol of defloration, of ravished youth, of a girl's despoiled sex. A Gond dadaria says:

Only with a rope can you draw water from a well
I told you ' Don't, don't ', but now I am pregnant.[1]

An Ahir *bas git* describes a girl's experience:

Your pitcher has been filled
My golden love
Like a cloud full of thunder
Is your fresh youth
Like the lightning
Shines your face
Drop by drop
Your pitcher has been filled
And your youth is ruined
My golden love.[2]

A Teli dadaria declares:

You have broken
The golden pitcher
Where did you lose
Your lusty youth ?[3]

While a Panka dadaria says of a young bride:

The new pitcher is full of pure water
Hay hay the pure water
He has destroyed love and desire
Since he kept that widow as a co-wife.[4]

180 Drizzling the rain falls
Come, *juri*, and set the fishing trap
My life is like gold
My clothes are like flowers
I cannot go
I shall get muddy

For ' rain ' and ' fishing ' images, compare poems 122 and 131.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 103.
[2] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 31.
[3] *Ibid*, 54.
[4] *Ibid*, 95.

BAROYA KARAM

THESE are sung while preparing for the Karam.

181 Haere
Ranchi town
Ranchi town
Thronging with crowds
Red you will see
White you will see
Golas[1] you will see
Shops you will see
Motors and rickshaws
All you will see.

182 Come to your own country, parrot[2]
Come to your own land
Your mouth is red, parrot
Your wings are green
Such a pretty thing is speaking.

183 On the trunk of the tamarind[3]
The moon shines
The moon shines
What a lovely girl, brother
How sweet she is
And the moon shines
The moon shines.

184 To buy a drum, *juri*
You go when the moon is up
You go in the moonlight
To get a wife, *juri*
You go in the darkness
Into the dark night.

[1] Granaries for storing grain.
[2] For 'parrot' as a boy symbol, see note to poem 280.
[3] Compare poem 1.

185 Haere
Living with a *juri*, mother
Where shall I have such a *juri* ?
Haere the *juri's* tie is broken
Mother
Sleep hardly comes.

186 The father and mother are dead
They died by shutting the door
The door on the right is open
The door on the left is shut
They died when they shut the door.

The meaning is not that the parents are dead but that they are out of the way.

187 Let us come, girl
And see the Dasain
No, brother, I won't
I shall get muddy.

188 Whose is the cock
That is playing in the dust ?
It is the cock of the raja
That plays in the dust.

189 Let us go, girl, you and I
Let us go to the other land
You will hold the basket
I will hold the spade
Why should not the time pass ?

190 That charming girl
Is giving back the marriage price
She is giving it back
Let her give it back, brother
Let her give it back
We will get you another.

191 A charming girl
Stands beneath the tamarind
Go and ask for her, boy
If they say they will give her, we will start the talks
If they say no, we will find you another.

192 Planted by the mother the *munga*[1]
Planted by the father the *munga*
The *munga* has spread its branches
The *munga* is in bloom
To sip the honey the bees come
To suck the honey the bees come.

193 Brinjal in a brinjal plot
The brinjal plot is gay with flowers[1]
A man ploughs the land for his own good
A woman decks herself for others.

194 Beautiful was the daughter I married beyond the Koel
But what is the son-in-law,
What is the son-in-law ?

195 The father and mother found a bride, brother
But the girl was no good
She was no good
Choose one for yourself, brother
A girl decked by a boy
A girl smart and neat.

[1] '*Munga*' is a symbol for a girl. See also note to poem 129. For 'brinjals', see poem 133.

THAPRI KARAM

THAPRI, Thariya and Lahsua are sung during the celebrations in the akhra–Lahsua towards the early morning; then, as the dancers tire, Thariya; and finally in a concluding burst of excitement, Thapri. Lahsua is danced with the body bent, Thariya and Thapri with the body straight.

196 Cowherd boy,
Why do you cut a flute ?
The cow does not come
And so I cut a flute
Cow
Why do you wait ?
The grass does not sprout
And so I wait
Grass
Why do you not spring up ?
The rain does not fall
And so I do not sprout
Rain
Why do you keep away ?
The frog does not call
And so I do not come
Frog
Why do you not cry ?
The snake does not bite me
And so I do not cry
Snake
Why do you not bite him ?
His wail of pain
Winds in the ear
And so I do not bite.

197 If not for eating and drinking
Then come for dancing
If not in the morning and evening
Then come at least for dancing

198 The Jaigi jatra is coming
Get ready your stick, O singer Birsa
In the morning it comes
O singer Birsa, get ready your stick.[1]

199 Frost kills the jungle
And the hungry leopard gapes
In the morning the frost kills
And the leopard gapes.

200 The daughter of the rich headman
Is in the plantain grove
In the morning the rich headman
Watches in the plantain grove.

For the ' stick ' image, see note to poem 128.

LAHSUA KARAM

201 In the stunted fig tree
The branches grow
In that fig tree
Are thick branches
Aloft, the lover
Breaks and eats the branches
Below, the pigeon
Pecks at the twigs.

Pigeons are almost always symbols for girls. A Pardhan dadaria compares a pigeon to a smiling girl :

Pigeons are feeding on the hillside
Don't smile at me, you are only a baby.[1]

In a Baiga poem, killing a pigeon is a symbol for the act of lovers :

I have come to the jungle to kill a wood-pigeon
My love, I will leave everything for you.[2]

In Punjabi folk poetry, on the other hand, the pigeon is usually a boy :

It has made its nest in your bosom
Look at the wild pigeon
It has made its nest in your plaited hair
Look at the naughty parrot.[3]

202 On the rocky upland
I sowed the long beans
And there the monkey comes
I will hit you, monkey, I will kill you
I will take off your skin and make a drum
Runu jhunu the drum will sound
Seven hundred girls
Will come and dance.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 107. [2] *The Baiga*, 256.
[3] *The Baiga*, 256.

The beans are girls and the monkey is a boy.

A Baiga poem employs the same symbol:

In the midst of the river grows a *pipal* thick with leaves
Among the leaves monkeys are hiding
O my love when will I meet you
And hold you close amid the leaves?[1]

203 To buy a horse
The Rajput raja
Goes to upper Barwe
Tell me the price of the horse, girl
And jewels you shall have.

204 Girl, in whose hand is the wrap
Coloured with haldi?
Boy, in whose hand
Is the blossom from the *bar* tree?
In the raja's hand
Is the haldi-coloured wrap
In the rani's hand
Is the blossom from the *bar* tree.

205 In Palkot town the spring bursts
Over the spring the fire flickers
Which rani is waking?
Which rani is sleeping?
Rani, a brother waves a switch.

206 In Palkot the springs are gushing
Over the spring the snake moves
The snake moves
Kill the snake and cut it in seven pieces
Cut it in seven pieces.

Devendra Satyarthi has pointed out that in Pathan poetry the spring is often a love image for a girl:

O my heart is like a mountain spring
Parrots of all lands come and delight in its water.[2]

[1] *The Baiga*, 453.
[2] Devendra Satyarthi 'Song Harvest from Pathan Country', *The Mode Review* (November, 1935).

207 In a fright, the little lover
Leaves his wrap behind
Come to the spring at daybreak
And you'll have your wrap
And I'll tell you what I think of you.

Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale have recorded a similar dadaria from the Gonds:

The garden fence is very thick
Don't be afraid, I'll bring your turban hidden in my pot.

'The meaning of this dadaria is that a youth has been visiting his girl and has left his turban behind in the house. He is very much alarmed lest it will be found and thus betray his presence there but the girl assures him that she will hide it in her water-pot and take it down to him at the well or on the roadside.'[1]

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 105.

LUJHKI KARAM

THESE are sung to the lujhki version of the main Karam dance.

208 Even as she husks the smart girl poses
The girl who flirts
The girl who likes her boys
The moment she sees her lover
She smartens her clothes.

209 The Lohardaga merchant comes
Under the bar tree, he puts his stores
Under the bar tree, he puts his stores
Under the bar tree, raja,[1] his silk has fallen
Under the bar tree he weeps and mourns.

210 In the castor wood I lost my calf
I looked for it till evening came
I looked in one forest
I looked in two forests
Still I was looking when evening fell.

For the calf as a girl compare the Baiga poem :

The brinjal is growing round the borders of my court
O I am a young calf, and he is a bull.
He is pushing me against my will
He is tugging at my breasts.[2]

211 In an upper field, I said ' Girl, please let me.'
No, elder brother, the place is muddy
The place is muddy
My heart is like gold
My clothes are like flowers
No, elder brother, they will get muddy
Near us are people
Over us is God
Elder brother, how can I let you ?

[1] ' Raja ' is often a term for the village headman. [2] *The Baiga*, 266.

212 Small is the starling
With her waist no bigger than a hand
Let the fire burn
For the starling
Has gone with her *chandan*
Looking for the starling
Comes a young lover
Let the fire burn
For the starling
Is off and away.

213 *Maina, maina*, you called
Where has the *maina* gone ?
Your *maina* has gone to the brinjal garden
On this side is the Ganges
On the other is the Jamuna
On the bank of the Jamuna the *maina* calls.

The *maina* or starling is the girl who has gone to meet a lover. Since brinjals themselves are symbols of a girl, a brinjal garden is an obvious trysting place.

DASAIN KARAM

THESE are songs which end the celebrations.

214 Very small the *mahua*
Spreading its branches
Drop after drop
The juice falls
Picked in the day
Picked in the day
Picked in the night
By the lover thief.

In this poem, as in poem 104 of *The Blue Grove*, the *mahua* is a symbol of a girl.

215 The raja sits on the machan
The saplings are cut
The fence is made
The gun is propped in the forest.

216 Drizzling the rain falls
The Ganges flows
On every side
Haere hae
On all sides
Flows the Jamuna
Haere hae
Whoever will carry me over
I will give him a bangle
And his hand will wave a switch
Haere hae.

217 Haere the son of the raja
Shoots from an elephant
And the dove is in the water
As he shoots from an elephant.

OTHER DANCE POEMS

218 Boy, you dally on the road
Your girl is looking in the akhra
In the morning you linger on the road
And your girl looks in the akhra.

219 I look and look for you, girl
Where are you hiding that you do not come ?
I look in the village
I look in the streets
Where are you hiding that you do not come ?

220 Come nearer, girl
O girl in the smart dress
Without you, girl
All joy is gone.

221 Boy, you are off to the other land
Who will deck your girl
Who will make your girl beautiful ?
You are off in the morning
Who will make her beautiful ?

222 Boy
You are killing yourself
For a girl like a mango
Dying
For a girl like a mango
Spending your money
Killing yourself
Spending, spending your money
Dying for a girl.

223 Singer, who will ride the wooden horse ?
Singer, a girl will ride it.

The horse, as in poem 56, is a boy.

[1] Dance meetings of several villages.

224 On the rocks I husked the paddy
But the boy never came.

225 Your husband, girl
Will be grown up at thirteen
Be patient, girl
He will be ready at fourteen.

226 Pick the *jamun* leaves, brother
And make her plugs for the ears
In the morning with a girl
Pick the *jamun* leaves, brother
And make her plugs for the ears.

227 I did go, elder sister
But I could not buy the ear-rings
Korambe and Lohardaga[1]
But I could not buy them.

228 Married girl
You go to pick *munga*
You were married in the morning
And at night you go for *munga*.

' Going to pick *munga* ' means that she is going to meet a lover.

229 Brother, you reared a goose
And your goose sits on her eggs.
In the morning you reared her
And she is sitting on her eggs.

230 Girl, how pleasure-loving is your mother
To be dancing the *bhejja* till dawn
How pleasure-loving in the morning
To be dancing the *bhejja* till dawn.

231 Your daughter-in-law, mother
Is not returning from the well
She has broken her pot, mother
And is not coming back
From the well.[2]

[1] Markets.

[2] For ' well ', see poem 143.

232 In the ploughed fields the water springs
Go and bring water
On the head a pad
On the pad a pot
Go and bring water.

233 In Palkot town
Is a bamboo fence
A fence to shield
A grove of beans.[1]

234 Whose is the red cock that crows at morning ?
It is the red cock of the raja that crows at morning.

235 Dance slowly
For the dust is mounting
Dance in the morning
With the dust mounting.

236 Haere the mistress of the house
Is forming her lips
To scold the young men
She is forming her lips.

237 Mother my darling
The bride who lived in the heart
Is going away
The bride who lived in the heart
For a hundred rupees
Is going away.

238 You say you have five brothers, girl
What will your five brothers do ?
When your bride money is returned, girl
What will your five brothers do ?
In the morning, girl
What will your five brothers do ?

[1] For ' beans ', see poem 202.

239 The girl from Palamau
That girl *juri*
Is weeping like the rain
She is smart with blossom
On her clothes is the scarlet
But she cries and cries.

240 Mother my darling
Why did you give me birth ?
Mother my darling
To die when I was little.

241 Uncle, uncle
Do not beat my aunt
Listen to your nephew
My aunt has a baby boy in her lap.
Do not beat her
Listen to your nephew.

242 Rohtas[1]
Come back to Rohtas
And sow the late paddy
Come back to Rohtas
With its late rains.

243 In the twelve hills and forests,
Mother, your heart aches
For leaves to eat, for the new shoots
Your heart is longing.

244 The girl is buried in a ditch
Over her the clods are heaped
Brother, go and see
That the clods cover her.

245 Man, you have won, you have won
You have routed the ghosts and witches
And made your name.

[1] The natural fortress in the Taimur Hills (Shahabad) from which the Uraons moved to Chota Nagpur.

CHIRDI[1]

246 Come in secret, brother
The girl is in the other land
Come in the morning, brother
The girl is far away.

247 Often you come
But I will not send her
You make her sad
You come in the morning
But I will not send her
For you make her sad.

248 Younger brother, will you buy bells
Or will you buy a wife ?
In this time of hunger
Will you buy bells or a wife ?

249 To a foreign land the husband's gone
And his wife is dancing with other men
In the morning he went
And at night she dances
With other men.

250 You sulk when you go to husk the rice
But you rush to dance the *bhejja*
You sulk in the morning
But you rush to the *bhejja*.

251 A year ago he danced the *bhejja* with me
But now he is ashamed
Morning and he danced the *bhejja* with me
But at night he is ashamed.

252 The girls you were dancing with
You have let your girls go
Will your time last, boy ?
In the morning you have let them go
Will your time last ?

[1] A form of Jatra dance.

253 When the *bhejja* is danced you claim to be a man
But you say you are too young to plough
In the night you are a man
But you're much too young to plough.

254 You are ploughing crooked
Through talking with that girl
You are ploughing in the morning
But in the night you talk to her.

255 You say I must come, *juri*
But I come and you go to the dried up stream
In the morning, you say, *juri*
But when I come you go to the dry stream.

Here a girl is addressing a girl-friend. The meaning is that when they should meet, the girl changes her mind and goes off to meet a boy.

256 Come, girl, in your smart clothes
Come, girl, and dance the *bhejja* with me
On the jatra morning
Dance the *bhejja* with me
In your smart clothes.

257 Do not dance behind me
My heart is sad without my girl
In the morning she is dancing, girl,
And I am sad without my girl.

258 I will dance the *bhejja* with you, girl
What does it matter if we hold each other's hands
Dancing the *bhejja* in the morning
Does it matter if we hold each other's hands ?

259 Dancing we danced, brother
Who will give us food ?
In the morning we danced, brother
Who will give us food ?

260 On the jatra ground, brother
The boy pushed and pulled her
Her comb fell down
As he grappled with her.

261 As long as you are unmarried
How smart you keep yourself
When you are old, girl,
All your looks will go
You are smart in the morning
But your looks will go.

262 The young man is almost here
Put on the pot, you lazy girl
In the morning he is almost here
Put on the pot, you little slut.

263 Get out of the way, you strapping girl
The little ox is treading on you
In the morning, you great girl
The little ox is trampling on you.

The ox is a young lover.

264 In street after street, girl, you look for a husking stick
Your husking stick is in the other land
Having a man, girl, you look for a husking stick
But your husking stick is in the other land.

As in poems 128 and 305, the husking stick is a symbol of the man's sex.

265 On the *karanj*
The lizard climbs
The girl catches its tail
As the lizard climbs.

Here the lizard is a boy.

266 In the river a fish,[1] girl
And the kingfisher ate it
Come and look, little girl
The kingfisher ate it.

In Santal poetry, the kingfisher constantly occurs as an image for a lover.

[1] For ' fish ', see note to poem 131.

267 The fishes walk in a wedding party
Where has Udho gone?
The fishes walk in a wedding party
Some fish are leaping
Some are talking
Some fish are going in a little band
Where has Udho gone?

268 By the beds of streams I went for flowers
To pick flowers
The mother has seen the flowers
The father knows the streams
I went to pick flowers
To pick flowers[1].

269 At hand is the women's hunt, girl
With its feast of pigs
In the morning the hunt, girl.
And a feast of pigs.

270 The brother and sister left on their travels
In the *sirasita* fields they lived
Their house was a crab's hole
And in the *sirasita* fields they lived.

The *sirasita* fields are the mythical home of the Uraon tribe. When the world was on fire, Sita, the wife of Dharmes, hid the first man and woman in her clothes. Then when the fire was over she put them in a crab's hole among the rushes in the *sirasita* paddy fields. This was the only part of the world that the fire had spared and there the first brother and sister lived.[2]

271 From husking rice she ran away
Who will feed a lazy girl?
In the morning she ran
O who will feed a lazy girl?

272 The sun is beating down
The girl is thirsty
In the morning, the sun
And the girl is thirsty.[3]

[1] For 'picking flowers', see note to poem 5.
[2] For a full account of the myth, see P. Dehon, *The Religion and Customs of the Uraons*, M.A.S.B. (Calcutta, 1905).
[3] For 'thirst', see poem 130.

273 The *gundli* is ripening
And the girl trembles in her skin
It ripens in the morning
And the girl shivers.[1]

274 No salt in the leaf curry
And the girl's ribs are shining
No salt in the morning
And the girl's ribs are shining.

This is a famine song.

[1] At the thought of the work.

MATHA

MATHA, Jadura and Domkach are danced between the Karam and Sarhul Festivals.

275 Look at the frogs, mother
Sporting in the water
Look at the pahan's mate
Diving about in the water.

The panbharin or pahan's mate is the villager who helps the pahan at religious ceremonies and brings water for him.

276 Brother, without wind
The leaves of the *pipal* shake
The weeds wave in the water
Look at the frogs, mother
Romping in the water.[1]

277 On the rocky hill scratching the red soil
The Koeri[2] girl is gathering roots
Hai, Koeri girl, the dusk has come on you
A lover will catch you at the spring.

[1] For 'frogs' as boys, see poem 124 in *The Blue Grove*.
[2] The market-gardener caste.

278 From where is the parrot, the green parrot ?
From where is the charmer ?
On the boughs it sat
And the boughs broke
On the leaves it sat
And the leaves fell down.

279 Parrot
Why are you cross ?
Dove
Why are you angry ?
Parrot
With the country you are angry
Dove
With the land are you annoyed.

The parrot is a boy and the dove a girl.

280 Parrot parrot
Green parrot
Parrot bring me blossom
Break the branches
Do not spoil the leaves
O parrot, bring me blossom.

In Indian folk poetry, the parrot is sometimes a boy and sometimes a girl. In the Eastern Bengal ballad of Mahua, the distraught lover, Naderchand, asks the cowherds : ' Have you seen a girl of the name of Mahua ? Her eyes are beautiful as a pair of stars and her hair like clouds. Has my sweet parrot flown to these skies ? The beautiful one ascends the tall bamboos and dances on the rope. Her curling hair gracefully hangs about her face. If she sits in a dark room her dazzling colour shines like bright gold ! With such an one does the gipsy-leader wander from place to place. In the garden the flowers bloom and on the hills bright stones sparkle ; but none so beautiful as she ; mad am I after her ! '[1]

[1] *op. cit.*, I, 13.

In a similar way, the parrot is a girl in the Baiga marriage poem :

Come along, my parrot to another nest !
Come along, my parrot, nibbling your leaf !
If you won't, I'll kick your bottom.[1]

Uraon poems, on the other hand, almost always treat the parrot as a boy and in this respect, their usage is very close to the European.

With my beak bent, my little wanton eye
My feathers fresh as is the emerald green,
About my neck a circulet like the rich rubie,
My little legs, my feet both feat and clean,
I am a minion to wait upon a queen :
' My proper Parrot, my little pretty fool ! '
With ladies I learn, and go with them to school.

' Meat, meat for Parrot, meat I say, ho ! '
Thus diverse of language by learning I grow,
With ' Buss me, sweet Parrot, buss me, sweet sweet ! '
To dwell among ladies Parrot is meet.

Parrot is no stammering stare, that men call a starling
But parrot is my own dear heart and my dear darling.

Between Skelton and the Uraons the difference is more of tradition than of attitude.

281 From where comes the heron
Its wings spreading like wild bamboos ?
From the east it comes
From the west it comes
And its wings fan out like wild bamboos.

282 Is he your husband ?
Your husband is off in a foreign land
Your husband dressed himself smartly
Your husband is off in a foreign land.

283 Off you dashed, girl
With a torn jacket
How cold it is
And you have no *luga*.

[1] *The Baiga*, 280.

284 In gusts, the rain has fallen
Filling the two Koels[1]
The rivers are in flood
The boat is carried down.

285 Drizzling the rain falls
And the river fills
Throw your net, fisherman brother
Catch the fish
In Asar and Sawan
The rain falls
Throw your net, fisherman brother
And catch the fishes.[2]

286 In the akhra of Basia
What drum is sounding ?
Haere
The prince has stopped me at my door
On his wrists are bangles
Gold in his ear
Haere
The prince has stopped me at my door.

287 *Juri*, the smart young lover
Has gone to Assam
And the girl's tears
Go trickling on her cheeks
Come back, O smart young lover
Come back from Assam
The girl's tears
Fall drop by drop.

288 Ploughing the fields
Breaking the clods
Mahto and pahan did not tell them
But a girl with a fine figure strode there
Ploughing the fields
Breaking the clods
Mahto and pahan did not tell them.

In Uraon villages, ploughing starts only when the headman and village priest have given permission.

[1] Rivers of Chota Nagpur. [2] For aspects of ' fishing ', see poem 131.

DOMKACH

289 Girl, if you'll stay
I'll give you a dress
Boy, I will give you
The words of my mouth.

290 As I went
I saw the river dry
As I came
The two Koels were full
Whoever takes me over
A coral necklace I will give him
And the golden words of my mouth.

291 Sparrows, why are you pestering my roof ?
With my bow, sparrows, I will shoot you.

The sparrows are boys who are after girls.

292 In the scattered clouds the stars show
In the grove the moon is drowned with stars
From the east a golden girl is coming
In the grove the stars have drowned the moon.

293 Mother, treat her kindly
Now she is going to your house
Treat her fondly, mother
Now she is going to your door
If you are harsh to her, mother
She will never go.

The reference is to the bride going to the mother-in-law's.

294 Never go to Barwe, brother
In Barwe people starve
Nagpur is a diamond
But in Barwe you will starve.

Barwe—a portion of Gumla subdivision in Ranchi district.

DHURIYA

DHURIYA is danced between the Sarhul and the Jeth Jatra (Chirdi).

295 Girl, what is the blossom in your hair
That you come flashing like a firefly ?
In your hair is a *naur* flower, girl
And you flash like a firefly.

In a Chhattisgarhi song, it is the girl's eyes that are fireflies :

Your eyes are fireflies
Your hair, my love, is curly
O love, how beautiful you are
The bread in the pan is burnt
My eater of supper is dying of hunger
Your eyes are fireflies
My beautiful love.[1]

296 Girl, throw down your wood
My thirst is killing me
On the slope of the hill
I am dying from thirst.

The meaning as in poem 130 is that the boy cannot contain his desire.

297 Whose big buffalo
Is grazing in the furrows ?
Headman, the fighting buffalo
Is grazing in the furrows.

298 Buy a wooden pipe, brother
Copper pipes cannot be had
With this hunger in the country
Copper pipes cannot be had.

This is a famine song.

[1] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 43.

LUJHKI

LUJHKI is a "tossing" variant which is danced at any time but with its own tune.

299 In the little plot
I sowed the *gundli*
And with it grew the *sag*
Cutting by day
Stacking by day
Cutting at night
By the gallant thief.

'Thief' as a reference to a lover occurs also in Pardhan poetry:

At midnight the dogs are barking
The stars have come into the sky
Long are the leaves of the young bamboos
And breaking through them comes my thief
At midnight the dogs are barking.[1]

Compare also a Baiga Karma:

O love, come silent as a thief
The door is shut, come silently
I open it, come silently
O love, you take me as a thief.[2]

300 In the month of Jeth I sowed
And the paddy shot up green
Hare haere
Cutting in the day a guard is watching
Cutting in the night comes a gallant thief
Hare haere.

301 Elder brother
You listen to the talk of others
You tell me to go away, to get out
O I am getting out
I am going away
I shall leave this land for ever.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 171. [2] *The Baiga*, 446.

302 Biru is a rich land
On its four sides it is a green land
The raja has two swords
When he rides on his horse
He bears a shining shield
When he moves on his elephant.

303 Bats, bats
Are you awake or asleep ?
The bats hang in the trees
The cock has crowed
The dawn has broken
And the bats
Hang in the trees.

304 Thin flutes with their stops far apart
My lover can play a hundred flutes
Hearing the flute
Sleep does not come
The drowsy girl comes to look.

ASARI

ASARI is danced in the Sissai and Palkot thanas of Gumla subdivision in Asar (June-July).

305 Little the hut
With its door to the east
With lovely flowers
The nut tree blossoms
The young lover
Hangs them on his chest.

306 Little the hut
And to the east the door
And all night through the water drips
I have no father
I have no mother
Who will mend my home ?

A folk poem from the Shan States uses ' a gap in the roof ' as a similar symbol :

The rain is falling through the roof
where is a boy
to fill our gaps for us ?[1]

while a Binjhwar Karma runs :

The adorable boy
Has thatched his house with grass
But the rain leaks in
How cold he must be
When the rain drips on his bed
The adorable boy.[2]

307 Drizzling the rain falls
And I cannot tell my brother
The rain falls in the morning
And I do not know my brother.

[1] Translated by E. Powys Mathers. [2] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 26.

308 I ask you, girl
Has the brown cow come home?
In the morning I am asking
Has the brown cow come home?

The brown cow is a reference to another girl.

309 Time for the June ploughing is drawing near
Coming like a brown bullock
Coming close in the morning
Like a brown bullock.

310 Go, brother-in-law
Go and take the bullocks to the hills
By the Ganges and the Jamuna
You will go for ploughing
Go and take the bullocks to the hills.

311 Sister-in-law, give me a coloured stick
I am going for the calves
When the Ahir milks the pot clinks
And the bangle on his arm tinkles.

'Going for the calves' is going out to look for girls.

312 Through the tamarind
The drizzling rain does not come
The landlord is cooking his food beneath the *pipal*
Under the tamarind and mango
Two drums are sounding
But I will not go, elder brother.
The boys of this village
Are all deceivers
And I will not go.

313 In the uplands
On the yellow mustard
The deer are grazing
One shot
Two shots
Three shots
But they only flick their tails.

Here also the deer are girls.

314 A girl is going
With parrot feathers
Look at her this way
Look at her that way
With her parrot feathers.

315 Till morning the girl dances
But she dare not dance a little longer
The girl is dancing in the morning
But she dare not dance much more.

316 Girl, your master sowed the *rahar*
Put the flowers in your hair
He sowed it in the morning
Put the rahar flowers in your hair.

317 Girl like a bumble bee
By the door is an axe
You are going to the women's hunt
By the door is an axe.

'Bumble bee' is an obvious simile for a jolly buxom girl.

A Panka Karma describes a dream:

I saw you in a dream
In colour lustrous as a bumblebee
You were at work on your dark hair
Making the parting with your comb
Black bangles on your arms.[1]

318 The life and death tree is in blossom
Giving a name to the fields in Bharno
The Bharno life and death tree is in blossom
In the Bharno fields.

A girl is here referred to as a tree in blossom.

319 In Ranchi and Lohardaga
The wells are dug no deeper than the waist
You went for fetching water, girl
And how your waist bends.

[1] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 33.

320 In all the houses sound the drums and trumpets
My house is silent
Grown up girl have I none
Grown up boy have I none
Silent is my house.

321 In Murgu is my father-in-law
And they do not let me go
This side is a river
That side is the Koel
And they do not let me go.

322 Little and you'll buy a drum
Bigger and you'll buy a wife
You'll buy a wife and gaze at her
And dance with her
And your drum you'll cast aside.

323 The modern man, mother
Does not care if a girl is his younger brother's wife
In the day
He acts like a husband's elder brother
In the night
He acts like the husband himself.
O yes I know the ways of youth.

The taboo on relations with a younger brother's wife is shared by all the tribes of Middle India.

324 Fetching palm leaves the young men and the girls
And the Karo river is in spate
The married man
Is tied with children
The unmarried boys
Can dance with the girls to their heart's content.

325 In Brindaban there grows a *champa* tree
And its branches brush the ground
Sister-in-law comb your hair
And put the new blossom in your tresses.

326 Starling
With lagging steps you will go
To the realm of Palamau
A cage of gold you will have[1]
But you will go to Palamau.

[1] For the house and family as a 'cage', see poem 106.

327 The water dries in the fields
O five brothers
The yoke and stick are at home
The plough is on the hill
Where have they gone
Those five brothers ?

328 Five brothers with their five wives
Going along to Gumla town
Couldn't agree how to divide
Going along to Gumla town.

329 Where have you been to
Mistress of the house ?
When you went for a lota of water
O mistress of the house
You forgot that lota of water.

A lota of water is a common image for the sexual organs—the spout signifying the male and the bowl the female. A Pardhan dadaria uses it to imply illicit love :

You went to the bazaar and brought home a lota
So sit in your house and play with the baby.[1]

while a Baiga poem describes how a lover uses a lota as an invitation to a meeting :

O girl, I threw my lota on the ground
You heard it fall, but you took no notice.
I called to you with my eyes,
But you never came.[2]

In an Ahir birha from Patna district, the lota is an implied image for the girl's sex.

Slender I was, and I grew
As slim as the string of a lota
I gave my husband water for drinking
Without a lota and without a string.[3]

In Rajput and Kangra paintings, particularly of Raginis, the lota constantly occurs as a sexual symbol.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 100, where the original is also given :
Gaye bajar leyela lota
Ghar baitho khela le apan beta.
[2] *The Baiga*, 254.
[3] Original at G. A. Grierson, *J.R.A.S.* (Vol. XVIII, 1886), 227.

330 Born like gold, brother
But you dwell in the straw
Born in the morning
And you dwell in straw.

331 After so many days, husband, where are you coming from
Begging for alms?
My father's house is full of wealth and persons
Back I shall go to it, husband
Back I shall go.

332 The lightning is flickering
Let me look at it
Raja of Barwe
The new bride is coming
O Raja
Let me see her.

Lightning is a common symbol in poetry for a girl and her vivid charm. A Gond poem says:

How often I have warned the young cowherd
Not to go to a Gond village
For Gond girls flicker like lightning.[1]

A Baiga poem describes how

In the middle of the court a lovely girl wriggles her body like lightning to and fro.[2]

While an Ahir *bas git* uses lightning to express the dazzled shine of a girl's face:

Your pitcher has been filled
My golden love
Like a cloud full of thunder
Is your fresh youth
Like the lightning
Shines your face.[3]

333 Hare haere, O little quail[4]
If you do not sing today, when will you ever sing?
Sawan has gone, Bhadò has come.
If you do not sing today, when will you ever sing?

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 199.
[2] *The Baiga*, 450.
[3] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 54.
[4] Nal-ora, a sort of small quail, *perdex chinensis*.

In the betrothal dialogues[1] of Kharias the quail is a symbol for the girl, while a Gond poem uses similar imagery:

It is evening and the black-breasted quail has flown away
Let us go now, my hunter, for it is very late.[2]

334 The girl keeps dashing home to her mother
O you sweet girl
How long must you stay?
All your life I shall love you
O you sweet one
How much longer must you stay?

335 Haere
The Karam came
And all the boys and girls were glad
Now the Karam is going
And the boys and girls are orphans.

This is a Karam song sung to an Asari tune.

336 Such a miserable umbrella
And how much does it cost?
Five and a half rupees says the Babu
Five and a half rupees.

337 Whose is the monkey whose bells tinkle in the jungle?
It is the monkey of the rani whose bells
Are tinkling in the jungle.

338 The korya paddy ripens on a pole
Come, O Raja of Barwe
For you've made your name
With your ripening paddy
Come, O Barwe raja.

339 Palkot town, mother
And the water flows through the town
Only a little town, mother
And through it goes the water.

[1] W. G. Archer, 'Betrothal Dialogues', *Man in India*, XXIV (1944), 150.
[2] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 107.

CULTIVATION POEMS

ROPA

THESE are sung during the transplantation of paddy.

340 Fish, fish, you cry, girl
O where shall I get them ?
Fish you will cook, girl
Crabs you will roast and roast.

341 Which is the bird that is making a nest ?
Which is the bird that is laying an egg ?
Which is the bird that hugs its children ?
The starling is making a nest
The *koel* is laying an egg
The bat hugs its infants.

342 The herons, brother
Hold court like a raja
On the banks of the tank
Holding court like a raja.

343 Of what ill died the raja
That the drums are like clouds ?
In sadness and gladness died the raja
And the drums roll like clouds.

344 Sow, I have sown paddy
But the rains have tricked me
Sawan, Bhado, and the dust is flying
And the rains have tricked me.

Sawan-Bhado is July to September. The meaning is that the rains have failed and the paddy has been spoilt.

345 What did you see, mother
That you married me in that village ?
Did you see rice, mother ?
Did you see riches
That you married me there ?

346 Come and nurse the baby in your lap
For how many days will you enjoy yourself ?
Nurse the baby in the morning
How many days must you idle and do nothing ?

347 At the spot I saw, brother
A crow riding on a frog
One says it's true
One says it's false
But I saw it, brother
A crow on a frog.

MARRIAGE POEMS

MARRIAGE RITUAL

I

THE RITUAL of an Uraon marriage involves a number of intricate and important stages—

the provisional selection of a girl by the boy's parents,
informal negotiations leading to a provisional acceptance,
a formal visit which is tested by omens,
the settlement of a bride price,
a betrothal journey
and, finally, a ceremony of house inspection.

The actual wedding includes the arrival of the bridegroom's party,

a mock capture,
the ceremony of sindur,
the invocation of the ancestors,
the giving of presents,
a wedding sermon
and, finally, a farewell address where the girl is compared to an arrow.

Although the main outlines of the ritual are fairly fixed, there is a great deal of local variation in its details. The account in Roy's *Oraon Religion and Customs*[1] differs considerably from that in Dehon's *The Religion and Customs of the Uraons* while the Gumla ritual which I have recorded in *The Blue Grove* is distinct from both.

It will illustrate these differences as well as suggest the ritual if I describe two Uraon weddings which I saw in 1940.

The ceremonies took place on 26 February in Karamtola, a little village close to Ranchi, and differed from the recorded ritual in the following ways. The marriages were at the boy's house and not at the girl's. The girl's party arrived before and not after dark. The boy was not in the procession which met the bride. There was no public verification of the bride price. Karsas (or paddy-draped pitchers) were carried by the bridegroom's party but not by the bride's. The putting of sindur was done first by the boy in

[1] Sarat Chandra Roy told me in conversation that this account was based on enquiries in the Bero and Mandar thanas of Ranchi district.

the obscurity of the girl's house[1] and then by two elder sisters. The marriage booth was used partly as a dancing stage but not as a wedding altar. Finally a yoke, a grinding stone and some thatching grass played an important part in the dance of the mother-in-laws but were not used at all in the sindur ceremonies.

II

At the first of these weddings, Mangra of Karamtola was married to Dhuchia of Baram while in the second, Dhelu, a boy of Karamtola, was married to Chare of Boreya.

When I reached the village, it was late afternoon and sultry clouds were massing in the sky. Dhuchia's party had arrived and a group of girls and women were quietly dancing while the bride sat huddled on the fringe. Presently the drums were answered by others and a small procession sallied from the houses. An old man led it with a small wooden disc on his head and the air of fantastic jollity was enhanced by a woman with a red paper flag. After them came a girl with a paddy-draped pitcher, a woman with a pot of water, and a mango twig, a boy with a flare, while in the rear came another woman with a bamboo basket on her head and a tiny straw ladder dangling from her shoulders. Girls in twos and threes walked along with them and in the middle of the crowd Mangra's father, Lothe, went quietly along.

There was a moment of great excitement when the little procession from the boy's village reached the girl's. The girls from the boy's side formed extra lines and as they joined the other women the dancing got wilder and the lines went round and round with a jolly flopping swing. While the two parties were fusing, Mangra's father quietly put the bride on his back and carried her to his house. A little later, the girls came trooping in and the courtyards began to fill with dancers, each group dissolving in the crowd and then reforming into lines of laughing girls.

The bride was then led out and taken to her party. Some girls came to wash her feet and, while they did so, others from the boy's side entered in a surging mob and a general dance ensued, with the drums thundering and the singing rising from the din.

After a while the crowd thinned and everyone stood by for the dance of the mother-in-laws. For this, the boy's mother and his aunt brought out a yoke, a grinding stone and some thatching grass and put them in the booth. The bride's mother and her aunts

[1] This is also the procedure in Bero and Mandar thanas (S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs*, 157-8).

then drew near and as soon as the boy's aunt had taken a mango twig and sprinkled the objects with water, there was a general scramble, each seizing what she could. The group then straightened up, the yoke was held aloft and at once they swang round in a small dance, beginning with a gallop and ending with a gentle swinging of the ankles. As they danced, they waved the wisps of grass and brandished the yoke. When the dance ended, the boy's mother and the girl's went inside a room and dressed themselves in new clothes which each had given the other. Their departure was the signal for yet another dance in which all the girls joined, jostling, waving, pulling and pressing while on the rim of the dancers, two old women bumped each other's haunches.

III

By this time it was early evening and I went across to Dhelu's house. Here,the proceedings started with a natua[1] dance and there was much din and excitement. Two enormous trumpets supported by poles were blaring out and three boys with a chorus of seven or eight striplings were strutting and posturing in the dance. The central boy had ribs of red cloth over his white coat, peacock's plumes strapped to his arms and a ring of bells on his ankles. He carried a fist-ful of green sprigs in each hand. His first companion had a small bamboo stick and the second danced with a red stave. On their faces white powder had been traced. As they danced they executed 'warlike' postures—a brisk rapid twirling ending in a 'stand and deliver' stance, a fierce bold advance with a swagger and shake of the ankles, finally a mock combat clinched in a taut quivering of the limbs.

It was now time to fetch the bride and as we came out of the village, we saw the girl's party a hundred yards away, dancing boisterously in a field. The Karamtola girls spread out into a long line and, slowly dancing, bore down upon them. Then as they reached and mixed, the dancing got quicker and noisier. Four girls caught each other and formed a tight little square. In the middle, a group of girls danced with violet powder on their faces while in the hair of the visiting girls, wisps of thatching grass tossed as they swung and flopped.

[1] A natua dance is less an Uraon dance than a general Chota Nagpuri-Bihari form assimilated by the Uraons. In Ranchi district, Kharias and Mundas also use it and in Dhanbad it is used by Kurmi Mahtos, Rajwars, Bhuiyas, Ghatwars and Santals. Grierson in *Bihar Peasant Life* (301) states that it is the term used by Ahirs in South Bhagalpur to describe a man dancing the cowherd's dance of *loriyaro*. The term could be said to cover almost any form of virtuoso stick dancing by a male.

As the excitement grew greater and greater, the boy's father quietly put the bride on his back and carried her off, and her mother, aunt and two bridesmaids followed. Half way to the village, the natua dancers came up with the throng and as they mingled with the girls, the dance became a whirling confusion, the boys leaping and brandishing their staves, at times jumping free of the girls and at times colliding.

It was now getting dark and as nothing more was anticipated, I went away and returned later in the night.

When I reached Dhelu's house at 10 p.m., I learnt that the bride had been taken in and washed and she and the boy had then put the scarlet powder on each other's foreheads. This had been done privately and without ceremony, and after they had put it on, it had been washed away. There had then been the dance of the mothers-in-law over the yoke, the grinding-stone and grass and the central ceremony was now in progress.

When I went inside the room, I found a raised lamp with three wicks in the centre and round it the leading figures grouped as on the two sides of a square. On the side that faced east sat the best man, then the boy, then the bride and then her bridesmaid; while at right angles and facing the centre were the boy's father and the village pahan. Behind the bridegroom stood a kotwar holding a drawn sword[1] and at his side were the bride's elder sister to do the ministering to the boy and the bridegroom's sister to attend to the girl. The room was crammed with guests, who pressed round the seated figures in the fluttering light and kept up a loud and boisterous singing. In front of the pahan were two brass trays containing two sindur boxes with arrow-shaped heads, two little pans of oil and two leaf-cups. Some rice-beer was then offered and handed round and while the envoys were drinking, the two elder sisters took up the little pans of oil and commenced anointing the two boys and girls. The bride's sister took up the boy's pan and rubbed oil on his hair and face. She then combed the hair with a comb belonging to the girl, gave him some playful slaps and buffeted his head. After she had finished the bridegroom she did the same to the best man.

While the girl's sister did this, the bridegroom's sister did the same to the bride and her companion. There was the same patient massage, the same kneading of the glossy skin, and just as the girl's sister used the boy's oil and the bride's comb, so the boy's sister

[1] The object of this is primarily to scare away evil spirits but, as with the arrow-shaped heads of the sindur boxes, it may also be a form of sexual symbolism.

used the bride's oil and the bridegroom's comb for massaging her limbs and combing her hair.

When the massage was over, the scarlet powder was applied. The bridegroom's sister brought out a sal leaf which the pahan had given her and pressed some powder first on the forehead of the girl and then on the forehead of the boy. The bride's sister then produced another sal leaf and pressed some powder first on the boy's brow and then on the girl's. Then the girl's sister made the bridegroom hold the sindur box and taking some scarlet powder from it she again daubed the forehead. After this, the boy's sister made the bride hold the other sindur box and with its powder, she also made the marks. Finally, five extra marks were given—two at the corners of the eyes, two on the lobes of the ears and a fifth in the centre of the forehead, this final daubing including both the bridesmaid and the best man. All the time the marriage songs went loudly on and leaf-cups of rice-beer went round like loving-cups.

We then moved out into the courtyard and sat under the booth and ten minutes later, the boy and girl came out and went respectfully round, touching the feet of the punches and saluting the assembly.

A little later a short marriage sermon was given, the new parents-in-law put scarlet powder on each other's foreheads and exchanged presents and in the early hours of the morning the party sat for a feast. At this meal, the bride and bridegroom formally exchanged their food—the boy tasting his first and then giving it to the bride, the girl tasting hers first and then giving it to the boy. Just as dawn was breaking, presents were given and after a short farewell address, the bride and the bridegroom left for their village.

348 In the forest I lived, mother
In the forest, the forest
Searching for a broken pot
I found a knife
Then, mother, I cut the old pulse.

For ' knife ', see poem 66 and compare an Annam folkpoem :

The golden knife must to the velvet sheath
and who will want me ?
A student is not a rice-picker,
and yet my heart trembles
and I burn all over.[1]

349 How shall I buy a *riyo* bird ?
How shall I buy a lovely wife ?
With words a *riyo* bird is bought
With words like flowers a lovely wife is got.

350 On the path to the spring, *juri*
You pulled off my pad
Haere, I am stained with haldi
Now, *juri*, give me back my pad.

This is a reference to forcible marriage. A boy marries a girl by catching her forcibly with a few friends and rubbing either some sindur or some haldi on her forehead.

[1] Translated by E. Powys Mathers.

351 How shall I buy
A red and yellow cloth ?
How shall I buy, mother
A beautiful girl ?
With money I shall buy
The red and yellow cloth
With words I shall buy
The beautiful girl
Where shall I put
The red and yellow cloth ?
Where shall I put
The lovely girl ?
In a chest I shall put
The red and yellow cloth
In a room I shall put
The beautiful girl.

352 My dhoti and your sari
Are packed in the box
Let us go to Calcutta
How long will your youth last ?
On bazaar day, girl
I will buy you bangles.
Let us go to Calcutta
How long will your youth last ?

353 In a little plot of maize
There enters a thief
No it is not a thief, sister
It is a young lover.

354 Drizzling the rain falls
And the two girls are getting wet
The father, the old fool
Does not spare his umbrella
It is the brother who hurries with a fine umbrella.

355 Under the tamarind, friend
Is money buried
Do not give it out
We will talk about it quietly.

PRE-MARRIAGE: THE RIPE GIRL

356 The well is of stone and brick
And there the rani is drinking the shining water
The pigeons are drinking the water
The doves are drinking the water
Drinking it in pairs.

The doves and pigeons are girls. The doves drink water in pairs in the same way as a girl and her girl-friend go about together.

357 In the dew, the dew
I planted a mango
In the heat, the heat
The mango grew
On that mango the fruit is showing
To ten brothers how beautiful
To twenty brothers how lovely.

In this poem, as in poems 369 and 370, the mango is a girl.

358 The moon, the moon rises
Glistening the moon rises
Shining the moon rises
The ten, the ten brothers
The ten brothers gamble
The twenty brothers lay their odds.

Here the moon is a girl. A Chhattisgarhi song has similar imagery:

The moon comes up
Crowded by many stars
If you do not desire me
Do as you will
But for love
I will not go far away
For love of you.[1]

359 A bubbling hookah
A copper-coloured hookah
Money I have
But where shall I get
A lotus bloom?

[1] *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, 7.

The lotus bloom is a girl.

360 Who has dug the tank ?
Who has dug the well ?
The well with the clear water
And the stone, the brick
The tank with the clear water
And the stone, the brick ?
The mother dug the tank
The father dug the well
The tank with the clear water
And the stone and the brick
The well with the clear water
And the stone and brick.

For ' tank ' and ' well ', see the notes to poems 4 and 143.

361 When I was a little fish
No one took any notice of me
But when I began to draw water
Ten families enquired about me
Twenty families began to ask questions.

362 Spreading, spreading
The smell of the custard apple
Spreading, spreading
The smell of the *pandair*
For twenty miles, the custard apple smells
For fifty miles, the *pandair* smells
The mother has a custard apple
Tucked in her skirt
The father has a *pandair*
In the ruck of his dhoti.

The custard apple and the *pandair* are girls ripe for marriage.

NEGOTIATIONS

(1) *The Arrival of the Envoys*

363 Bring, bring a mat, girl
Bring a mat
The guests have come
They are sitting in the courtyard
They are sitting at the door.

364 The raja of Jashpur
Comes to discuss the marriage
With ten horses and twenty elephants
He gallops on the road
He lifts the dust.

365 Haere, envoy, haere
To whom will you wed me ?
Marry me, envoy
To a girl with ear-rings like a starling
And clothes of silk.

(2) *Attempt and Opposition*

366 In a deserted plot
I planted sugar cane
I planted sugar cane
In a big village I settled my child's mother-in-law
Haere baba, will they outdo me or shall I win ?

The sugar-cane is the girl.

(3) *Attempt and Success*

367 Out of the east and west came a monkey
A monkey going on a journey
Only a little he strayed from his path
But the brother's bullet hit him
The brother's arrow struck him.

The monkey is here an envoy who strays from his path to negotiate for a girl. The brother hits him in the sense that he obtains a proposal from him.

368 Under the tamarind I scattered the paddy
And the sparrows came in bands
I set a trap for the greedy sparrows
And into it fell the boy's father and the father of the girl.

369 I planted a mango, father
Two mango trees I planted
O *juri* like a swan
O lovely *juri*
I sold a daughter
I sold two daughters
That daughter overlooks the land
That daughter is a *juri* like a swan.

370 You cut the big mango at its root
You broke the branches
You picked the long leaves
You pulled away the bunch of fruit.

Cutting the mango is selling the daughter.

(4) *The Selected Girl*

371 From where is the sunflower bride
Who goes to bring water in the raja's house ?
It is the sunflower bride of Gumla
Who goes for water in the raja's house.

372 In the little plot of *jhingi*
Comes a thief
No it is not a thief, sister
It is the bride chosen by the mother
The bride chosen by the father.

Jhingi is a creeper with long bean-like pods and is here a symbol of a boy.

THE BETROTHAL CEREMONY

373 East and west pick the long plantains, mother
And light the lamps in upper Barwe
From the jungle the clear water flows
From the sea comes dirty water
Into a lota put the clear water
Into a dish put the dirty water.

374 I am lost, mother, I am lost
Lost through a dish of water
Lost through a bowl of water
The younger brother blocks the spring
The elder brother digs for his living
The sister has gone
The village is empty
My house is sad and still.

375 Come, you ten brothers
Come, you twenty brothers
With lotas of water in the hands
With bowls full of water
Come, you ten brothers.

The reference is to the lota and bowl of water which the boy and girl drink at the betrothal ceremony and which is shared with the two parties.

THE WEDDING

(1) *The Appearance of the Bridegroom*

376 Where are you coming from
Beautiful parrot ?
The parrot speaks the name of Ram
Your feathers are green
Your chest is red, parrot
The parrot says the name of Ram.

The parrot is the bridegroom. A Pardhan Karma also connects a parrot with the same name :

On the flat top of a hill there is a tank,
Where a parrot has its home.
There it says to itself, Ram O Ram !
In the tank is a broken *pipal* tree,
And on the tree are flowers,
By the flowers grow little buds,
Above them all is that parrot's cage,
Where it says to itself, Ram O Ram ![1]

377 On the high hills, the low hills
Green are the leaves
If the father-in-law is not coming
I will go and see the son-in-law
Some say he is small
Some say he is big
If the father-in-law is not coming
I will go and see the son-in-law myself.

(2) *The Arrival of the Bridegroom's Party*

378 From where have the clouds gathered ?
From where is the rain falling ?
Girl, I am not to blame
From the east the clouds gathered
From the west the rain falls
Not mine is the fault.[2]

[1] *Songs of the Forest*, 94. [2] See also poem 164 in *The Blue Grove*.

379 From Jashpur comes the marriage party
With how many baggage carriers
Girl, do not get nervous
I will have you married.

380 The horse which came
Came looking at the dub grass
The elephant which came
Came bending and shaping the branches
The horse they have tied
Golden the chain silver the chain
To the nim tree branch they have tied it
The elephant they have tied
Golden the chain silver the chain
To the nim tree branch they have tied it.

381 In Kidili jungle, mother
Alone I wander
Mother, the cock has crowed
It is the point of morning.

The reference is to the arrival after dark.

382 Rearing her on broken rice
How they reared her
Beaten in the talks
Defeated in the words
Ahead are the hundred carriers
Behind is the gay litter
No one can save me, mother
No one can save me, father.

(3) *The Mock Capture*

383 In Brindaban in Brindaban
The robbers gather in their gangs
First come the guns and then the boxes
And last the baggage carriers
Coming in the rear.

384 O Europe
O Punjab
All the day long
The fighting
All the night through
The fighting
Ahead go the Germans
After them the English
Haere
The Germans are defeated.

The Germans and the English are the boy's party and the girl's. Verrier Elwin has also recorded similar German-English songs in *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh*, but these are straightforward songs about the War and do not have symbolic significance.

(4) *The Entertainment of the Guests*

385 What is that bird
With a call like honey ?
It is the samdhi, mother
Calling like honey
Mother, it is the girl's mother.

386 I went to Gumla market
I went to Sillam market
I was happy
I bought a pot
I bought a *kula* pot
I bought a *haria* pot
I was happy
I gathered the rice up
I poured out the beer
I poured it into the bowl
I served it in the cups
And round and round my samdo staggered.

387 You say there are enough, brother
There are not enough
Juris there are, brother
But no one at all from the family.

388 I waited for you but you did not come
Coming, you would have filled the hookah,
You would have packed the chelum
What a good smoke you would have had !

(5) *The Emotions of the Boy and the Girl*

389 You have given me in marriage, elder brother
Given me in marriage on the far side of the hill
It was not I who gave you in marriage, sister
It was the elders of the village.

390 I am too young, elder brother
Do not give me in marriage
Buy me a pretty tray
And a gay stick
And I will play at winnowing.

391 If you settle my marriage in a hilly country, elder brother
I shall take an axe and go to the hills
If you give me in marriage where there is no jungle, elder brother
I shall busy myself with the stubble.

392 Elder brother, you are still young
Do not give me in marriage
If you give me in marriage, elder brother
You will put the *dilingi* in your door
The *chatka* in the courtyard
And into a room I shall slip away.

The *dilingi* and *chatka* are different kinds of store-chest.

393 In the heart of the jungle, elder brother
The mustard is in bloom
While I live with you, brother
I shall pick the crop
After you have given me in marriage, brother
Who will pick it for you ?

(6) *The Wedding Presents*

394 Scattered the white clouds
Rain at the brother's wedding
Drops and drops of gold.

(7) *The Departure of the Bride and Bridegroom*

395 Come out, girl
Do not slink in the room
Now you are ripe
For handling and slapping
Now you must feel
The painted stick.

For the meaning of ' painted stick ', compare poem 128.

396 Under the high hills the narrow passes
They have taken the sister-in-law
The thieves have taken her away
Haere the sleepy watchers
Who call
Search, search and strike, strike
And did not catch the robbers
Haere those sleepy watchers.

In a Gond marriage song the thieves are the bridegroom's friends who carry off the calf, the bride :

To the edge of the woods
Have come the thieves
The cows are safe in their shed
But the thieves have stolen the calf.[1]

397 The hills, the high hills
Where is my daughter ?
I cannot see my daughter
I have looked in the village
I have looked in the streets
I cannot see my daughter
Where is she ?
I have looked in ditches
I have looked in the streams
Where is my daughter ?
O nowhere can I see her.

[1] *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills*, 215.

398 The mother
Who gave the lota of water with her own hands
Is weeping
The father
Who counted the dowry with his own hands
Is weeping
The elder sister
Who pinned the flowers in the hair with her own hands
Is weeping
The elder brother
Is catching his sister
And giving her away
The sister's beauty
Is filling the whole village.

THE RESULTS OF MARRIAGE

(1) *'The Death of the Heart'*

399 Mother, she plays with the fan
She plays with the basket
She toddles a little
She sits in the lap
And all of a scramble
She drinks her mother's milk.

The reference is to the bride when she was a baby. The bride going to her husband is as helpless as an infant.

400 You brought me up when I was little but you could not keep me always
Only for a speck of scarlet you had to send me to another's door.

401 Daughter, daughter
My only daughter
Walking in the village
How lovely she makes it look.

402 Little pretty bird
Little pretty bird
Where is your house?
Darling, little darling
Where is your house?

There is a similar identification of 'cage' and 'house' in poems 106 and 326.

403 You have sold your daughter, mother
You have done well
Your house is empty
You have brought a daughter-in-law, mother
You have done well
Your house is brightened.

404 The little sister
With her waist no bigger than a hand
To her waist her hair dangles
Jira jawain, father
Jira jawain, mother
They have given her in marriage
The mother's land is left
The mother's land is split.

(2) *Life at the Father-in-Law's*

405 Hanging the ghi, mother
Hanging the ghi
Hanging the ghi, mother, and the pots are empty
Am I a thief, mother ?
Am I a pilferer ?
I will go to my mother
I will go to my mother.

406 The bamboo stems, mother
Blossom in plenty
Daughter, we shall work and eat and you
Will manage the world of your father-in-law.

Bamboos are prolific and the meaning, as in poem 89, is that the girl will soon have a large family. Her mother-in-law consoles her with the reflection that as she gets older she will replace her parents-in-law and become the mistress of the house.

407 I sold my daughter I sold my daughter
I sold her for a single *dhiba*[1]
Later I see the silver coin
The corner of the fan is full
The corner of the door is full.

408 In every house the drums and trumpets are playing
My own house is silent
Where the drums play
There I shall go
There I shall go
I shall not listen
To the words of my mother
I shall not heed
The warning of my father.

409 No one, no one, brother
Behind me no one
In front of me no one
Going and coming in the house
I am lonely, brother.

[1] Two pice.

RIDDLES

RIDDLES

I

A water bean. — A fish.

II

The eight-legged one. — A crab.

III

The younger brother with the sharp teeth
The elder brother with the sharp eyes. — The white ant and the vulture.

IV

Buttocks before
Buttocks behind
Buttocks above
And between the legs. — While a cow is being milked the calf's haunches are by the cow's head while the cow's haunches are behind. The milkman's buttocks are above the ground and the milk pot is between the legs.

V

The bitten tassel that prods from hole to hole. — A country tooth-stick.

VI

The old woman who makes a leaf-cup as she comes and goes. — A foot print.

VII

The little bird that does not fear a raja. — An eye-fly.

VIII

The dwellers in cowdung who carry loads on their behinds.	Dung beetles.

IX

The man with teeth in his belly.	A sickle.

X

The twenty brothers with their foreheads the wrong way round.	Nails.

XI

The packet of mango leaves that hangs in the flesh.	An ear ornament.

XII

Silent when apart Crying when together.	Cymbals.

XIII

The moon eclipses the sun and a hammer knocks them apart.	A padlock and key.

XIV

The hill with the jointless bamboos.	The head and hair.

XV

The tiles that stand on the two slopes of a hill.	The ears.

XVI

Hollow inside Bowels outside.	A drum.

XVII

Paddy scattered in a field.	The earth from a mouse hole.

XVIII

Eat and drink it can But walk it cannot.	A tree.

XIX

Water springs from a dry piece of wood. — An oil press.

XX

The golden parrot with the silver beak
Drinks water through its tail. — A country lamp.

XXI

Every fruit has a stalk
but one fruit has no stalk. — An egg.

XXII

Everything has breasts but one thing has no breast. — A hen.

XXIII

The headless goat that stands still. — A paddy stump.

XXIV

The fruits that form separately and come together for ripening. — Earthen pots.

XXV

It hangs from the sky
And bites the earth. — A mattock.

XXVI

The spear of the raja that cannot be held. — Fire.

XXVII

A fire catches one village
The smoke rises in another village. — A hookah.

XXVIII

A father born after a son. — Mahua.

XXIX

The corpse with the four legs. — A country cot.

XXX

A fish jumps in a cup of water. — The tongue.

XXXI

Thatch inside
Rafters outside. — A leaf water-proof.

XXXII

When she reaches the age of her mother, the daughter wears her hair long. — A bamboo.

XXXIII

On either side, the splinters and inside, the fence. — The tongue.

XXXIV

The lump which is got from the threshing floor in the water. — Butter.

XXXV

A wooden house with a heron's beak. — A rice pounder.

XXXVI

Hands are inside
Ribs are outside
And over them all
Are the bowels of a goat. — A handloom.

XXXVII

Stay here, you with the big belly.
I am going out to see the country. — A marrow.

XXXVIII

The rice bales of the raja that cannot be placed on each other. — Eggs.

XXXIX

The black bitch that jumps on the hill when kicked. — A rice pounder.

XL

Hurry up, spoon shape
The work is waiting for you.

A grain measure.

XLI

Fifteen brothers had a chapati
Fourteen brothers ate it up
And the fifteenth ate it whole.

The moon.

XLII

The brother without legs, without a head and without a nose, walks on the road.

Writing on a paper.

XLIII

Slippery the stem
Smooth the leaves
Long the fruits
Sweet to eat.

A plantain.

XLIV

The brown cow that starts to graze in a corner.

Fire.

XLV

A red flag in the centre of a hill.

The cotton tree flower.

XLVI

A buffalo without a tail that dries up a pool.

A hole.

XLVII

A potter's garden
A weaver's garden
An oilman's garden
Three gardens all in one
And in it dances an old monkey.

A country lamp.

XLVIII

Seven co-wives with a single bottom.

Garlic.

XLIX

The little garden is lovely as a blossom. — A country lamp.

L

In a small pond is a champa flower. — A country lamp.

LI

A tree full of pots. — The fig tree.

LII

Come out, you with the eight legs
And hear the raja's message.
Speak up, you with the long mouth
I can hear where I am. — A crab and a heron.

LIII

Comes not when it comes
And comes when it comes not. — A river.

LIV

The tendrils of a creeper that make a noise when pulled. — A handloom.

LV

When she reaches the age of her mother, the daughter puts on her clothes. — Bamboo shoots.

LVI

The thread went into the fire, but did not burn
The inmates of the house were captured
The house escaped through the windows. — A fishing net, fish and water.

LVII

Fetch me a bridegroom
Or yourself marry me
My time will pass
And you will mourn. — A paddy seedling.

LVIII

A small hut in the centre of a hill.	The nose.

LIX

Knocked and it vomits.	A pot.

LX

Earth above and earth below and old Raghu in the middle.	A crab.

LXI

A behind full of curry.	Fish.

LXII

A headless goat jumps over a fence.	Blowing the nose.

LXIII

The woman with the four breasts.	A *nachuwa*.[1]

LXIV

The flirting woman with her breasts behind her.	A winnowing fan.

LXV

Spun with fine threads.	A spider's web.

LXVI

Early in the morning a boy gets up and says ' come and fetch me, mother '.	A plough stick.

LXVII

An elephant with hoofs on its knees.	A grasshopper.

LXVIII

The silent one who weeps when beaten.	A drum.

[1] A bamboo basket with four corners.

LXIX

Sell the sheep at a market but bring back the sheep when you come. — The sheep's wool.

LXX

It fell from above and was picked up and smelt. — A mango.

LXXI

Six things with twenty legs that cry in twos. — A kite, and a horse; a buffalo and a country trumpet: a cow and a tiger.

LXXII

Listen, my friend, to a strange thing
A father is born after his daughter-in-law. — Fire and smoke.

LXXIII

One name when living
Many names when dead. — A bamboo.

LXXIV

The best of all the flowers. — Cloth.

LXXV

The elephant pounds it
The horse levels it. — A rice pounder.

LXXVI

Going it goes but it fears water when it comes. — A shoe.

LXXVII

A dry and fallen thing wanders from place to place. — Paper.

LXXVIII

A single colour while hatching
Different colours when coming out. — Eggs and chickens.

LXXIX

Water from the sky
Water on the earth
Look at the woman
Who carries the water.

Toddy.

LXXX

It cries in the lap
And is silent on the ground.

A drum.

LXXXI

The house is coming in through the door, Where shall I go?

Water coming into a fishing trap; and a fish.

LXXXII

Tall and slim the trunk
Pretty and small the bird
The trunk does not shake
The bird does not call.

A handsome youth puts on his bells and is ready to dance.

LXXXIII

Going to the father-in-law it flies
Coming away it walks.

Rain falling. Rain going away in a river.

LXXXIV

The man who grows a beard before he cuts his teeth.

Maize.

LXXXV

The red raja holds court
The white raja roves the country.

Flower and fruit of the cotton tree.

LXXXVI

A scattered handful of mustard seed that can never be counted.

Stars.

LXXXVII

It was bashed against a threshing slab and still it did not break.

A cocoon.

LXXXVIII

Fire rises from a dry piece of wood. — A gun.

LXXXIX

The buffalo that the tiger killed
Gives milk to all. — The rod of a pair of scales.

XC

The animal with bowels in its head. — A crayfish.

XCI

Wood of one kind
Bark of another
And there the red monkey dances. — Sparks from a bellow.

XCII

It coils and is not a snake
It eats flesh and is not a tiger. — A worm, a maggot.

XCIII

On the earth or in the sky
In the sun or in the moon
On the hill or on the mountain
It has only one name. — Shadow.

XCIV

Twelve storeys high
With a door like a horn
And there the armoured warrior stands. — A wasp's nest.

XCV

The thing with the three legs. — A bamboo umbrella.

XCVI

The lifeless animal with the tasty meat. — Rice-beer.

XCVII

Sharp and sour one,
Why do you break a head ?
Then tell me why do you
roam at night.

A mango falling on a tortoise.

XCVIII

Little and it's torn to shreds
Young and it puts flowers in
its hair
Old and it hangs up its bells.

Gram.

XCIX

The smart youth who goes
into a flat door.

Sword.

C

Water in a fruit
Stalk on the water
An umbrella on the stalk
A sharp taste on the umbrella
The cry of the ploughboy
in the taste.

Smoking a hookah.

CI

Twenty thousand brothers
fell ill. When the pulse of
one was felt, all of them
were cured.

Rice boiling.

CII

I got the curd first
And then I milked the cow.

Rice-beer.

CIII

Red when going
And a hare's ears when com-
ing.

A murka flower.

CIV

A worn-out horse drinks wat-
er up to its knees.

A fishing trap.

CV

Cow and bullock spoil it
Ratan brother saves it.

To separate the paddy from the straw, cattle tread on it. To separate the grains from the husks, one uses a winnowing fan.

CVI

It roams about all day and where it stays at night is only worth a pice.

A stick.

CVII

The dung of a buffalo in the middle of a pond.

The moon.

CVIII

The red thing that goes into your hole.

The leaf ornament in the lobe of the ear.

CIX

What is the best among the decaying ?

Rice-beer.

What is the best among the dead ?

Fish.

What is the best among the broken ?

Cotton.

What is the best among flowers ?

Cotton flowers.

CX

The landlord caught hold of the land-lady
And the land-lady caught hold of the tenants of the village.

The main beam, the rafters and the tiles.

CXI

Straight but with a weight in its bottom.

The pole for the well.

CXII

Oil of the oilman, stick of the potter, trunk of the elephant, flag of the nawab.

An oil press.

CXIII

The ten brothers who carry a single log.[1]	A crab.

CXIV

The little bird twitters, breaks it with its legs and gives a tasty meat.	Dal (pulse).

CXV

Who is the best of the rajas ?	Salt.

CXVI

In the village of the nails the deer was killed.	A louse.

CXVII

The one-eared goat roams the street.	A potsherd.

CXVIII

Two brothers saw it Five brothers picked it. Thirty-two brothers ate it Only one knew its taste.	Two eyes, five fingers, thirty-two teeth, one tongue.

CXIX

The man who carries a load once a year.	The scaffolding for a creeper.

CXX

The boy who rides a horse.	Spectacles.

CXXI

Tippety, tippety, why do you break the head ? Wiggly, wiggly, why do you roam at night ?	Mahua and snake.

CXXII

They sleep apart but fart together.	Bellows.

[1] A log is tied to a bullock's neck to prevent it from straying.

CXXIII

Two annas for a sore against the will. — Vaccination.

CXXIV

A seer before it ripens.
Four seers when it's ripe. — A corpse.

CXXV

Which of all the roots mixes best in the body ? — Turmeric.

CXXVI

The tree with the twelve branches and its name in every leaf. — The year.

CXXVII

Boil it and it is not cooked
Roast it and it's finished. — A hair.

CXXVIII

The girl with the round little body works the pounder, while the red girl supplies the grain. — Teeth and tongue.

CXXIX

The trunk of a tree on an ant-hill.
In the trunk of the tree a nest
And in the nest an egg. — A hookah.

CXXX

The man who is always eating meat. — A ploughing stick.

CXXXI

The animal that excretes string. — A spider.

CXXXII

A tethered calf in a deserted field. — A mushroom.

CXXXIII

Be off you silly
With a spool in your belly. Mahua.

CXXXIV

The little bird with its meat between two stones. A louse.

CXXXV

On a steep slope a pair of mirrors. Eyes.

CXXXVI

A heated rat bathes early in the morning. A coulter.

CXXXVII

The boy who dives as soon as he leaves his bed. The bucket of a well.

CXXXVIII

The boy who ties a rope by turning round. Rice boiling.

CXXXIX

It sleeps at night and wakes during the day. A mat.

CXL

Thuruk thuruk it sounds
In a corner it hides.

A wooden mortar for pounding.
A wooden pestle for husking.

THE WOMEN'S HUNT

THE WOMEN'S HUNT

AFTER AN INTERVAL of twelve years, the women's hunt burst on the Ranchi district of Chota Nagpur in the middle of April 1940. It swept across the Sadr and Khunti subdivisions, infected Gumla and ended in Simdega about the middle of May. In its origin Uraon, the ceremony imposed on other castes and tribes a pantomime and a carnival, and during its rampaging course it asserted a set of Uraon beliefs, it gave to hosts of women a fantastic satisfaction, and for the time being slightly altered the balance of society in the district.

The hunt started in Ormanjhi thana and by noon of 12 April in Ormanjhi itself, a small band of Uraon women and girls were laughing and singing on the main road as they went along in the guise of men. They wore dhoties, shirts and turbans and those who could get them had put on red and black waistcoats. They carried lathis, halberds and axes and were looking for goats and fowls.

In Ranchi itself, at about the same time, there were three processions of grotesquely clad women. The lines went down the main road, looting whatever animals they could. Topis vied with turbans in giving the mock men a masculine semblance, and after butchering pigs and fowls, they went home swinging their booty and gaily singing.

A week later the hunt reached Gumla and on 20 April a joint hunt of three villages, Karaundi, Phasia and Tarri, took place. The women mustered more than two hundred and were mainly Uraons and Kharias. A few Teli, Mallah, Kherwar, Chik and Rajput women went with them.

The hunt started in the early morning, went through Gumla and then over the fields to Ghatha Satparha. From there it turned east, reaching Soso in the heat of the mid-afternoon and ending at Karaundi in the evening. Here the day's bag was cooked and the hunt finally dispersed in the small hours of the next morning.

As the hunt was nearing Soso, the total bag amounted to two pigs, two goats and fifteen fowls. These were strung on poles and were carried by two pairs of strapping girls. In Soso, the hunt went straight to the akhra and, forming themselves into three lines, the women and girls went round and round like savage and mock males. During the dance they sang again and again the hunting song :

After twelve years, the women's hunt
The raja ties a turban on the women's head.

When at last the singing stopped, they stamped four times on the ground and jingled their male dancing bells. A little later the village headman came and gave them permission to hunt in the village. A wild dispersal followed. A pig was sighted. The women galloped after it, and at the end of a hot chase it was killed. After three fowls had also been secured, the hunt set off on its journey home, carrying its swollen spoils in triumph.

Back in Karaundi, the women received a hunter's welcome. The men, who during the day had done the women's work of bringing water, cooking, cleaning up the cowshed, and keeping an eye on the children, came out, washed their feet and ushered them in. The women skinned and cut up the meat, and divided it among the households; and when the night meal was over, there was a mass women's dance in the akhra with loud triumphal singing.

A fortnight later, the hunt reached Chetter, also in Gumla thana. Here it totalled sixty women and consisted mainly of Uraons with a sprinkling of Rautias, Lohars, Ahirs and Chiks. The hunt took in Dumardih and also visited Soso. As it went along, the women who were dressed as men were heard exchanging quips of the kind 'Hurry up, there's a good boy', 'What! A great boy like you can't walk any faster', 'Look at that old man!'.

When the hunt reached Soso in the late afternoon, three pairs of burly girls were carrying the spoils, two goats, one pig and seven fowls, and the hunt then separated, half of the women forming a cordon round the houses while the other half went to the akhra. The dancing and singing, and the formal permission from the mahto and pahan ensued and then a pig was tracked down and killed. After that, the hunt went surging home.

About the same time, Kinkel in Simdega sub-division was affected. Here the hunt mustered about twenty-five consisting mainly of Uraons but with a few Telis, Chiks and Kharias mixed in. It made a round of all the tolas of Kinkel and then went on to Karuarjor and Karangaguri. Here also the women donned a variety of male clothes and sallied out with axes and lathis.

At Karuarjor, the hunt met some opposition and moved on without killing anything; but in Karangaguri, the tables were turned. A boy who was grazing goats when the hunt came up, tried to keep the women off. There was a hot exchange of words and the boy was put to flight and pursued by a merry gang of girls. As they ran after him, they called out 'He's not a boy, he's a girl'. After that a goat was killed and the hunt moved on. By the end of the day, one goat, one pig, and four fowls had been bagged.

By the middle of May, more of Simdega sub-division was affected and at Kuruchdega in Bano thana about a hundred and fifty women went swaggering out in male dress. Mundas, Uraons, and Kharias bulked largest but Chiks, Lohars and Ghansis also took part. The hunt went first to Ketunga Tikuntoli then on to Jarakel, Bundulda and Kanoroa, after that to Pabura and Bani and finally home to Kuruchdega. By the end of the day, three pigs, three goats and twelve fowls had been killed.

The procedure in each village ran to type. The women first met the mahto and pahan, then with their consent they danced and sang in the akhra, and finally were told what animals and birds they might take. In some villages these were brought and given to them. In others an animal or fowl was pointed out and a mass chase ensued.

While the hunt was sweeping towards Gumla sub-division a branch was infecting Khunti and on 16 April as I was motoring five miles south east of Khunti, I met forty Munda girls straggling along in dhotis and turbans, and in a mood of strange elation. Some of them were singing and a pig and a goat were being carried in their midst.

Five miles the further side of Khunti I met a similar band, also laden with a pig and a goat and singing and shouting. All were dressed like men but all looked oddly plump and gawky. I asked one of the warriors where they were coming from and she told me from ' a hunt on Biru Pahar '. She then made a playful cut at me with an axe.

By the end of May, the hunt had ceased in Ranchi and after moving into Jashpur and Gangpur, it came finally to a stop in early June. By then, the topis and turbans had been laid aside, the dashing bravery of the dhotis forgotten and the men and women were back where they were before the hunt had caught them in its wild romantic scamper.

A first explanation of this strange carnival is to be found in the legends. The main legend as current in Gumla dates the hunt from the Uraon expulsion from Rohtas. According to this story, the Uraons under an Uraon raja were holding Rohtas fort and had beaten back a series of Muhammadan raiders. An Ahir woman who supplied the Uraons with milk then advised them to make an assault on the day of the Sarhul festival when all the Uraon men would be drunk. She told them the date. Accordingly while the men were lying drunk in the sacred grove and the women were pounding rice for making the Sarhul bread, the Muhammadans attacked. Seeing the Muhammadans approaching, the women hastily put on male dress, tied turbans on their heads and went out

with their rice pestles to fight them. The Muhammadans were taken aback at the sight of a male army and fled in abrupt retreat. When they reached their camp, they abused the Ahir woman for giving them wrong news. The woman laughed and said that the Uraon women had tricked them and the soldiers who had sent them flying were not men but women. She told them to send scouts to see how the Uraon warriors were washing their faces. If they were using one hand, they were men but if two hands, they were women. Scouts were sent and they reported that the warriors were washing in a river and using both their hands. The Muhammadans then attacked again but the Uraon women again beat them back. A third time the Muhammadans attacked and a third time the women defeated them. Finally, the Muhammadans tried yet again and this time they routed the women and drove the Uraons from Rohtas fort. The Uraons escaped by a secret track and the Muhammadans abandoned the pursuit. To celebrate the three occasions when they defeated the Muhammadans, Uraon women have since put three tatoo marks on their foreheads and to celebrate their success in male dress the Uraon raja tied turbans on their heads and decreed a women's hunt every *jug* of twelve years.

Three other versions which are current in Gumla accept the main outlines of this legend but modify its details. Thus in one version the Ahir woman is omitted, there is no mention of the Uraon collapse, and the raja ties the turbans on the women's heads after the first day's rout of the Muhammadans. In a second version, the Muslims attack Rohtas on the Sarhul day, the Uraon women sally out in male dress and beat them back, they dip their fingers in the blood of the Muhammadans, mark their foreheads with the gore, and it is only after an Ahir man has told the Muhammadans to apply the washing test that the ruse is detected. The Muslims then attack again, overcome the resistance of a combined male and female army and drive the Uraons southward. To celebrate the women's first success the women's hunt and the tattoo on the forehead were started. Finally the third version amplifies the circumstances in which the raja tied the turban. After the Uraon collapse, the raja and a group of women were retreating through the caves and rocks. They came out near a karam tree and while they hid by a large boulder, the Muhammadans passed by overhead. The raja then declared that their escape was due to two causes--the skill of the women in beating back the Muslims for three days in succession and the lucky presence of the karam tree. To celebrate the first he tied turbans on the women's heads and to honour the second he started the Karam festival.

A version in Kinkel in Kurdeg thana accepts the substance of the main Gumla version but follows the first two Gumla variants in crediting the women with only one Muslim defeat. It then states that in the Uraon collapse following the second attack, the Uraon raja was killed and the women's hunt was started to commemorate his death.

In Kompala in Thethaitangar thana, the main Gumla legend is followed but in a summary form. The legend dates the hunt from the time of an Uraon raja, Hari Chandra Rai, and says that it celebrates the women's skill in disguising themselves as men and beating back the Muslims.

In a Munda version of Gargarbahar in Thethaitangar thana, the main Gumla account is accepted with the exception that the Muhammadans are defeated only once. There is then a Munda amplification. According to this, when the Uraons collapsed at Rohtas they went southward with the Muslims harrying their retreat. The Uraons reached the Munda country with the Muhammadans still in pursuit and to save themselves from being butchered they disguised themselves as Mundas by putting marks on their foreheads. The Muslims failed to detect the ruse, found only Mundas, and retired. The hunt was then started as a joint Munda-Uraon festival to celebrate the joint outwitting of the Musalmans.

To accept this as the sole explanation however would be to misunderstand both the nature of the myth and the nature of the rite. On a first view, the myth is functional. It is the sanction for the course of action, the apparent motive behind it, and even the decisive energizer. The women perform their hunt because the Uraon raja sanctioned it and because the myth requires its recurrent celebration. But equally it could be said that the women recount the myth because the hunt requires it. The myth has little or no historical basis. It fluctuates from area to area, and we shall only be grasping its real meaning if we regard it not as fact but as poetry, as the expression of a need rather than the statement of a truth. In this view, it is neither the myth which fully explains the hunt nor the hunt which fully explains the myth. Both spring from the same need and both are forms of symbolism.

This need may be defined as follows. In Uraon society, the principles of succession are male, the method of government is male, the salient offices are male. The men are by convention and tradition the social superiors of the women. But if this is the convention, it is only partly the fact. In Uraon villages, the actual relation is one of equality. It is as equals that the men and women dance, it is as equals that a wife and a husband order their family

affairs and it is as equals that they work and live together. There is thus a stress between the formal structure of tribal life and the actual feelings and emotions which thrust upon it. To relieve this stress is the function of the hunt and the myth.

The myth shows that although the men may rule, it is the women who are also men. In its reliance on the success of a simple trick, it expresses Uraon pleasure in naive cleverness and under this typically Uraon cover, it mildly pokes fun at male incompetence. The balance is therefore righted. The women are recognized to be the equals of the men.

The hunt with its brusque reversal of roles has the same effect. It demonstrates that the country is as much the women's as the men's. For a single exciting day, it downs all masculine dominance. It gives the women a new boldness, and finally through the element of transvesticism, it clinches the excitement with a slightly sexual tinge. The women in the act of becoming men feel themselves profoundly female. As a result of this expression in playful pantomime, female resentment at male control is neutralized. The feelings which if permanently repressed might cause danger are dispersed. The women in the act of asserting their rights realize from their gawky actions that the claim is unreal; and in peals of laughter the stress is dissolved.

The importance of the women's hunt is that, through its simple symbolism, the tribe keeps its balance.[1]

[1] Verrier Elwin has recorded an interesting parallel in Baiga tradition: 'A great company of Baiga women were filled with one of those "inspirations" that descend from time to time on primitive tribes. They dressed up as men, adorned themselves with men's ornaments and tied turbans on their heads. Carrying spears and bows and arrows, they went out as an army. When they came to a village, they beat all the men, and drove them to take shelter in their homes. Then they caught a pig, cut off its ears and tail and gave them to the headman. They took the pig and marched home. Then two women of the village they had visited took the ears and tail from the headman and themselves formed an army and marched to the next village. There they repeated the process with another pig. Meanwhile the women of the original village captured a man and made him their servant. They made him kill the pig and roast it. Then they had a great feast and ended all with the karma. "We men were very frightened," says Dhan Singh, "for the women had spears and they were mad. Who knew what they would do? I was only a young boy and I wept very much when my pig was killed."' (*The Baiga*, 238-9.)

LIST OF IMAGES

References are to poem numbers

I

THE DOVE AND THE LEOPARD

II

THE BLUE GROVE

INDEX