

Folk Tales of Central India

By

DURGA BHAGVAT

Introduction

The Central Provinces are rich in folk-tales and with the variety of material vindicates a contrast between the polished, romantic and the sophisticated story of the Hindus and that of the aboriginals. Yet considering the large population of the tribes in the province, the contrast is not at all sharp as one would expect. The fusion of the Hindu and the tribal tales is due to the fusion of the two cultures on which the motifs of the tales are based.

Principal motifs of tales:—

(a) Motifs of Hindu tales:—

(1) Mythology

(i) Creation, (ii) Gods.

(2) Deification of heroes and saints.

(3) Sacred spots¹.

(b) *Motifs of aboriginal tales:*

(1) *Tribal mythology:—*

(i) Creation (ii) Gods.

(2) Totem.

(3) Heroes.

(4) Sacred spots.

*Common motifs:—*The motifs which both the Hindus and the tribes have taken from the same stock are:

(a) *Local tradition:*

(i) place, (ii) tree, (iii) animal, (iv) bird.

(b) *Supernatural belief:*

(i) Ghost, (ii) Magic and witchcraft.

(c) *Love:—*

(i) Man and woman, (ii) parents and children, (iii) brothers and sisters, (iv) other family relations, (v) friends, (vi) jocular relations.

(d) *Humour:—*

1. The source of all these tales is the Vedic and Puranic literature including the Epics.

(i) sex-element, (ii) idiocy, (iii) sarcasm about other castes and tribes, (iv) funny situation.

(e) Origin and interdependence of various castes and tribes.

The working of the tribal tales:—The story requires a trained memory and power of expression for its preservation and spread. People with the gift of narration and intelligence only are possessors of all good tales. The tales are mostly based on local traditions and some have been taken up from an alien source. It is not an easy thing to find an expert story-teller among the tribes, though practically each and every man and woman is conversant with the chief tribal tales. Such an expert naturally commands great respect from the people, and is usually a bit conceited, as he comes in touch with several important persons of other tribes and castes. Such a man is usually the headman or the Gunia (magician) of the villages. The contact makes him keep his knowledge brushed up and up-to-date. Tales are also preserved by the aboriginal bards, e.g., the Pardhan or Pathari, the Ojha and the Diga who are professional story-tellers and bards of the Gond.

The story has a natural tendency to spread. As it has been, unlike the song, its connection with the ritual is preserved in very few cases. And so, many a trait which is not commonly found among the tribal people who have preserved and cherished the tale, is found sticking persistently to it. That is an irresistible echo of the outer and the bigger culture of the province, viz. the idea of 'feminine chastity' persistently adheres to the story of the aborigines of even the most solitary and backward tracts like the southern part of Raipur, deep forests on the border of Hoshangabad and Betul, and the Patakot of Chhindwara, etc., though the sex conventions of the tribes are different from the Brahmanic standard. The Hindu idealism and the theory of Karma also have gone to the very root of the tribal tales. Usually the framework of the story is essentially based on the Hindu ideas and only a few details are indicative of the aboriginal standards.

Mythology:—The mythological tales perform an important function of shedding light on some of the vital culture traits of the people viz. (1) their psychology, (2) their attitude towards the gods and fellow beings, (3) their religious practices and (4) philosophy of life.

We have to see now how far the mythological records of Central India are reflected in the above mentioned traits. We have to tackle the problem however with a handicap. In spite of the love of the aborigines in the area to tell stories and listen

to stories, we find that there are few who can tell a substantial myth. The hardest task an anthropologist has to face in his hunt for folk-lore, is to get the myths of a tribe. Many hill-tribes, living in complete isolation like the Bharia of Chhindwara or the Kamar of Raipur, cannot give but a broken legendary account of their remote ancestors—but none of their gods. As for instance, the Kamar trace their taking to archery as the commemoration of the event when Ram in his exile gave one of their remote ancestors his own bow and arrow. So also, they tell the tragic story of two of their greatest heroes Kana and Bhaira who were tricked and killed by the Gond. The Bharia have even less to tell us. The Korku have accepted the Mahadeo Parvati myths of the Hindus and have probably given up their own tribal mythology. All these tribes on a closer inquiry tell one that they are followers of the Gond mythology. How far these tribes are actually influenced by the Gond mythology, we are not yet in a position to ascertain. But judging from the material on the tribal myths that has already been published, the statement does not seem to be very far from truth. As for instance, an important tribe like the Baiga, who definitely does not belong to the Gond family has its own legendary accounts of Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin, the first Baiga pair. Their accounts of the creation of the world, and of other gods are clearly of Gond origin. Only the part of the Nanga Baiga in the creation of the world is exaggerated.²

Looking to the various legends that are current about the Bara Deo of the Gond, and the spread of his worship among non-Gond tribes of the region, as well as out of the region suggest the Gond supremacy in the tribal myths and religious practices.

The mythological records even of the Gond are broken and sometimes even obscure. Contradictions are not few. Adaptations from popular Hindu mythology (which we can call pseudo-mythology, as contrasted with the classical mythology) are found everywhere. And yet the aboriginal myths have retained some traits, which are non-Hindu and give the tales a special primitive setting as shall be discussed in the course of the chapter.

Why I call the mythology of the tribes in Central India pseudo-mythology, is not only for its dependence on Hindu popular mythology, but also because nowhere in these myths we get definite ideas of the tribal pantheons. Even the ideas of cosmo-

2. Elwin, *The Baiga*, p. 305.

logy, and the persons and beings taking part in the formation of the universe are so hazy. Even about the primitive ancient heroes no elaborate records exist. This shortage of accurate information of ancient events and persons deprives the tribal myths of much of their positive character and has made them permanently subservient to the Hindu myths.

The gods in the primitive myth:—Bhagvan or Creator is mentioned in all the primitive mythological tales. Looking to the real primitive tradition, the idea of the supreme deity seems to have evolved out of the tribal contact with the Hindu religion. Yet it is only in more Hinduised tribal population where the Creator is identified with Mahadeo. And hence in many tales of creation, Mahadeo and his wife Parvati are the most prominent figures.

The Gond have their Bara-deo or 'the great god', but he is not the creator (though many Hinduised Gond now say that he is Mahadeo), and in the oldest version of the creation legend now available to us, in Hislop's papers, no mention of Bara Deo is made. Only the Creator is mentioned who with the help of the crow, the crab and the earth-worm creates the earth.

Even in the Baiga legend of creation Bhagvan is the actor and Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin and the rest of the heroes come very late. The identification of the deified tribal hero such as Bara-deo, with Bhagvan or Mahadeo³ is more a Hindu trait than a primitive one. The aborigines do deify men. An analysis of the legends of Bara-deo shows us that he was a man who came to be worshipped after his death. So did Lingo become an object of worship.

The Baiga worship Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin. The Agaria worship the ancient king Lohgandi and his twelve sons. Yet the primitives have shown remarkable commonsense in not making these men 'incarnations' of some god, as the Hindus always have done with their ancient heroes. As every dead is paid his share of worship for some fixed time, the first known ancestors are paid an everlasting tribute. The deification of these heroes involves no further mysticism. It is only when the aborigines come into a closer contact with the elaborate and all-absorbing Hindu mysticism that the gods of aborigines cease to be deified men and are likely to be identified with Mahadeo or Bhagvan. So far of all the tribal gods only Bara-deo has undergone that fate.

3. Kakaprasad Mishra, *Gondi Dharma Sadwichar*, p. 1.

The Hindu contact has also linked the names of gods like Brahma, Ganesh and Kartik and also of the goddess Laxmi with the primitive tales. Narayan is another popular deity of the primitives. He is neither the god Vishnu nor the sun-god of the Hindu mythology, but a very peculiar deity. Though the god is recipient of the pig-sacrifices and secures health for the people, he is the deity of the household. Yet we have no elaborate tales about him except what we find in the Baiga account, and in the story of Premnarayan in my collection where he is identified with Budha-deo or Bara-deo. The Baiga account which is current in a larger population of other tribes in the eastern districts of Madhya Pradesh also identifies him with Bara-deo, and in spite of his being recipient of sacrifices, also receives kicks from every passer-by on the threshold as a punishment of the sin by polluting the sacrificial food by offering it to the untouchable Dom Raja.⁴ This is narrated in the creation myth. So Nanga Baiga, greatly annoyed by this unceremonious behaviour of Narayan Deo, cursed him that he should receive kicks of men on the threshold.

The Dom Raja or Domar Raja appears in the story of Premnarayan also, as he is the custodian of Annadeo, the god of food. He has the seeds of all corn in his possession in the underworld and he gives it to the first Gond brothers Bariyar and Rakhtyal to sow on the earth.

The tale of Shriyal Jangu, a female Gond deity, identified with Ratmai, tells us that the goddess appeared to the two Gond brothers Bariyar and Rakhtyal in their dreams and asked them to offer worship to her. The tale is broken and abrupt. Yet it is one of the very few primitive stories which are still linked with a ritual. The tale is recited when the worship of Ratmai takes place in Chhattisgarh. The tale of Budha-deo or Premnarayan is also recited in the worship of the god. Similarly the tale of creation is recited in the 'bidri rites', the sowing operations.⁵ In Raipur at the time of the harvest festival in November the following tale is told:—

Earth and Sky fell in love with each other, and they confided their secret to the Creator. The Creator was very happy to learn about it and made grand preparations for the wedding. All creatures were invited to celebrate the occasion, and the rejoicing knew no bounds. But the jackal took no part in the

4. Elwin, *The Baiga*, pp. 314 ff; St. Fuchs, *The Gond and Ghumia of Eastern Mandla*, pp. 425f.

5. Elwin, *The Baiga*, p. 306.

festivities. It kept aloof with a sinister smile on its face. When the wedding ceremony was about to take place, the jackal shouted out contemptuously, 'Surely, Bhagvan is gone mad. He has no commonsense. The world is coming to an end'. Every one was astounded at this impudence of the jackal. Many got angry with it. Yet the jackal repeated the statement that Bhagvan was wrong in giving a sanction to the matrimonial alliance of the Earth and the Sky. Bhagvan however had more patience than the rest and he asked the jackal what it meant by the remark. The wise jackal replied, 'When the earth and the sky will have a conjugal embrace, there will be no space left between the two, and all the creatures on the earth and those in the sky will be crushed to death. It is surprising, you have not so far realized this simple truth'.

Bhagvan now understood the truth behind the jackal's utterance and the serious consequences that would follow the marriage. He immediately broke the engagement and got the Earth married to the Sun instead.

We thus see how far primitive mythology is subservient to the ritual. It is to be borne in mind in this respect that looking to the number of mythological tales very few like these pointed out above are connected with a ritual. Besides we know almost nothing about the gods of the Gond, on whom the septs depend. The legend of Bara-deo is broken. Only an irrelevant bit of Parsa Pen's legend is available in a charm.⁶ We know nothing about Gagra Deo and Sankra Deo of the Gond.

It is obvious from whatever mythological tales we have that the creation legends and those concerning heroes are more popular and obtainable in a greater number than the stories about the tribal gods.

Creation:—The tales of origin can be classified in three categories viz. (1) the creation of the universe, (2) the birth of man and (3) the adjustment of the races. These we shall examine separately.

The Tales of Creation:—The Gond tale of creation has a universal appeal in the aborigines of the central regions. There are variants of the tale, and the difference in the version is due to (1) the verbal transmission of the tale, (2) the current tradition of the locality and (3) the tradition of the tribe. Thus we have a different version of the tale as it is told by a Gond, a Pardhan, a Baiga and an Agaria and so on. A Gond gives pro-

6. See Vol. XXXI-1, p. 70.

minence to Lingo, the Pardhan to his first ancestor and the playing the Kinri flute; the Baiga talks much of Nanga Baiga and magic, and the Agaria of Lohgandi Raja and the virgin iron. Many a time the classical Hindu ideas of creation also get mixed up with these old tales. Especially when the beginning of the world is discussed the idea of the primeval ocean and God who 'wished to create the world' is the same as in the old Hindu tales.⁷ Names of ancient sages also are mixed up with various important events from time to time.

Looking to the accounts of the creation legends of the Gond and Baiga as they are presented by Hislop, Russell, Elwin and Fuchs, as well as a few bits I have been able to get from the Pardhan, one thing becomes plain that the Gond explanation of creation is the central theme of all the tales of origin available among the aborigines of the area. And though each tribe has endeavoured to put its stamp on the legend, yet it has not deprived its brethren from their secondary place of honour. Thus the Gond when he tells the legend will tell us something nice about the Baiga, the Pardhan and Agaria. And they in return also will speak about the Gond. The creation legend therefore has an intertribal character.

The gist of the creation legend:—In the beginning there was nothing but water, and on a lotus leaf sat Bhagvan. He created a crow from the dirt of the chest and entrusted him with the mission of finding out the seed of the earth. The crow flew all over the water and saw a gigantic crab. The crab on knowing the mission of the crow, took it to an earthworm. The earthworm had stored the seed of the earth in its belly. When the crow and the crab explained about the great work Bhagvan had entrusted to the crow, the earth-worm vomited and gave a small mud ball to the crow, which contained twenty-one seeds of the earth. The mud ball then was dissolved by Bhagvan in water and the water was churned well. After nine days a layer of earth was formed. But the earth then was not steady and Bhagvan had to make it steady by passing nails into it.

II. *The Birth of man*:—With the Hindus the aborigines share the same belief that man was the last and the best of God's creation. The riddle of man's first coming into the world has as much interest for the aborigines as for their civilized brethren.

The tales of the birth of man shed considerable light on the aboriginal philosophy of life and death as well as their atti-

7. Elwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 308 ff.

tude towards sex.

The tales unanimously attribute the parenthood of mankind to Mahadeo and Parvati. Mahadeo showed favour to the fair coloured Hindus and Parvati was always loving the dark and neglected children, the Gond.

It is also universally acknowledged by the aborigines of the area that before the birth of man the world was inhabited by the gods. The first parents of the tribes like Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin and the ancient Gond men and women, whose names we do not know, and King Lohgandi of the Agaria, etc., were lucky enough to come into contact with the gods and even shape the destiny of mankind to some extent.

The gist of the tale regarding the birth of man is as follows:—

Mahadeo was capable of creation as he knew the charm of the seed—the Bijamantra. The knowledge of this charm made him immortal. He wanted to create man. But before man made his appearance on the planet, Mahadeo wanted to find suitable work like agriculture, forestry, etc., for him and was planning instruments for it. To do this he retired to the jungle and left Parvati alone in the house. Mahadeo had made seven vegetable plots in his garden and had forbidden his wife to eat Kamdeo's vegetable—the vegetable of love from one of the plots. But Parvati ate it and since then suffered from the curse of menstruation and painful childbirth. As her daughters the curse is visited upon all women.

Parvati then sent a tiger to convey the news of the calamity to Mahadeo. But Mahadeo was so much engrossed in his work that he got angry when he was disturbed, and created a batch of wild dogs who hunted the tiger. Parvati also got angry when her husband was inattentive to her and burnt the mouths of the dogs. The dogs came back yelling to Mahadeo and told him how his wife had treated them. Mahadeo then went home, saw his wife and came to understand that Parvati had become pregnant.

Parvati gave birth to several children. Some were fair and some very dark and mischievous. The fair children were the Hindus and the dark ones the aborigines.⁸

8. The Hindu idea of menstruation and child birth is this: In the *Va-sistha Dharma Sutra*, I, 1, tells us that menstruation is the mark of the sin of killing a Brahmin. Indra became a sinner when he killed Vritra, a Brahmin. Indra wanted to get rid of the sin and asked if anybody would take it away from him. Women said they would accept the sin if Indra would give them children. 'Every month you will menstruate, and get

The social adjustment of the tribes:—The social adjustment of the tribes is one of the most important points which strikes a student of the tribal myths. It sheds a considerable light on the social status of the tribes. It tells us how the tribes stand with the Hindus and also how the tribes behave with one another.

As we have already seen, the ancient tales of the aborigines tell us that Mahadeo showed special favour for the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. The Gond children, on the other hand, were dark and mischievous. He did not love them. He was annoyed with their pranks and buried them in a ditch. It was Lingo who rescued the Gond from their underground prison and taught them music and dance and worship.⁹

Another version of the ill-treatment of the Gond by Mahadeo says that the Gond babies were numerous and very troublesome and fought for their mother's milk and in this way contrived to injure Parvati's breasts. Eventually she complained to Mahadeo who gathered up all the dark children and threw them into a river. They swam out of the river and started sucking at Parvati's breasts and caused her pain. Once again Mahadeo got annoyed and dug a hole and buried all the Gond children. He kept a stone on the hole so that they should not escape. However one little Gond girl hid behind a huge trunk of a tree and escaped burial. She went to Parvati and asked her where her companions were. Parvati pointed to her Hindu children. The girl attempted to form a friendship with them, but they ill-treated her and drove her away. The girl came back to her mother and asked her where her real companions were. Parvati pointed to the place where the Gond children were buried. The girl went to the spot and called them out. 'We are all here, but we cannot escape'. They said. She removed the stone with great effort. All the Gond children came out. They had no clothes to wear like their Hindu brethren. So they retired to the forest with the kind little girl.

In the Baiga tale also the superiority of the Hindu is hinted at when the Hindus including the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Banias and the Shudras even refuse to eat food with Nanga Baiga. Only the Gond agree to do so.

more children', Indra said to them. Since that time women menstruate. The aboriginal idea however is more realistic. That menstruation is a great inconvenience to women and a mark of sex-antagonism becomes quite clear from all the stories about menstruation and child-birth that are available in the area. (cf. Elwin, *The Baiga*, pp. 208 ff.)

9. Hislop, *op. cit.*, Part III, also tale No. 3.

The Baiga tales, however, are neither tragic nor submissive in spirit as the tales of the Gond. The Baiga as a magician has been able to subdue even gods like Narayan and Baradeo. No Brahmin is big enough to scoff at a Baiga. No Hindu is given by Bhagvan an important mission to perform as Nanga Baiga and the Agaria. They were asked to fix the earth with nails.¹⁰

The aborigines however do not treat the untouchables with respect. The Chamar is ridiculed because he eats carrion, and is treated with disdain.¹¹ The Dom is said to be in possession of grain before the Gond took to agriculture and he gave them seeds to sow.¹² Yet the Baiga and the Gond look upon him contemptuously.¹³ The aborigines also do not all stand on the same level. The Gond are numerous and a ruling race. They are always given first place of honour in the tales. Other tribes depend on them as their bards, etc., like the Pardhan and Ojha. They came next. In fact in all the tales the Pardhan tell us about ancient heroes and happenings the Gond is always the central figure. The Baiga however assume a much better position than the Pardhan priests. The influence of the Baiga on the Gond is obvious from the creation tales. The Baiga have adopted the Gond version of cosmology, yet the place of Nanga Baiga and the mission he is entrusted with are unique. The Baiga by their ancient and mysterious heritage of magic have always held the Gond under their spell. In the Gond tales also, Nanga Baiga is given due recognition.¹⁴ The Agaria also share the same ideas about the creation of the world and boast a lot about their ancient position when King Lohagandi performed miraculous deeds and held people under his sway. Yet the curse of God fell on him and his twelve sons and since that time the Agaria lost their position and became subservient to the Gond.¹⁵ The Bharia in Chhindwara have no independent mythology except that of the Gond, though physically as well as culturally they differ considerably from the Gond. 'The ancestor of the Bharia ate by mistake from the leaf plate which a Gond had thrown away after taking his food from it. Since that time the tribe has to follow us in all we do' say the Gond neighbours of the Bharia. The position the Bharia have in the tract is not enviable. The Gond

10. Elwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 314 ff; S. Fuchs, *op. cit.*, pp. 417f.

11. See tale No. 2.

12. See tale No. 5.

13. Elwin, *op. cit.*, p. 314 ff.

14. See tale No. 5.

15. See tale No. 6.

will always taunt the Bharia for his 'low origin' whenever he gets an opportunity.

The tales of Kana Bhaira of the Kamar of Raipur and of Kachana Dhurva tell us how badly the Gond treated their backward neighbours, the Kamar and the Bhunjia.¹⁶

Totem tales:—The oldest and most primitive in spirit and form are the totem tales. However, looking to the enormous quantity of various kinds of folk-tales in the tribes of Central India as well as those of the adjoining states that are collected and published so far, we find that totem tales are very rare. They are almost extinct. The reason is obvious. Totemism on which the tales are based is itself on the verge of extinction. It is preserved only in the sept names. The food taboos and other customs pertaining to it have almost died out.

The totem tales which I have obtained are all from the Korku in Hoshangabad and deal invariably with the origin of the respective sept. No elaborate tales of the totem visiting the members of the sept in dream or any other phantastic form when the totemistic taboos are broken are available. No tales also of the competition of different totems for superiority are found. No tales regarding the more practical aspect of totemism, viz. compatibility or incompatibility of certain totemistic groups as far as marriage is concerned are preserved.

I have been told that stray totem-tales exist among the Gond and allied tribes. In spite of a laborious investigation into the totemistic beliefs and customs I was not able to get any such tales from them. I am thus forced to give only tales as I got them from the Korku.

The Korku Totem tales:—Most of the totem tales which I am going to narrate below are abrupt and incomplete. Many a time the significance of the story does not become clear. The beliefs and practices regarding totemism are altogether missing. All these things point to one result—decay of totem-tales in all its phases.

The tales are as follows:—

(1) *Kasada*¹⁷ (ridge) and Sagon (teak tree) are the first two septs from which other Korku were born. It is said that long long ago there lived a boy and his sister. But it was not possible for them to marry as they belonged to one sept. So God became anxious and in order that their family should not

16. See tales Nos. 7 and 8.

17. In Hindi *Kasuta* means a difficult or unapproachable place.

become extinct assumed the form of a furious tiger and scared them. The children ran for their life. The boy climbed a teak tree and the girl hid herself in a ridge. After a few hours they came out of their hiding places. But fear had worked such wonder upon them that they lost all the recollections of the past and failed to recognise each other. Like two strangers they came together, and married. From that time the girl was said to belong to the Kasada sept and the boy to Sagon.

(2) *Bethe*:—Once while a female deer was running fast in the forest, the fruit of the 'seoni' tree fell down and hurt its leg, and it could not move. So it sat underneath the tree. While this thing happened, a man who had climbed the tree, remained seated on the branch till the deer disappeared. On his return home the magician priest asked him what detained him so long in the forest. When he heard the story of the deer, he said to the man 'you shall be called 'bethe' (the seated one) since you sat on the tree as long as the deer sat under it.'

(3) *Dikar* (*dikar* is a variety of fish, which is very small)—Once a man had gone to the river for fishing. But when he saw a big fish he hid himself behind a rock. Another man saw it and since then he was called *Dikar*. (This is perhaps a mocking epithet given to the timid fellow since he was frightened at the sight of a big fish just as a small fish would be). Those who belong to this sept do not eat the *dikar* fish. This is a very peculiar and singular instance of totemism in the Korku community. The Korku on the whole are not particular like the Gond in observing food taboos.

(4) *Busum* (a leaf-plate which is thrown away after the meals are over):—Once a child was playing in the courtyard and was frightened at a noise. It covered its face with a leaf-plate which had been thrown away after meals. Since then his sept became *Busum*.

(5) *Mori* (a ditch):—Once a man who was digging out the 'dardi' roots in the forest, was frightened and hid in a ditch. Since then he was called a *Mori*.

(6) *Jambu*:—Once a boy was frightened and hid in a 'Jambu' tree, and was called *Jambu* afterwards.

(7) *Akhandi* (an edge of a hill):—Once a man was frightened and sat on the top of a hill, and was called *Akhandi*.

(8) *Atkom* (a hen's stack):—Once while children were at play, a child hid in a hens' stack, and was called *Atkom*.

(9) *Sabankar* (sand):—While children were playing hide and seek, a child hid in the sands of a river.

(10) *Sun* (hemp) :—A boy while playing hid behind in the bushes of hemp.

(11) *Bun* (forest) :—A boy went to play alone in the forest.

(12) *Chamil* (star) :—Once a boy saw a shooting star and was frightened. Since then he was called Chamil.

(13) *Tota* (maize) :—A boy while playing hid in the maize crop.

(14) *Takhar* (cucumber) :—A boy while playing hid in the cucumber plants and was since then called Takhar.

The first tale is the only tale which is the most important and by far the most natural also. The following two are also slightly elaborate; but the rest that follow are very abrupt and do not give us any details.

In these tales fear seems to be a very important psychic factor, which has worked wonders; playfulness also seems to be another motif. The latter motif however is not as elaborately brought out in the tales as the element of fear.

The tales are stereotyped and very prosaic and dull.

The Local Tales :—The central areas of India have got some of the most beautiful local tales. The most important and impressive is that about the powerful and turbulent Narbada. Sleeman in his "Rambles and Recollections of an Indian Official" related it. The tale gives us a very marvellous interpretation why the Narbada like a fury flows westwards, cutting through the Marble Rocks, while all other big rivers in India flow eastward. The Narbada is born in the hill of Amarkantak. Another mighty river, the Son, also has taken its source in the same hill, but flows eastward and joins the Ganges in Bengal. Narbada, it is related, was engaged to be married to King Son and was to flow eastward with him. When the wedding was about to take place the bridegroom was coming in the bride's house in all his grandeur. Narbada was extremely impatient to see her bridegroom, at least to know about his looks, his bearing and habits. As she had not seen him before, and she could not go herself, she sent the little river Jhola, the barber's daughter, to take a close view of him! It however happened that the Prince fell in love with the barber's daughter and she also 'yielded to his caresses'. Some say that Jhola pretended to be the bride herself and thus trapped the bridegroom. When the bride came to know about it, she rushed forward and with one foot sent the Sohun running back to the east whence he came and with the other kicked little Jhola sprawling after him! She herself then would not go a single pace in that direction and

to the west she flows in all her majesty as a 'virgin queen!'¹⁸

Sterndale also in his "Seoni or Camp Life on the Satpura Range" records another beautiful tale based on a natural phenomenon, the confluence of two rivers in the district, the background of the tale is also marriage. A tragic fate threatens the bridal pair, but they luckily escape it narrowly.

The beautiful Hirri river, it is said, was to be married to the Wainganga. When the wedding day was fixed all the gods who resided on the earth then, because at that time even the ancient Gond were not born, were invited, only Kukra Deo, a god known for his mischievous and crooked nature was forgotten to be invited. This drove Kukra Deo mad with anger. He resolved to take vengeance on the marriage party. Early in the morning when the wedding was about to take place, Kukra Deo hid behind the hill, and laughing a wicked mischievous laugh, hurled a sleeping cock on the gathering of the gods who were rejoicing. The cock gave a loud yell when it fell on the party, and all the guests and relatives of the bride and bridegroom were turned into stones. With great presence of mind, however, the bridegroom clasped the weeping bride in his arms and rushed forward. This saved them.¹⁹

Besides these I came across several spots, which have their own broken legends. Of these two spots, I remember very vividly. In the jungles of Hoshangabad, in the tickest groves on the banks of the river Machak, a tributary of the Narbada, I came across a spot called Rani Mahal, 'the queen's palace'. It was a most exciting and unique sight, hitherto unrecorded by the archeologists. On a hilltop, huge pentangular monoliths, were carefully piled up. It looked a Herculean task to carry such a load on the hill. Many broken pieces of the beams were strewn

18. Sleeman, *op. cit.*, I., pp. 65 ff.

19. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, pp. 134 ff.

It is interesting to note that, in many important folk-tales of Central India, catastrophe hangs over marriage. In the story of Dulhadeo, the bridegroom is said to have died all of a sudden, either by lightning, or by being attacked by a tiger or turned into a stone for being curious to see his bride before it was proper time for him to see her. So also, Gansam is said to have been attacked by the tiger on the day of his wedding, before the marriage was consummated. In the story of Narbada also there is an echo of tragedy. In the case of Hirri, tragedy is very narrowly averted. It seems however from these stories that marriages, though an occasion of rejoicing, has filled people in Central India with a secret horror. All these luckless persons have been deified so that their spirits may not trouble those who are about to marry. Can this innate fear for marriage suggest promiscuity and no marriage in the by-gone age?

in the river bed. On inquiry I was told that a Gond queen in very old days wanted to build a palace on the site. But some catastrophe happened and the work of building remained unfinished. She then ordered all the beams and pillars to be piled carefully on the hill where no one could find them. One day when the difficulties were over she hoped to undertake the task again. And to this day the monoliths lie on the hill-top, in the thick shade of the trees, not noticed by travellers.

In the bed of another small stream in the same district one finds fossils of cocoanut, almond, carrot, betelnuts etc. It is said that a Mahomedan Fakir used to stay there and pray. One day a group of the Banjara were passing that side, with their bullocks loaded with cocoanuts, dates, carrots, etc. When the sage asked what it was they were carrying, the insolent Banjara replied that it was stones. 'Be it so', said the holy man and all the commodities turned into stones, which are still seen there.

Very many are the spots connected with mythical Hindu heroes. Bhimsen is the most popular one. To Hindus as well as to the Gond he is an embodiment of strength, and he is associated mainly with rocks, mountains and rivers. Several rocks are pointed out as the loads Bhimsen used to carry. Many hills are again pointed out as relics of Bhimsen. He is said to have changed or blocked the course of rivers, viz. the Narbada, the Wainganga, etc.²⁰

Very many are the spots again connected with mythological personages like Rama, and ancient sages. The Chitrakoot falls near Jagadapur in Bastar for instance, take us back to the exile of Ram in Chitrakoot, described in the Ramayana. Again the Mahandi is said to have born from the water drops which used to trickle from the water-jar of the innocent sage Rishyashringa who had never seen a woman or even heard of her till he was tricked into marriage. Not very far from this place is another hill supposed to be the hermitage of the sage Agastya who is to have drunk up all the water from the oceans. In Chhindwara I was shown the hermitage of the sage Kanva, where Shakuntala is said to have spent her childhood and fallen in love with King Dushyanta. In short, it can be said that every lovely and curious spot, has its legendary history.

Tales about Heroes:—Hero-worship is predominant in the tribes. The common belief of every dead person having power over the living members of the family also causes people to re-

20. Hivale and Elwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-4. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, pp. 134 ff.

gard men of extraordinary quality in the tribe with awe and admiration. The tribes thus have stories of three kinds of heroes viz. (1) the heroes honoured by the Hindus, (2) the tribal heroes, (3) the local heroes.

The Hindu heroes are Ram, and his brother Lachhman, who are worshipped by all Hindus. Ravan who is an object of hatred of the average Hindus, however, is an object of admiration for the aborigines; 'Ravan-bansi' is a Gond tribe. Besides these Ravan's son, Meghnath, also commands much respect. There are villages in the primitive areas which are called 'Ravanwadi'. There are the heroes of the Mahabharat, the Pandavas, who are very popular among the aborigines. Bhimsen especially is much cherished and feared and occupies a place of honour in the living faith of all the aborigines all over the country. Krishna is not mentioned much except in the songs of Sagour and Mandala where Hindu culture predominates. Of the saints, Kabir is much respected by the semi-aboriginal Pankas and followers of Kabir. The stories of Kabir however are not widely spread in the tribes and castes except among the Pankas, Satnami Chamars and the Koshtas of Chhattisgarh.

Tribal heroes:—The tribal heroes like Lingo Kachana, Dhurva of Gonds (of Raipur) and Chinda Raja of the Bhunjias or Kana and Bhara of the Kamars or the king of Lohrigarh of the Agariyas are extremely valorous. And some gloom hangs about the stories of these mighty tribal heroes. The stories are short, devoid of any ornamentation and prosaic. In all these stories the hero is killed by his enemy, mostly after revealing to him the secret of his own death.

Mythical heroes:—Bhimsen's story is very well illustrated in the Pandavani or the tale of the Pandavas. He is the most ill-treated of all the five brothers, hated by his mother, and yet the nicest of all. He is ever willing to help the needy. Yet he has his moods of humour and wrath. He is thus very well depicted in small anecdotes and local happenings and places. Whenever two hills of some size are seen standing side by side, they are considered to be the load which Bhimsen had thrown off his shoulders and had not taken further. When a river is blocked by a row of rocks that is also taken to be a beam which Bhimsen had used to carry his loads.

Of Lachhman, the brother of Ram, many stories are told. He is the ascetic and a confirmed bachelor. Sita is enamoured of him and he repulses her. The love for self-torture of Lachhman is very appealing to the primitives. Ram is a very much

lesser hero and so is Krishna. In Bhilaspur we hear of king Lalikar of Bhartari line. King Bhartrihari is the famous poet ascetic of mediaeval India. But we hardly know much of the aboriginal version of the story of the king except in a few songs. The stories of king Vikrama are also very popular and the versions are the same as the Hindu tales.

Ordinary tales:—The common tales that migrate from tribe to tribe irrespective of any distinctive features are numerous and it is almost an impossible task to give a detailed analysis of these stories. They vividly resemble the common tales from the Kathasarit-sagar. And if any ancient scholar had collected them he could have easily passed them as particles from the 'lost portion' from the 'Ocean of the Story.'

A brief outline of the contents of these stories can be given as follows:—

(1) *Local tradition*:—The local tales comprise (a) the animal tales, (2) the tree tales and bird tales. Animal tales are very popular among the aborigines. The fox is the most favourite hero, and is known for his crafty ways. The monkey is the second best clever fellow. The tiger is fierce but sometimes very generous.²¹ The snake is very much feared and supposed to be possessed of a treasure. Of birds, the crow is the favourite as also the vulture and the kite. Tree tales are rare except when they are also ghost-stories, because the tree is supposed to be the haunt of a ghost.

(2) *Mysterious tales*:—(a) Ghost-stories,²² (b) Magic and Witchcraft.²³

These tales are numerous, very popular and sincerely believed in.

(3) *Love*:—(a) In love between man and woman the Hindu standard of chastity is rigorously kept up in the stories. (b) Love between parents and children, brothers and sisters also is fairly illustrated. (c) Friendship is another important motif.

Humerous tales:—Humour in the tales rests on (a) the sex-element, (b) idiocy, (c) sarcasm about other castes and (d) a funny situation. The sex-element in the stories is coarse, cheap and morbid. The humour on the whole is dull and even childish.

Some striking motifs:—The hero is driven out of the house as a good-for-nothing fellow and after a series of adventures

21. Vide tale 15.

22. Vide tales—21, 30, 32.

23. Vide tales—11, 12.

abroad returns home as a glorious man. (2) The bringing-back to life of the dead by some superhuman agency. Reliance on superhuman help. (4) Snake in the penis and in the vagina.

*Tales of Origin*²⁴

(1)

a) In the beginning there was only water on the earth. And only Mahadeo and Parvati were living. Mahadeo said to Parvati 'there is water everywhere, what shall we do?' 'You churn it' she said. Mahadeo did so. And two blisters came on his hands. One blister burst and black earth came out of it. From the other red earth ('the menstrual earth') came out.

'What shall we get from these two soils?' asked Mahadeo.

'I tell you' said the wise Parvati, 'From the black-soil corn shall be got and from the red one children'.

Mahadeo churned once again. Again two blisters came on his hands. 'What shall I do with them' he asked his wife.

'From one blister you shall get a man, from another a woman' said Parvati. And so a man and a woman were first created.

'What shall we do with these two' asked Mahadeo again.

'Wait and see' said Parvati.

'From the red soil a flower came out.

'What shall happen to the flower?' asked Mahadeo.

'When the man and the woman unite at midnight, after four days, the flower shall bear a fruit; from the white and black soil men will come and from the red one women.'

'But this man and the woman are separate. How can they united.'

Indrakamani, Indara's nymph, heard the conversation and came there. I shall show you how a man and woman can unite on the earth, said she. Parvati told her that for seven years she had not eaten anything and practised penance. The nymph was very much pleased at this and she gave them a demonstration of sex-union. Mahadeo saw that the flower in the red earth had borne a fruit. That very night Parvati also became pregnant. But it so happened then that Mahadeo was telling a story to Parvati and she was saying 'hu, hu' 'Yes', all the times. She fell asleep and the foetus in her womb went on saying 'hu, hu' instead. Mahadeo after some time found out that she was sleep-

24. From the Gond and Pardhan in Mandla.

ing. He thought that someone else must be sleeping by her. He got angry. Meanwhile Parvati awoke and heard the foetus saying 'hu, hu'. When she began to talk, it remained quiet. So Mahadeo understood his mistake.

b) Mahadeo and Parvati lived in the jungle. There Mahadeo built a house with seven rooms and also a garden with seven vegetable beds. Mahadeo then said to his wife 'you can go in any of the six rooms but the seventh room is forbidden to you. So also, you can pluck vegetable from the first six beds but not from the seventh'.

Mahadeo then went to a far-off jungle spot and fell the trees, cleared the fields, made wooden implements for farming. All this took about twelve years.

Meanwhile Parvati was waiting for him. She did not know where he was and what he was doing. 'He must have left me' thought she and 'why did he forbid me to eat the vegetable from the seventh bed and enter the seventh room?'—Now she was suspicious of him. So she went to the seventh bed and plucked the red vegetable. The vegetable was bright red and fragrant. She cooked and ate it. Then she went to the seventh room. In it she found the seven young daughters of the sea. Parvati saw them and smiled. 'Surely on account of these seven beauties Mahadeo has forgotten me' thought she and came back to her rooms. The seven daughters of the sea understood why Parvati had smiled and they said 'It is Parvati. Mahadeo is not here, we shall play mischief with her'.

So they entered her womb. And Parvati started getting pains in her abdomen. All her body began to ache, blood came out of the womb and she started crying and began to wallow on the ground. Now she remembered Mahadeo and understood why he had forbidden her to enter the room and eat the vegetable. She repented. But Mahadeo did not come. She could bear the pain no longer. She must inform her husband. Whom could she send? She then made a 'Kheha' bird from the dirt of her body and sent it to her husband. 'Go to Mahadeo, said she, 'he will not look at you, but you start pecking at the leaves and he will get frightened'. The bird went where Mahadeo was busy making his bow and arrow and the plough-share. 'Never once in the last twelve years a noise came like that', thought Mahadeo and so he threw a stone in the direction of the noise without looking up. The bird got frightened and returned to Parvati.

Parvati then made a tiger from the dirt of her body and sent him to Mahadeo. The tiger was not afraid of Mahadeo.

Mahadeo then threw chips of wood at the tiger which became hunting dogs (Sonkutta), the dogs ran after the tiger and followed him to Parvati's house. Some of the dogs hid in Parvati's clothes and some in the corner. When the tiger told his story, Parvati got angry and threw a burning log of wood from her hearth (chulla) in the direction of the dogs. Since that time the mouths of dogs have become black with burn. The dogs yelling with pain came back and told Mahadeo how Parvati had treated them. 'Something must be wrong with Parvati' thought Mahadeo and came home. He saw Parvati's condition and knew at once that the curse of menstruation and childbirth was acting on her. The pain was terrible. 'I must go to Daugan Guru and get help from him to stop your pain' said Mahadeo. He made a bull of mud and put life in it. It was Nandi. He made an earthen dish for keeping wine. He made a rope for the bull. He then lighted twelve stoves, put vessels on them and distilled the Mahua liquor. He kept the wine in the dish and also some gold. With that he started to meet Daugan Guru the teacher of the gods.

Daugan Guru was the teacher and king of the gods and lived on the bank of the ocean. The seven beautiful 'Samudariya' girls or sea-nymphs were his daughters. He had four sons also. But they were all cripples. One was blind, the other was dumb, the third was lame and the fourth one was deaf. Daugan Guru hated the boys and always lived with his daughters whom he loved. Beyond the seven oceans, on a black rock he would sit taking his seven beautiful daughters on his lap. He would thus laugh and play with them. The wind-god Pavanasiri was in love with the seven sisters but Daugan Guru was so jealous of him that he never left the daughters alone. And whenever he had to go out he would shut them in a deep dark cave of the ocean.

When Mahadeo was walking, he saw a couple of vultures sitting on the tree. The birds were sitting on the tree on either side of their nest and there were eggs in it. For ages they were hatching them but the eggs would not break and their offspring could not come out of them. When the birds saw Mahadeo they asked him where he was going. Mahadeo told them about Parvati's affliction. The birds said that they were also afflicted and requested Mahadeo to tell about their affliction to Daugan Guru. In return the birds told Mahadeo where Daugan Guru's sons lived and Mahadeo went there and asked for their help in pursuing their father.

The blind one said 'I am blind, what can I do?'

The dumb suggested that he was helpless.

The lame one said 'I am lame, what can I do?'

The deaf one could hear nothing. Mahadeo by his magic cured them all. The boys thanked him for that and promised to help him. The brothers took him to the distant shore of the great ocean where their father lived. But the rock where the father sat was surrounded by water on all sides. How could they reach there? Pavansiri was also there. When he saw Mahadeo and the boys his heart became hopeful. 'If you secure for me the seven daughters of Daugan Guru, I shall help you', he said. They promised it and so Pavansiri reached the voices of the boys to their father. When Daugan Guru heard the voices he said 'Surely these are the voices of my sons. But how could they come here, the blind and the lame and the deaf and the dumb?' He came out and saw that they were not longer the disabled men as he had left behind but quite healthy and handsome. When the boys told him that it was all due to the magic of Mahadeo, Daugan Guru was greatly pleased. Mahadeo then told Daugan Guru about Parvati's affliction and the sorrow of the vultures. Daugan Guru promised to cure Parvati, he himself would attend to her.

He started with Mahadeo having locked the seven daughters in the cave of the ocean. "Do not come out till we return" said he and walked away with Mahadeo.

In the meanwhile the daughters were released from the prison by their brothers and Pavansiri married them. They all loved him and promised him that they would persuade their father not to curse them. Since then the waves of the sea always dance when there is wind.

Daugan Guru cured Parvati but for having disobeyed her husband and for breaking one of the most profound spells of the Universe, viz. conception, Parvati and her daughters, i.e., all women are still subject to pain in menstruation and childbirth. Had she waited till the return of her husband, there would have been no pain.

There is another version of the story also where Mahadeo forbids Parvati bathing in one of the seven wells, which was full of blood. She did bathe and suffered from menstrual troubles and childbirth.

(2)

In the beginning there was water everywhere. Paramesar

was alone in the water. He made a crow from the dirt of his chest and ordered him to bring a pinch of earth. The crow flew all over the sea and got tired. There was nothing to perch on. It came back to Paramesar and told him the failure of his exploit. Paramesar abused it and drove it away. Again the crow in search of soil flew over the ocean. He saw a reed coming out of the water. He perched on it. A crab came out of the water and threatened to kill him. The crow said he was despatched by Paramesar, to fetch earth. The crab then brought an earthworm from the depths of the water. The crow carried it to Paramesar. Paramesar then spread the excreta of the earth-worm on the water which became the earth. The hollow in the centre is Lanji.²⁵ Paramesar sat in Lanji and smoked a pipe. The smoke curled up and formed the sky. Paramesar then rubbed his hands together. Blisters came on the hands. When the blisters burst open, the Gond, Teli, Rawat and Chamara came out of them. Paramesar then gave them a cow to eat. But Chamara instead of dividing the flesh, touched it with the spittle on his hands. For this reason other people refused to eat it and excommunicated him. Chamara then buried the bones of the cow in the ground which came up as sugar-cane and distributed it to all other men. They ate it and then Chamara disclosed the secret; but they were not polluted by eating it as they were innocent of the mischief. Since that time all these people gave up eating the cow, and only the Chamars eat it.

(3)

All the four primeval islands were in the beginning covered with water. In the ocean there was a lotus, in which Brahma was born. From Brahma, Mahadeo was born. He sat in the ocean. Only the wind went from east to west and from west to east. Mahadeo took dirt from his body and made a cup of the lotus leaf. He then put dirt in it and made a vulture. He then ordered the vulture to find out a little earth and bring it to him. 'Where shall I go? What shall I eat?' asked the vulture. You may go anywhere you like and eat whatever you find in the water. The vulture travelled all over the ocean but found no place to sit and nothing to eat, as all the 'seeds of beings' were hidden in the netherworld. The vulture got exhausted. As the wind was blowing hard and it could fly no longer it saw a huge crab on the water. One fang of it reached the sky

25. In Raipur district, supposed to be the centre of the earth.

and the other reached the netherworld. The vulture sat on the fang in the sky. The crab thought—'I am alone in this world. No other being is yet born. Who can be sitting on my head?' So he said to the bird, 'Tell me who has created you or I shall kill you'. The bird said that Mahadeo had created him and had sent him to bring the seed of earth and all beings. The crab said, 'If you try to deceive me you shall die. But if what you say is true I shall give you what you want.' The bird convinced him of the truthfulness of his mission and the crab gave him the seeds of the twenty-one 'earth sisters', twenty-one²⁶ 'food-sisters', twenty-one 'iron-sisters', twenty-one 'copper-sisters', twenty-one kinds of all metals, twenty-one varieties of all beings. All these seeds he mixed up and put it in a ball of mud and gave it to the bird. The vulture took it on its back, returned, and gave it to Mahadeo. Mahadeo then took sixteen kinds of water and dissolved the mud-ball in it. He then churned it first—the mud of the twenty-one kinds of earth separated. He threw it on the ocean and the earth was formed. The earth was not steady then, and used to float on the waves of the ocean. 'I must steady the earth first and from the seeds of beings create the vegetation, animals and birds!' He did so. Only man was not created yet.

Mahadeo now wanted to get married. He went to the mount Himalaya who had a daughter named Parvati. Mahadeo said to Himalaya 'I am a mendicant and I want a gift'.

'What do you want?' asked Himalaya.

'I want your daughter.'

'What great thing can you do to ask for my daughter?'

'I can sit in the fire and come out without a burn.'

Himalaya made him sit in the fire and was very much im-

26. viz. (1) White earth, (2) black earth, (3) yellow earth, (4) mud-maite darti or red earth, earth required to wash the head after menstruation, (5) brown earth, (6) Kuwar, virgin earth, (7) Dom Dharti—earth which soils clothes, which do not become clean after washing, (8) Damar Dharti, earth which creates illness, (9) Chhutalu Dharni; menstruating earth, where nothing can grow, (10) Dharmi Dharti, earth which is auspicious, (11) Papi Dharati, earth which is unlucky, (12) Dudhia Dharti, earth where water and soil are white like milk, (13) Bijfaitavan Dharti, earth where seeds grow, (14) Banas boran Dharti, earth where everything that grows dies, (15) Patharlu Dharti, rocky earth, (16) Bhulan Dharti, earth in which man loses his way, (17) Muar Dharti, earth in which man becomes dumb, (18) Chamkan Dharti, earth in which man gets shivering fits, (19) Chakka Dharti, earth where man fights, (20) Udani Dharti, earth where man has no rest, (21) Parra Dharti, earth where nobody can go.

pressed by his magical power and gave him Parvati.

Mahadeo and Parvati now lived in the jungle. Mahadeo made seven plots of vegetable garden. In one of them the seeds of men were sown. Mahadeo told Parvati to take vegetables from any of the six plots but not from the seventh till he returned. He then went to steady the earth with pegs of sandal wood.

Parvati liked the vegetables from the six plots very much. She then was tempted to eat the 'vegetable of Kamdeo' (love) from the forbidden plot. "It must be the sweetest of all"—thought she and ate it. She then became pregnant and suffered a lot. Her abdomen began to enlarge. She got mortally afraid.

She then made a tiger of the dirt of her body and sent it to scare Mahadeo in the jungle. But Mahadeo with the chips of wood created hunters to drive the tiger away. Mahadeo by his magic power knew that something was wrong with his wife. He went home and when he saw his wife he knew she was pregnant. He scolded her for disobeying him but was touched with her pain. So he went to the teacher of the gods Daugan Guru. Daugan Guru said he could not do anything for him and sent him to his Guru Jathindhar. Jathindhar sent him to his Guru, Nindhan. Mahadeo bowed before him and requested him to cure Parvati and also tell him about the children that were going to be born to her. Nindhan Guru said, 'The first shall be a boy, put him in a hut near the river and keep a fire burning by his side and a conch-shell. He will be a Brahmin.

'The second son shall be kept in the jungle near a wooden pillar. Keep a weapon near him. He shall be a Khatri. 'The third son shall be kept on a mud platform and make for him a coconut.

'Do not touch these children again. The rest of the children, the Gond, should be suckled and reared by Parvati'.

When Mahadeo returned, Parvati delivered. Everything was done as Nindhan Guru had said.

The children who remained with Parvati were numerous and very mischievous. 'What shall I do with so many of them, how can I nurse them?', said he and buried some in the jungle. They became the deities.

Of the remaining children some were male and some female. The boys married the girls.

Once the children of Parvati went to the jungle and the deities underneath made a noise. They got scared and ran homewards. Mahadeo told them that they were the deities and were

brethren of the other children. Then he told the Gonds to make them an offering of pig, goat, cock, etc., every now and then. 'Unless you keep them satisfied they will kill you', said he.

Parvati meanwhile got another daughter. She heard what Mahadeo told the Gond. She said 'Both the Gond and the deities are my brothers and sisters. I shall please the deities and bring about an understanding between the two parties!' So she took a jug of wine and went on sprinkling in the name of the deities. The deities were pleased with her. They said 'We live in the jungle, and the Gond stay in villages. If they will give us wine and offerings of pig and goat we shall not trouble them!'

Since that time the offering of pig and goat is made to the deities by the Gond.

(4)

The Bijmantra

Parvati said to Mahadeo—'How is it you are deathless and I had to be borne ten times?'

Mahadeo replied—'It is true, yet our pair has never broken!

Parvati again said 'But why I alone should die!'

Mahadeo replied, 'I know the Bijmantra, the secret of life, that is why I am deathless.'

Parvati then said, 'I too shall learn it and be immortal like you!'

'We live in the hills, if any one else hears the spell he will be immortal', said Mahadeo, 'You give a large shout so all will go away with fear' said Parvati. So Mahadeo roared loudly and all birds, beasts, and insects left the forest. He then began telling the spell and the story connected with it for nine days and nine nights. Parvati in the meanwhile felt sleepy and stopped saying, 'hu, hu' while listening to the story. Meanwhile there was a parrot's egg above a tree. The nestling had just come out of it. It started saying 'hu, hu' instead. When Mahadeo found that Parvati was sleeping and someone else was saying 'hu, hu', he got angry and suspicious, who is saying, 'hu, hu'. Parvati woke but she did not find anyone. Mahadeo roared again and the little parrot and a moth came out. Mahadeo killed the parrot but he became alive again and as a mark of strangulation its beak and neck became red. From that time it could imitate speech. The moth also came to life again as a portion of the intestines remained intact. Since then the head and tail

of the moth have remained hard but the middle portion where Mahadeo had struck is very tender. Both the creatures since that time do not die an easy death as they heard the spell partially. The parrot began to fly through fear and Mahadeo followed it. In the forest the sage Vyas was bathing in the river Purpuri and his wife was sweeping the courtyard of the house. She yawned while doing so and the parrot entered her mouth and went in her womb. 'A thief has entered your house, give him to me', said Mahadeo to Vyas who was bathing, 'otherwise I shall kill you'. Vyas was a humble man. He worshipped Mahadeo, gave him food to eat and said with folded hands, 'Now you alone can kill me or save me. Do as you wish'. Mahadeo then was very much pleased with the devotion of Vyas and said that the parrot would be born as his son and should be called Sukadeo.

Mahadeo returned home. When he saw Parvati he said 'Sukadeo took away the spell of life and has become immortal and you in spite of my teaching you for nine days are yet a mortal. Get away from my house!' 'Where shall I go?' said Parvati, 'Go to your father' replied Mahadeo. She went to her father, but he drove her away for having disobeyed her husband. So she went to her son Khatmukh. The son said that he would not take her in his house and displease his father. Parvati then came to the mountain Vindhya and built a hut for herself and lived there. She was frightened of the beasts at night. So she took out dirt from her body and made a boy and put life in him. Her son sat on the threshold of her hut while Parvati practised penance inside.

When Parvati had really gone away Mahadeo's anger was appeased and he began to repent. His remorse was so great, that he swooned and lay in that condition for twelve years. When he regained consciousness he called out his wife. 'Parvati' he said, but no reply came. He threw his drum angrily on the ground. Mother earth then assuming the form of a cow stood before him and said, 'Why are you angry, oh Mahadeo?' 'Where is Parvati gone?' asked Mahadeo. Earth then told him the whereabouts of his wife. He went on the Vindhya mountain and stood near the hut. The boy Ganesh would not allow him to enter the hut and disturb his mother during prayers. There arose, then, a fight between Mahadeo and Ganesh. Mahadeo cut Ganesh's head and went in.

Parvati when she saw him said 'Why have you come here? You had driven me out of the house!'

'I did nothing of the kind' replied Mahadeo. 'Where is my son?' said she.

'I have killed him' said Mahadeo.

Parvati wept bitterly and demanded her son.

Mahadeo then plucked a hair from his body and made a demon of it and ordered him to bring the head of a newly-born baby, whose mother was sleeping turning her back to it. The demon found everywhere mothers sleeping with the new-born babies in their arms. Only a female elephant slept with her back turned to her young one. The demon cut the head of the baby-elephant and brought it to Mahadeo. Mahadeo fixed it on the dead body of the child's shoulders and so the elephant-god Ganesh came into existence.

(5)

The Tale of Budhadeo

Mahadeo created two Gonds, Raital and Bariyar by name. As the two men were born all of a sudden from the blisters on Mahadeo's hands, they were perplexed as to who would guide them and whom they should worship. They asked Mahadeo, 'Who is our god, whom shall we worship?'

'Go', said Mahadeo, 'On the mountain Kailas, lives a god called Premnarayan. You find him out and worship him'.

The two brothers went to Kailas and searched every corner of the forest. They did not find their god. They were disappointed and sat under a Saj-tree and began to weep. From that tree the deity Premnarayan came out and said, 'Who are you two? And why are you crying?' The brothers said that they were in search of their deity Premnarayan for many days and had not yet found him.

Premnarayan then replied from the top of the tree that he was the god whom they were searching for so long.

The two brothers then joined their hands and made a bow to Premnarayan and said, 'How shall we worship you, oh god?'

The deity said, 'You worship me and the host of attendants that follow me'.

'Very well' said the brothers, 'but how shall we worship you, and keep you pleased?'

Premnarayan said, 'All my attendants eat nothing but flesh and blood. If you can give us that, then only worship me. Now you go and live by farming! The two brothers went to a forest

and cut the trees and tilled the ground. But they had no seeds to sow. Again they came back to Premnarayan and asked him for the seeds.

'Go to the netherworld where the Nagdeo stays. He will give you seeds!' The brothers crossed the seven oceans and sixteen islands and through a hole underneath a semar tree (cotton tree) reached Patal, the under-world—city of the snakes. They requested Nagdeo to give them seeds to sow. But he refused. Again the brothers had to come back to Premnarayan and tell him about the unhappy enterprise. Premnarayan then went himself to Nagdeo and asked him where 'the deity of corn'—Annadeo lived. He wanted corn as he had returned from his pilgrimage to Kasi. Nagdeo said that he had no corn with him.

Premnarayan said, 'How shall these men live without corn? Show us where the deity of corn lives. Nagdeo then said that in the jungle of Banabasu a sow called Mendi lived and that she had eaten up all the corn. And Annadeo had fled to the Domaraja of Kasi.

While the brothers reached Kasi and went to the house of the Domar Raja, Premnarayan spread his magic on the Domar prince. All the pigs in the city began to die one after another. The Domar Raja was very much puzzled and went to Nanga Baiga and asked him why his pigs were dying all of a sudden. Whose magic was it? Nanga Baiga told him that a new god called Premnarayan had originated and he had done this trick to get the corn god. If corn was not given to him all the pigs in his possession would perish and he also would die.

'I do not see anyone, whom shall I give corn?' said the Domar Raja.

The Baiga then said, 'Outside the city there is a Saj tree. You leave five handfuls of corn beneath it and come back.'

The Domar Raja did so and then no more pigs perished.

Premnarayan picked the corn and gave it to the two brothers and said 'You sow this in your field. And at the time of the harvest, worship me. Give me a red male goat, Dharti (Mother earth) a black goat, a pig and a red cock to Annadeo and a pig and a brown cock to Narayandeo, and a pig to Nanga Baiga and Nangi Baigin!'

After three years the corn was ready and so the brothers went to Mendi the sow, and got from her two pigs, called Ghentwa and Pathia.

From Nanga Baiga they took the cocks and the goats.

They invited all the Nagvanshi and Rajavanshi Gond. They

gave new corn to all the victims to eat. All ate except the goat of Premnarayan.

'What shall we do?' thought the brothers. They then plucked a hair from a horse' tail and split a bamboo into halves. They attached the hair to it and made a musical instrument out of it. Premnarayan was then pleased with the music and entered into the body of one of the Gond that had come there. He then said 'Worship all the twelve divisions of the Gondi gods!' When they did so, Premnarayan said, 'Worship me under the Saj tree, when you get new corn. Call me Budhadeo. When any one dies in your house keep a piece under the tree, play the musical instrument and say to the dead 'Now you shall meet Budhadeo. Come after three years!'

(6)

Origin of the Agaria

In Lohari-garh there lived a king. He had twelve sons. The king of Lohari-garh and his sons had acquired extraordinary magical powers. The streets of their city were made of red hot iron and they used to drink and eat hot burning iron only.

This extraordinary power of swallowing red-hot iron was the result of a boon they received from a deity called Bandhari. Once the king and his twelve sons made a bellow with cow's skin, and brought iron from the hills and melted it in the furnace. They then made a bellow of it and were going to market to sell it. The deity Bandhari met them on the road and he asked them what it was they were carrying with them. The king and his sons replied that it was an iron plough-share they were taking to the bazaar. The deity then asked them not to sell the implements of virgin-iron in the market and offered to buy the articles. The king of Lohari-garh then sold he implements to the deity. The deity then was pleased, created gods of the iron mines and furnace.

In the mine lives the god Lohasur. In the bellow Budhimata, Kamania and Bhahudhukan. In the tube of the bellow Sairimai, at the mouth of the tube Ghatrundhan, in the skin of the cow Sallaitrhai, in the pit where iron is melted, Patharasur and Koilasur live. Since then the king and his sons prospered. King Lohagandi however became so impudent by his great achievement that he once caught the sun and kept him under his anvil. The world lost its light and splendour and became dark and dismal. The gods held a meeting to inquire what had

happened to the sun. God Pavandsiri (wind) clever in finding the whereabouts of people, came to know what had happened to the Sun. The gods then went to Lohagandi and asked him to release the Sun. He refused, and there was a fight between the king and the gods. At last the gods won and the Sun was rescued. The Sun then became red and hot. So hot that with his burning rays he killed the king and all his sons and subjects. Only one Agaria woman hid in a pot of stale rice gruel in a Gond's house and was saved. She was pregnant then and soon gave birth to a boy. He is the ancestor of the Agarias. The Agarias on that account take food from the Gonds and from no other caste or tribe.

Tales about Heroes

(7)

The story of Lachhman Jati

In the heavenly assembly of the gods, viz. the Pandavas, Ram was playing dice with Mahadeo. Lachhman, his younger brother, a staunch celibate was waiting upon him. That day Ram had forgotten the dice at home. He ordered Lachhman to go home and get the dice for him. The dice were kept in the hollow under the roof of the house. Lachhman took them out and was about to return when Sita, his elder brother's wife, came out and stopped him. She had fallen in love with him and was waiting for an opportunity to tell him about it. 'Come and sit in my room for a while' said Sita to him. Lachhman said that he had come home by the order of his brother and of Mahadeo and he could not wait!

Sita however was determined to stop him and so she bolted the door from outside and locked him in the room. But Lachhman broke the door with a kick and came out without looking at Sita. He went straight to the assembly.

Sita was repulsed. She was insulted and she got angry. She had sixteen maid-servants, she gave them a holiday. She tore her sari, pulled out her hair, broke her necklace and sat weeping in her room.

When Ram returned from the assembly and sent his servant in to inquire if food was ready. He saw all the maid-servants singing and dancing. No work was done in the house. No food was prepared, and the mistress of the house was weeping. 'What is the matter?' he asked his wife.

'Your brother wants to make love to me' said she. Ram got furious. He went back to the assembly, abused his brother for bad behaviour and false celibacy and gave him twelve lashes with a whip on the back, before Mahadeo and the Pandavas. Ram then brought oil from twenty villages and kept it boiling in a cauldron and asked Lachhaman to jump in it. Lachhaman bowed down to Mahadeo, his Guru, and jumped in the boiling oil. Lachhaman began to sing in the pan, and went to sleep while singing. The boiling oil became cold and Lachhaman was unhurt. Ram now repented for his hasty conclusions and begged his brother's pardon. The two brothers met. But Lachhaman was hurt to the quick by the charge of his brother against his moral conduct. He decided to go into exile, beyond the reach of any woman. Ram requested him to change his mind. Sita also begged him not to do so. But his decision was firm and final. He then turned to the forest.

Sita now transformed herself into an old woman and sat weeping in the forest. Lachhaman asked her why she was weeping. Sita appeared, then, in her own form and bowed low to him and asked him to return home. He refused her request and walked on. Again Sita transformed herself into a sheep and sat moaning loudly in the forest. Lachhaman went near her to see what had happened to her. Sita again took her own form and asked his pardon and begged him to change his decision. But he was relentless and walked on.

Once more Sita in the form of a buffalo was crying loudly in the wood. Lachhaman went to her and the buffalo changed into Sita. Again with tears in her eyes she requested him to go home. But again he refused.

Now Sita got angry and cursed him that for twelve years he would not see a human face.

So twelve years Lachhaman wandered in the jungles but never came across a human being.

At the end of twelve years Lachhaman while wandering in the woods, saw a group of men busy with gardening. He went near the garden, and to his great surprise found that the garden and the phantom planters had disappeared. He went a little farther and saw some men building a house. Again he went near the house and the phantoms and the house disappeared. He again walked a bit further and saw some cow-boys and cattle. He approached them and they also disappeared. Lachhaman could not understand what it was.

He saw a woman, a faggot-bearer, sitting on the road. Lach-

haman asked her whether she knew anything about the magic appearance and disappearance of men and cities. 'I know', said the woman. 'A princess, the daughter of the king of Udanapur has been kept by the serpent Adravali in his captivity. The people and the cities you saw have been swallowed by him. When the princess is rescued from the serpent, the people and the cities will also be free!'

The woman then requested Lachhaman to help her to put the load of the faggot on her head. Lachhaman refused, saying that he never would touch a woman. The woman then with her own hands put the load on her head and walked on and Lachhaman went to set the princess free from Adravali.

They crossed the seven continents of earth and reached the house of Adravali. There were altogether twenty-four holes—entrances—to his house. In the twelve holes were seen his twelve hoods and in the remaining twelve his tails. The princess took Lachhaman inside through one of the tail-holes.

Lachhaman then told the girl to say to the serpent that her soul always rested in the same place as his, and that they were inseparable. In the meanwhile Lachhaman wanted to pass urine and he asked the girl for a suitable place. 'Go through that door and enter the room that is upstairs, in that room sits a woman on a bedstead. Behind the bedstead is a hole which will serve your purpose'.

'But I am a brahmachari, how can I pass urine in a woman's presence?' asked he. The girl then showed him another place. When Lachhaman had gone out, the girl went to the serpent and said, 'So far I was small. Now I am a woman, so you must marry me'.

The serpent was taken aback at this proposal 'But I have brought you up as my daughter, I cannot marry you', said he.

'What can I do?' said the girl, 'my heart and yours are one'.

While the serpent was thus perplexed, one of his hoods awoke when Lachhaman went from one room to another and a fight arose between the two. It was a terrible combat. The serpent with a mightly stroke of his hood hit Lachhaman on the head and he fell down in a swoon. Mahadeo, the Guru of Lachhaman, with his yogic powers came to know of Lachhaman's condition. He sent seven birds with nectar in their beaks. The birds poured the nectar in all the orifices of Lachhaman's body and he recovered. 'Why are you pecking me, oh birds, when I am still alive?' said he, 'eat me when I am dead!'

'God Mahadeo sent us to you to pour nectar in your body'

said the birds. Lachhaman was delighted and thanked the birds.

Again the fight began. The strokes of the serpent now were ineffective. 'Unless you strike on the centre of my head I won't die. My body is filled with nectar', said Lachhaman.

Lachhaman also cut all the tails of the serpent and yet he was alive. Meanwhile the princess who was watching the fight said, 'If you hit me on the head I will not die. If you hit me on the body I shall die!'

'Alas! The girl has disclosed my secret', said the serpent.

Lachhaman hit him on the body now and the serpent died. Lachhaman smashed his head and saw two black bees getting out of it. By the time Lachhaman thought of catching them the bees had disappeared in the sky.

Indra was now sitting anxiously in his court. The bees which came out of the snake's central hood were the eyes of Indra and he had given them to the serpent. When the bees returned to him he knew that the serpent was dead and danger threatened him also. Because immediately after the arrival of the bees three arrows, the piercing arrow, the fire-arrow, and the needle arrow, despatched by Lachhaman, also reached there. The arrows told Indra to give back the 'two thieves' to Lachhaman. But Indra refused and gave a challenge to Lachhaman for a fight. Immediately the piercing arrow killed all men. The fire arrow set fire everywhere and the needle arrow pierced through the eyes and brought them back to Lachhaman. Now Indra began to weep. So Lachhaman took pity on him and prayed to Mahadeo to send his birds with nectar. The birds sprinkled nectar on all the men and they became alive.

Adravali also was made alive and ordered him to keep a watch on the princess. 'May she not be immoral like other women', said he. While Lachhaman was departing the princess came there with an 'arati' in hand, but Lachhaman the brahmachari refused it and went away.

In his wandering he came on the banks of the Ganges. A group of Lamars were crying. Their road was blocked. On one side Adravali's tail formed a coil, on the other side a gigantic elephant was swinging to and fro. The Lamars beseeched Lachhaman to save them from the monsters. He told them to climb a hillock nearby and watch the fun. Lachhaman then jumped on the back of the elephant. The elephant laughed and said 'For many years no one had climbed my back' and started swinging with force and seized Lachhaman with his trunk. Lachhaman thought that his death was near. He then thought of 'eighteen

juktis and twenty mohinis'. They came in the forms of insects and entered the body of the elephant and the serpent Adravali. The creature was tortured by itch. Lachhaman then killed the elephant with his arrow. The Lamars were hugely delighted to see the road safe for their journey. They offered a girl to Lachhaman, but he refused her. He would not marry. But the Lamars left the girl there and went away. Lachhaman then took the girl to Adravali's house and asked the princess to make her fair like herself. The princess applied rice flour and turmeric to her body and the girl became fair.

Mahadeo and the Pandavas then took Lachhaman's sin of killing Adravali and the elephant on themselves and dissuaded him from going into exile again for that sake.

Lachhaman then took both the girls with him and came to his disciple's house. The house of his disciple, Gangu Marar. Gangu Marar had gone out and his wife was alone in the house. Lachhaman wanted to give one of the girls to him. But Gangu Marar was so much enamoured of the beauty of the two girls as they walked in the garden, that he out of jealousy threw Lachhaman into the well. Lachhaman then entered a crevice of the well, pulled out bits of flesh from his own body and threw them into the water for the fish. His limbs were thus sacrificed. And only the neck and the head remained intact. The neck was just dipping in the water when Mahadeo and the Pandavas came there. Arjun was about to throw his arrow into the well with which he wanted to pull Lachhaman out. But Lachhaman said he would kill himself if Arjun took him out. Then Bhimsen also wanted to jump into the well and pull him out. But again Lachhaman refused to be taken out. All gods became really anxious.

At this very moment the monkey god Hanuman was being born. Immediately he was born he asked his mother where his maternal uncle was. Mother told him about Lachhaman. 'Then I must go and save him' said Hanuman. 'He will kill you' said his mother. 'No one in this world will kill me' replied Hanuman and flew to the well, in the form of an insect. He then jumped in the well and remained floating on the water. He told Lachhaman why he had come, and then taking his real form of a monkey, caught Lachhaman by the neck.

The Pandavas thought that the monkey was going to kill Lachhaman and Bhimsen, then fought with Hanuman. But Hanuman defeated him and brought Lachhaman up safely. Mahadeo then touched Lachhaman and his body became beautiful and shone like gold.

Since Lachhman had left him, Ram worked as a menial in a potter's house and Sita used to collect fuel in the forest. Lachhman saw her and recognised her. He called the girls and asked them to bathe her. When she was properly bathed he gave her a golden garment and golden flowers and ornaments. When she returned home Ram saw her beauty and said 'Surely you have been in love with someone' and she admitted that. She then showed him the man. 'Who are you' said Ram. 'I am the one whom you formerly had lashed with a whip!' Ram began to weep. Both the brothers then embraced each other. Ram then requested Lachhman to go home with him and stay there. 'On one condition' said Lachhman, 'if people in every house utter the name of Ram as of Mahadeo!'

Before he had finished the sentence from every house Ram's name was proclaimed with great respect. Then Lachhman went home.²⁷

(8)

Pandavani

Mother Kotma was weeping. Her sons, the five Pandavas, were playing dice in the Dharmakuti. The five Pandavas shared one wife, her name was Sahodri. She had a son who had now grown into a youth. His name was prince Ahibaran. When mother Kotma started crying, Arjun gave up the game and went near his mother and asked her why she was crying. So all the five brothers came to know that mother Kotma was weeping. They all then asked the cause of her sorrow. She said, 'Sons, you five brothers have only one son and he has become big now. Why do you not pay any attention to his getting married now? Give up playing the dice. This gambling has caused your ruin!'

The five brothers agreed to it. Sahadeo Pandit then took a bath, and examined leaves of five trees of tamarind, and eight grains of a rice-granary filled to the brim, and read a 'Pothi' seven feet long and said 'The boy will marry Basant the daughter of Radha Rukmin who stays at Dwarkanath!'

Bhimsen knew nothing about this. So the four brothers asked their mother, 'How many relatives have we got to invite?'

Kotma said 'I can't recall just now. At the age of sixty the wit is nasty, at eighty it is a waste! I may remember it in my dream perhaps! Then I shall tell you!'

27. From a Gond in Mandla.

The four brothers then bathed the mother, fed her and put her to bed. She slept for a while. When she woke they asked her about the dream. She said, 'Radha-Rukmin is my daughter and her daughter is Basant. These two are my only relatives!'

The four brothers then went to the four quarters of the earth to find out a suitable match for the boy. In the meanwhile Bhimsen returned. He came to know what had happened and said, 'My mother treats me as if I were her step-son. Hence she did not tell me any of their plans! You sent my four brothers to arrange the marriage and did not tell me anything about it. Yet it is I who bring roots from the hills to quench the hunger of all!' Kotma did not say a word.

The four brothers then went to Dwarkanath. They went to the office of Baladeo and asked 'Where is the house of our sister and her husband?'

Radharukmin had just then came out to throw away water. She recognized the Pandavas and took them in. She washed their feet. She then went to king Baladeo and said, 'I was married when I was quite small. These four guests look like my brothers. You come and see them!' Baladeo saw them and said, 'Many beggars come like this. They are not the Pandavas!' So the poor queen could not offer food to her brothers.

Basant was swinging on a swing under which twelve khandi of turmeric powder was thrown. She said—'Mother, these men look like my uncles!' The queen said, 'It is so. These poor men have eaten nothing since last evening!' Next morning Arjun went and stood before Baladeo and said 'Accept the bida, oh king, we have come to arrange marriage of Basant and prince Ahibaran!' Baladeo paid no heed to it. Arjun tried to persuade him for nine days. But Baladeo was adamant. At last disappointed and starved, the four brothers left the place. In the meanwhile Bhimsen said to his mother 'I shall now go and who is there to wait for my brothers!' So he went and waited in a thick jungle. He broke the hills and made his way in the jungle. At last he saw his brothers standing dejected under a tree. 'Surely these fellows are disappointed. They look quite starved', thought he. He came back and said to his mother 'Mother, my brothers look thin and weak. Surely they have got nothing to eat!'

'Radharukmin won't treat them so' said the mother.

Bhimsen insisted, 'What I say is true. Make a dinner for them!'

He returned to his brothers. They said 'We have fixed the

engagement, now you can manage the rest of the details about marriage. They have kept for you twelve cartfuls of rice, one cartload of chilly and two carts of vegetable’.

Bhimsen said, ‘Is this true?’

They replied ‘It is quite true’.

The brothers then bathed and told their mother that they had made the engagement. ‘The rest of the things will be managed by Bhimsen.’

Bhimsen then told his mother to make food for him. He was going.

He then went to the lake to bathe. The water at the bottom rose up and that on the top went below. Bhimsen’s body was covered with mud. He came home like that.

Kotma had engaged hundred and twenty-six girls to cook food for Bhimsen. They took twelve khandi rice, two cartfuls of red vegetable, and one cartful of chilly and cooked the food. When they saw Bhimsen all covered with mud they got frightened and were about to run away. The girls told Bhimsen, ‘Please let some food remain for us also, we are hungry and have toiled hard to cook!’

‘Yes’ said Bhimsen. But he finished all and said to his mother ‘Give me something to eat’.

‘Take the grams that are in the store-room’ said she. He then took twelve khandi grams in his bag and said ‘Mother, I am going’.

Mother Kotma said, ‘Speak with respect to the girl’s father—you should say ‘I shall dust your shoes and so on’. ‘I won’t say it’, said Bhimsen. ‘I shall say something nice to him. By the way, what shall I sing, mother?’

‘I do not know. You know it best’ replied the mother.

So Bhimsen got out of the house and began singing the following song:—

“I went to the hill to cut a rope—

Where can a match be found for Ahibaran?”

He saw a Semar tree in full bloom. He uprooted it and put it behind his ear. He also uprooted a Palas tree in bloom and put it on the other ear.

When he came near Baladeo’s city he saw a barber sitting on the ground. That man did not know what a strange thing was coming near him. Bhimsen on the other hand thought that Baladeo had sent him to receive him and he shook his body in such a funny way that the barber got frightened and ran away. He told the people about the strange being that was coming to

the city. A crowd of people went where Bhimsen was. Again Bhimsen shook his body and the people got scared. Bhimsen then put one tree right across the road which went to the lake and another in the road which went to the market. All people were terribly frightened and bowed to him as he passed on to the palace.

Bhimsen shouted 'Oh Samadi, bride's father, come here, we shall meet'.

The king came out immediately, terror-stricken. Bhimsen took breath in, and with the force of the inhalation, Baladeo entered his nose. He breathed out, and Baladeo was thrown out. When the two men embraced each other Bhimsen put two bees under Baladeo's armpits. He began to shout with pain. Bhimsen also let loose a swarm of bees in the city which bit several people. When Baladeo consented to give his daughter to Ahibaran Bhimsen called all the bees back. Then he went inside and met his sister. There also he let loose a bee and made her promise to give her daughter to Ahibaran.²⁸

(9)

The story of Kachana Dhurva

The king of Lanji (in Raipur District) was a Gond king of the Netam sept called Singal Dhurva. The king of Dhamdha (in the same district) belonged to the Markam sept and was called Makhanamajhi. Makhanamajhi was married to the sister of Singal Dhurva, called Gangi Dhurvin, and Singal Dhurva incidentally married the sister of Makhanamajhi.

On a Dassara day Singal Dhurva wanted to offer a white goat to Bara-deo and so invited all his relatives to attend the function. He entered the forest of Dhamdha, to collect fuel, etc., which would be required to cook the ceremonial food. In the woods he saw a golden deer, who in reality was Sonarupa-deo of Bindra-Navagarh. The king not knowing who the deer was started in pursuit of it. The deer entered a thick forest grove of Bindra-Navagarh mountain and disappeared. The king spent six months in the search of the deer but did not find it. He then returned to his own country.

When months passed and the king did not turn up, the queen and all the relatives thought that he was dead and they

28. From a Pardhan in Mandla.

were about to perform his funerary rites when he returned home.

After a few days, Singal Dhurva and Makhanamajhi retired from the throne and intending to pass a peaceful life in the forest, the two families settled in the jungle of Bindra-Navagarh. Once the two men set out for hunting, they saw an elephant of the king of Bindra-Navagarh. They then caught the elephant, sat on it, and took it to a wine-grocer's shop, gave it liquor to drink and struck it with an axe on the forehead. They left the elephant near the shop and went away. The elephant went screaming and bleeding to its master, Chinda Paik, Bhunjia, the king of Bindra Navagarh. The elephant succumbed to the injuries inflicted on it. His master got furious at this outrage and inquired as to who had done it. When he came to know who the culprits were, he invited them for dinner one day. The guests were received with great pleasure and pomp. Dinner was served. Good wine was also served with it. But the cups of Singal Dhurva and Makhanamajhi contained poison. The two kings succumbed to it and died. The queen of Singal Dhurva was pregnant then. She hid herself in a Brahmin's house and gave birth to a son called Kachana Dhurva.

Kachana Dhurva was very brave from his childhood. He was an expert hunter. He married the daughter of the king of Jay Patana, who had declared that he would marry his daughter to a brave youth who would kill a fierce tiger who was troubling his people a lot. Kachana Dhurva accomplished the deed and married the girl. After his marriage Kachana Dhurva went to the forest to perform the worship of Bara-deo and saw, like his father, Sonarupa-deo, now in the form of a golden hare. He followed the hare to the cave in the mountain whose Chinda Paik Bhunjia stayed with his family. When the hare entered the cave, Kachana Dhurva collected some wood, piled it in the entrance of the cave and set fire to it. Chinda Paik and his family died inside the cave due to suffocation and burns. Now Kachana Dhurva became the king of Bindra Navagarh.

(10)

The Story of Kana and Bhaira

There were two Kamar brothers, called Kana and Bhaira, who were very brave. Bhaira had a little bird with him which was lovely and very clever.

Once Bhaira had to attend the Gond Raja's Durbar in Nava-

garh. When he went out, he entrusted the bird to his brother Kana. Kana took the bird and went in the jungle for hunting. He shot a flying dove which fell in Navagarh. The dove was picked up by four Gonds of Navagarh. Bhaira's bird followed the trail of the victim and reached Navagarh. It forbade the Gonds to touch its master's property. But they did not listen to it. The Gonds annoyed at this, killed the bird and opening the stomach of the dove stuffed the bird within it.

In the meanwhile Kana came there to pick up the game but did not find it. He suspected the Gonds. He asked them about it but they flatly denied that they had ever seen the dove.

Bhaira also had reached home by this time and saw that his bird was missing. His brother told him that he suspected the Gonds of Navagarh of killing the bird and taking away the dove.

The two brothers went to Navagarh and asked the Gonds an explanation for taking away the dove. A fight arose between the two parties, in which the Kamar brothers vanquished their opponents. The dove and the bird were restored to them. But alas, the bird was not alive. In baffled rage, the brothers returned to their village and by their magic power the horses and elephants of the Gond king Kachana Dhurva as well as the beasts in the jungles of Navagarh went mad. The king, when he came to know that it was all due to the magic power of the Kamar brothers, he sent five messengers and invited them to his Durbar, with great respect. When the brothers arrived in the Durbar, the King gave them the village Dadiya Pani and asked them to remove the spell.

While returning to their village, a Gond servant of the King became jealous of them and attacked them in the jungle, un-awares. The two brothers fell down and were severely wounded. They were unable to get up; but whatever their enemy would do, they did not die. The Gond servant and his friends were tired of now inflicting wounds on them. The brothers then told them that if they would put a peg of wood in their ears they would die immediately and not otherwise. The Gond man did so and the Kamar brothers died the very day they were honoured.

(11)

*Tales about witches*²⁹

(1) In a village there was a witch. She had also initiated

29. From the Gond in Drug.

her daughter-in-law in witchcraft. One day the daughter-in-law asked a Ravat cow-boy, where he took his cattle to graze. The cow-boy knowing the woman to be a witch pointed exactly to the opposite direction. But the woman was clever enough to understand the correct direction of the grazing spot. She came home and the boy followed her at a distance. The woman told her mother-in-law of her new hunt. The old witch was delighted. She killed a dog and asked her daughter-in-law to make a preparation of it and keep it under the cow-boy's roof. The young woman busied herself with the task and the cow-boy returned home. At night the woman placed the cooked piece of flesh under his roof and departed. The cow-boy afraid to interfere with her operation kept quiet and let her go and when she had gone far, got up and threw away the piece of flesh far, far away. Next day the cow-boy took his cattle to graze on the usual spot. Both the witches seeing that the piece of the enchanted flesh had failed to destroy the cattle as they had designed, became furious, and went to the grazing ground. 'Why did you deceive us and point to the wrong direction?' shouted they and started beating the cow-boy. Another cow-boy who knew magic and witch-craft saw it, and by his powers saved the cow-boy and caused the two women such great pain that they died in the night. In the morning the magician cow-boy went and told the true story to their respective husbands. They also were glad to get rid of the witches. They then threw the two women in a well and filled the well with mud and stones.

(12)

(2) In a village there lived two witches, and there was also a Baiga who practised magic. Whatever the witches did, the Baiga used to turn the witch-craft against them and hence he had become very popular in the village and consequently an object of hatred to the witches. One day while the Baiga was sleeping under a tree which was near the burial ground, the witches transformed themselves into owls and frightened him. He got up and the owls squeaked above his head. They would not let him move an inch from his place. The Baiga recovered from the sudden shock of surprise and fear in a short time and knew who the owls really were; but now he was under their spell. The witches then made him powerless in every limb and buried him alive in a pit with his drum and all other implements of magic. As soon as the Baiga was covered with earth from head to foot, he regained his magical powers and started beating the drum

and chanting the mantras which turned the tables against the witches. The women got mortally frightened now and ran to the village. The Baiga too followed them and killed them by his magic.³⁰

Ordinary Tales

(13)

The Idiot

There lived an old Panka woman. She used to weave cloth and earn her livelihood by selling it in the market. The old woman had only one relative. It was her grand-daughter. But she was an idiot and a laughing stock of the people.

One day the girl said to her grandmother 'I want to go to the bazar!

'Go' said the grandmother, 'but take some yarn and cloth with you to sell'.

'Alright' said the idiot and set forth.

She sold the yarn in the market for four rupees and one pice.

'Now I shall buy grams worth a pice' said she to herself, 'grams worth a pice' she repeated. She kept the pice tight in her fist and handed over the four rupees to the gram-seller. While she was munching the grams joyfully she saw a heap of flesh kept for sale.

'Now shall I buy good flesh for grandmother' said the girl and bought flesh worth a pice.

She held the pieces of flesh in her hands and started homewards.

On her way she found two dogs fighting. It was a fierce fight. She picked up a stone in one hand to strike at the dogs but threw pieces of flesh instead of the stone at them, the dogs stopped fighting and started eating the flesh. The girl however hurled the stone in the direction of the river where a thief was burying a stolen treasure in the river bed. He was hurt and died immediately. The dogs grateful for the flesh they had received picked up the treasure and kept it in the old woman's house. No one knew about it.

'I shall send you to your husband's house now' said the grandmother. 'But mind you, make rice and Kadhi—(curry)

30. From the Gond in Drug.

at least well'.

'Alright' replied the girl dutifully. When she reached her husband's house she stayed in the courtyard only and would not go inside. 'I am mourning the death of the poor thief' said she.

At night she was very hungry. She saw an earthen pot full of honey hanging from the roof. 'I shall have it' said she. With a stick she broke the jar and drank the honey. Her mother-in-law heard the noise of the breaking of the pot and saw that the idiot was bathed in honey.

'Now go to the river and bathe yourself' said she angrily.

'If only I had Kadhi to eat' thought the idiot. 'Kadhi, badhi' she went on saying to herself, 'I must have it'. People did not understand what she meant.

'Kadhi, badhi' were the only two words the idiot repeated. She searched for Kadhi in the river.

In the meanwhile the police, who were searching for the lost treasure, thought that she was the thief and was looking for the buried treasure in the river bed. They went to her and inquired about her suspicious movement. With her heart thumping loudly with fear, the idiot ran-ran as fast as she could and reached her grandmother's place. The police not finding the treasure did not pursue her any longer.

Again a quarrel arose between her and the grandmother. The old woman did not know what to do with the idiot.

The girl got sulky and slept. At midnight she wept and shouted loudly 'I am dead, Oh! I am dead. Bury me!' The grandmother and other neighbours tried to comfort her but she would not listen. 'I am dead. I am a ghost. Bury me', said she. At last they took her to the cemetery. 'Do not bury my head', said she and accordingly her head remained above the ground and the rest of the body was buried. Two Pathan thieves came to the cemetery that night. They were fighting over their share of stolen ghee.

'Five pice a day for ghee' said the girl.

The Pathans got scared on seeing a head coming above the ground and talking like that. They left the jar of ghee there and ran for life. The girl came out of the pit, carried the jar on her head and went to her husband's house. A big jar of ghee caused great delight.

In the meanwhile her grandmother too found the treasure in her house and became happy.³¹

31. From a Gond in Drug.

The thief

(14)

There was a robber who wanted to commit a theft in the king's palace. He went to the Rani's maid-servant, a Ravat woman, Dularin by name. She used to sleep in the queen's apartment and tell her stories till the queen slept. The robber said to Dularin, the maid-servant, 'The Rani gives you only four rupees a month, I shall give you the same amount for a day, if you will only not go to sleep in her apartment'. The woman agreed to this. The robber then got himself clean shaved, and dressed as a woman went to the palace. The watchman asked him who he was. 'I am Dularin, the queen's maid', replied the robber. He entered the queen's room and told her that he had a bad headache and slept. At midnight when he saw that the queen was sleeping soundly he untied the key tied to the end of the queen's sari and stole her ornaments worth four thousand rupees. Next day the theft came to the notice of the queen and poor Dularin was arrested.

The robber then went to a carpenter and asked for a job in his shop. The carpenter employed him. 'I do not want any pay from you. My only condition is that if either party breaks the contract, a piece of flesh as big as a pice should be taken from the back of the neck! The carpenter agreed to this. The thief started working in his shop.

One day he went to the carpenter's house. His wife was standing reclining against a big cupboard decorated with brass strips. The robber winked at her. The woman was enamoured of him and gave him a gold coin. The robber came to the shop and told his master 'I had been to a house where a huge cupboard decorated with brass strips has been kept. The lady of the house gave me this coin. I am going there to-morrow as well!' The poor carpenter got startled. It was the description of his house. He became suspicious of his wife and kept a watch on her. Next day, the robber went to the carpenter's house in the disguise of a maid-servant and sat at the grinding mill. Again the woman gave him a coin. With it he returned to the shop and said, 'See, the woman gave me this coin, but what a fool her husband was, he could not make me out though I was grinding there before his eyes. I am going there tomorrow!'

The next day the woman hid the robber in a mat. The carpenter searched the whole house but did not find him. That day also the robber returned with another gold coin. 'Look,

here is another coin. I was hidden in the mat but the fool could not make it out. Tomorrow I shall go again.' The woman that day hid him in a wooden box where her husband used to keep cash and important papers. The carpenter mad with anger and suspicion, determined to burn the whole house with its contents. 'It's mad to burn important papers and ornaments, let us take that box out at least', said his wife and the box was saved while the whole house was reduced to ashes. The robber again went to the master's shop and started telling him the fun about the burning house.

The carpenter became quite furious but he could not dismiss the servant because of his fear that the robber would take flesh from his neck. He thought of going to his father-in-law's house. The robber came to know about his intention from his wife. He went and sat in the wooden box again. The carpenter carried the box on his head and started walking. On the way he felt hungry and opened the box to take out bread from it. The thief came out and made obeisance to his master. The helpless carpenter sat there only and sent the robber ahead to inform his father-in-law about his arrival. The robber went and told the father-in-law that the son-in-law had eaten too much and suffered from dysentery. So, every day he should be given only rice gruel to eat. The father-in-law accordingly gave the carpenter only rice-water to eat which gave the poor man a real attack of dysentery. One night he got up and called the servant and said he wanted to attend nature's call, but as he was very weak to move out the servant should accompany him to the courtyard. The servant would not move. He threw an earthen pot at him instead. 'Do your business and then I shall throw the pot away!' The carpenter did accordingly. But the servant then would not throw away the pot. 'I shall do it in the morning', he said.

The poor carpenter took the pot on his head and went out to throw it away. The servant went and told his father-in-law that the son-in-law was running away. All people got up and caught the carpenter. The earthen pot broke and the filth fell on him. He then told the servant to take flesh from his neck and depart.

'I shall be kind to you', said the robber. 'I shall only take half of your property and go away!' He was accordingly given half of the property. The robber saluted his master and went away.³²

32. From the Gond and Marar in Drug.

(15)

Why the Fox is called Mahadeo's watchman

A fox made friends with a monkey. One day the fox stole somebody's pair of shoes. 'See now how clever I am', said the monkey to the fox. Then an Ahir couple came walking on the road with pots of curds on their heads. The monkey kept one shoe at a little distance before them. 'What a nice shoe! Let me take,' said the Ahir and he put the pot of curds down for a while and turned round. There was another shoe behind him. He first went to pick up that shoe. The monkey came and took it away. Before the Ahir reached the first shoe, the monkey took away that also and the pot of curds.

"See how clever I am' said the monkey.

'You could do it because it was my pair of shoes. Your wits are nothing compared to mine!'

'Prove it,' said the monkey.

The fox then entered the house of an old woman and said loudly 'I shall pull out the tusks of an elephant, I make a tiger roll on the ground, I make a rope of a serpent and I shall kill you'. The old woman frightened out of her wits ran away in the jungle to give the news to the elephants and tigers.

The fox then feasted on the food she had stored. When the monkey came there he saw his friend enjoying himself and said to the fox, 'I shall also stay with you!'

After a few days the old woman returned home. When the fox saw her coming he got out of the house. The monkey remained inside. 'Who is inside?' asked the old woman. 'It's the monkey' said the monkey. The old woman then beat it thoroughly. When the fox saw the monkey he said 'You know now how frightfully clever I am. I shall make even Mahadeo bow before me'.

So he hid behind a rock. When Mahadeo and Parvati passed that way, Parvati took it to be a deity and asked Mahadeo to pay respects to it. When Mahadeo bowed down before it the fox came out and laughed loudly. 'It is Parvati who misguided me', said Mahadeo.

'Never mind', said the fox, 'once again you shall bow before me'.

The fox then hid in a hole. His eyes were shining brightly. Parvati took them to be a deity, and again Mahadeo bowed down. The fox came out and laughed.

Now Mahadeo made dolls of wax. The fox took them to be men and attacked them. His paws got stuck in the wax. Mahadeo then taunted him saying 'How do you feel now? You are very clever, are you not?' Mahadeo then tied him with a rope in his courtyard. After some time, another fox came. The first fox said that he was well fed by Mahadeo and pampered by Parvati. The second fox was tempted to stay there. He untied the rope round his neck, and got himself tied with it. Next morning Mahadeo came out and gave him a good thrashing.

'I am not that mischievous fox, I am a small one', replied the fox meekly.

Mahadeo, outwitted the third time by the fox, let the innocent fox go away, went inside the house, quietly. Since that day Mahadeo bestowed the boon on the fox to be called his watchman, as for some time he was tied in his courtyard. And the people call him 'Mahadeo's watchman'.

(16)

The 'Corpse's death'

Two brothers lived together with their wives.³³ One day the younger brother died and his widow also took ill. It was heart-fever. She suddenly collapsed and her heart stopped beating. The relatives thought her dead and took her to the cemetery. It was night time and the wind was blowing hard. Two men sat near the corpse and two went to fetch wood. When the cold wind blew over her the woman regained consciousness and a sound 'ha' passed from her lips. The two men got scared and ran away. The woman sat up and looked around. It was a cemetery. 'The relatives are tired of me!' said she. She got up and went to her father's house. The house was broken and there was not a soul in it. She went to a friend of hers who was her play-mate in childhood. Two months she stayed in his house. Afterwards the friend and his wife got tired of her. The friend one day went to her brother-in-law's house to see why the woman would not talk of going to stay there. The brother-in-law told him that his brother's wife had died two months ago and that she had become a ghost. The friend perspiring all over reached home and told his wife that they had lodged a ghost in their house and not a human being. The woman heard this and became quite desperate. 'Yes', she said 'I am a ghost. I feel

33. A variant of the story occurs in Gordon's *Indian Folk-tales*, p. 56.

very hungry. Now I shall eat you both'. While she was saying these words the lamp went out and it became quite dark. The couple scared to death hid in the corn vessels. The woman weeping and very sad reached her brother-in-law's house and quietly went in and leapt into the bed where her child was sleeping. The boy feeling a hand carressing his head got up. He saw his mother and said 'You were dead, mother, were you not?'

'No, my son I am alive', said she.

'I do not believe it', said the boy.

The brother-in-law and his wife also came there and saw the ghost sitting on the boy's bed. They screamed loudly. The whole village woke up and a huge crowd assembled to see the ghost.

The poor woman pleaded that she was not a ghost but a living woman. But not one would believe her words.

The woman now quite desperate said, 'I was not dead but now shall I die, so you will know the truth', and jumped in the well of the courtyard and died. 'Now the corpse has died', said the people.³⁴

(17)

Two brothers

Once upon a time there was a king who had two sons. The whole day the boys would do nothing but play in the field and kill birds. In spite of many warnings from the father, the boys would not give up the game. In the end the father got wild and drove them out of the house. The brothers went to the forest where they met a sage. The sage blessed them and told them not to sleep both at the same time. In the first half of the night according to these instructions, the elder brother slept and the younger one kept a watch. On the tree under which they slept was a crow's nest. The crow was telling his wife—'Underneath this tree is a cobra's hole. If oil is poured in the hole, the cobra will die and I shall get a good feed. One who kills him will get a jewel'. The cobra heard this and said, 'One who kills the crow and eats his head shall become a king the very next day. One who eats the tail shall first undergo calamities but in the end shall become very happy'. The younger brother heard this. He killed both the crow and the cobra. He ate the tail and kept the

34. From a Gond in Drug.

head for his brother. He woke up the brother and gave him the head to eat and slept. The female cobra infuriated by the attack on her husband came and bit the younger brother who died immediately. The elder brother kept the corpse hanging on the tree and started walking in despair. He entered a forest-village in the morning. The king of the village died every day and a new king was installed on the throne. When people saw this young handsome man, they made him their king and married him to the queen. At night he suddenly remembered the sages' words 'Let one of the brothers keep awake at night'. He held the sword tightly in the hand and had under the bedstead. He kept a leg of wood on the bed and covered it with a cloth. When the queen entered she saw her new husband already gone to sleep. She did not wake him up and went straight to bed. From her vagina a snake came out and proceeded towards the young man. The prince however was watchful and killed the reptile immediately. In the morning scavengers saw the pieces of the snake in the room and the king safe. The people were very happy and celebrated the day with great pomp. The king now declared who-so-ever would bring tiger's nails, would get ten rupees and one who would bring a diamond would get fifty rupees a month.³⁵

In the meanwhile, Siva and Parvati were flying across the sky when they saw the corpse of the younger brother. When Sive told Parvati the secret about the cobra's jewel and the crow's tail, Parvati brought him to life.

When the younger brother came to know about the prize for killing the tiger, he resolved to kill it, and did it successfully. While he was going to hand over the tiger's nails to the king is also found a diamond and with that he proceeded to the city. The Bhoirs on the way robbed him of the nails which they took to the king and got the prize. A Marwari robbed his diamond and also gave it to the king. The boy reached the gates of the city at night but they were closed. No one was allowed inside after nightfall. While the boy sat near the gate in broken spirits, there came a group of the Lamans who went to the land of diamonds which was beyond the seven oceans. Every year they sacrificed a man to appease the gods on the diamond land. They found the boy suitable for the purpose and took him with them. He used to graze their cattle. Before the day of the sacrifice,

35. In Maharashtra also the story is current in which the snake from the vagina (some say nose) of the princess used to kill her bridegroom every night and also every day a new bridegroom was found for her.

the king of the diamond land declared that he would give fifty diamonds as prize for every diamond, to one who tested correctly. The cow-boy took two diamonds in his hands and said there was rice in the first, and hair in the second. People were astonished at the preciseness of his test. The king gave his daughter to him in marriage. The boy then told his life's story to his father-in-law, and the girl wrote it down. While the boy and his wife were going to their own home with the group of the Lamans, the latter intended to throw the boy into water and present the girl to the king. The girl overheard it. She made a statue of wax of the size of her husband and kept it on the bed and ran away with her husband. They threw the statue into the water. The girl then sent her manuscript to the king. The king read it and sent men to bring his brother and his wife to his city, and punished the Lamans severely.³⁶

(18)

The prince tests his people

There was a king who had only one son. The young prince never studied anything and did not work. He spent all his days in fooling. One day he met a Sadhu on the road and he told the prince the following proverb:—'Father is known by expectation, mother is known by non-expectation, relatives are known by money, friends are known by poverty, wife is known by bed'. The prince was very much interested in these words and resolved to put them to the test. The prince went into the house, took five hundred rupees from the safe and gave them to the Sadhu. He then went to bathe. A servant noticed that and reported the matter to the king. 'Oh master, your son takes out five hundred rupees from the safe and gives it to an idle Sadhu and you give us nothing!'

The king got angry. 'This boy does nothing and wants to spend. I shall drive him out of the house now', said he, and with the same servant he wrote a letter to the prince asking him to leave the house. The prince saw that the first part of the proverb had come true. When he was about to leave, his mother with tears in her eyes gave him a sweet ball—ladu,—(with gems and gold coins stuffed inside) to eat when he was hungry or in need. The second saying also proved true.

In order to test the third maxim he went to his sister's vil-

36. From a Gond in Drug.

lage. He sat on the bank of the lake and sent a message with a neighbour to his sister to take her brother home. The sister inquired what her brother had brought with him. 'He has brought nothing and is clad in a single garment', said the neighbour. 'My brother is poor. How can I see him?' thought she and sent kodo corn to him through the neighbour. The brother felt sad and went to his father-in-law's place to test his wife. Instead of going to the place he stayed in the stable. A Ghasia, the stable-keeper, was the lover of the prince's wife. At night the princess came there with a silver dish full of sweets. She entreated the Ghasia to eat them. She had forgotten to make 'vida' for her lover that day. The Ghasia abused and beat her for her carelessness and ordered the prince who was inside to make a 'vida' for him. The prince made three vidas! One he kept for himself and one was given to the Ghasia and one to his mistress. The princess knew that the 'vida' was made by her husband. She would not eat it. When the Ghasia asked her why she refused to eat it, she said 'This man is my husband and I am afraid of him'. The Ghasia then beat the prince and got him arrested as a thief. The princess went away. Next day he was ordered to be hanged and he was being taken away to a far-off spot in the jungle to be beheaded. The prince broke the sweet ball his mother had given him which contained fifty gold coins. He bribed the hangman with the money and ran away. The hangman killed a goat and showed the blood-stained clothes to his master. With the maxim about the wife now proved true the prince went to the house of his best friend—the Mahaparshad (the best vowed friend). Before he reached the house he sent a word through a woman who had gone to the well to fetch water, that his Mahaparshad had come with a single garment only. The Mahaparshad came running to the place with clothes and good food and with a warm welcome took him home. He stayed there for four days and having tested his friend left the place with one garment only. The friend offered him food and clothes and money and servants but he refused the help and went on.

It was the month of Vaisakh, and the heat was tormenting. On his way he found a crab who was dying of thirst. The prince pitied it and carried it to a lake. He himself drank water and slept under the shade of a mango tree. On the tree lived a snake and a crow who were friends. The snake bit the prince who died immediately and the crow sat on his body to feast on it. The grateful crab now came out of the lake and killed the snake

and the crow with its fangs. It sucked the poison from the prince's wound and fanned him with its fangs. The prince came back to life. Soon afterwards he got up and walked to Bijanapur, and stayed in the house of a gardener. The gardener's wife told him a funny story that the princess of the city got married every day, and every night the husband died. That day it was the turn of her son to wed the princess and so she was weeping. The prince pitied her and said he would marry the girl and spare the life of the boy. He then went to the palace and married the girl. At night the two entered the bedroom. The prince slept on a separate bed. He could not sleep but lay on the bed with his hand on the sword all the time. At midnight a snake came out of the vagina of the princess and proceeded to the bed of the prince. The prince immediately got up and killed it, and threw the bits of the body in a basket. He then woke up the princess and showed her the bits of the snake. She was delighted and the couple went on playing the dice till dawn. In the morning people were delighted to see the prince alive. They gave him a warm welcome and made him their king.³⁷

(19)

The Kumhar and his friends

There was a Kumhar (potter) boy who used to make any number of pots only from a pinch of mud and when he took them to the market each pot multiplied into twenty. Thus he used to make enormous profits in his work. His elder brother became so jealous of him that he planned to kill him. His wife however loved her brother-in-law and so disclosed her husband's plans to him and warned him to sleep cautiously. The young man then kept a log of wood of his size under the bed-sheets and ran away from the house.

He became a wanderer and in his wanderings he made friendship with a Marar youth who could easily drag two bulls, and a Lohar who was an excellent boxer. The friends entered a forest which was the favourite haunt of a giant.

The morning meals used to be prepared by one of them and the other two used to go out hunting. The first day it was the turn of the Kumhar. The giant came and beat the young man, ate all the food and went away.

Next day, the Marar cooked the meals. The giant came to

37. From a Gond in Drug.

eat the food. The boxer fought with him, but in the end the giant vanquished him.

The third day was the Lohar's turn to cook the food. The giant came again behind a tree. There arose a fierce fight between the Lohar youth and the giant. The giant was defeated and sank into the ground. The Lohar tied an iron chain to his feet and followed the giant underground. 'When the chain shakes pull me up' he told his companions.

He entered the house of the giant. The giant's mother had gone out and his sister alone was at home. The girl fell in love with this man and hid him behind a board. At night when the giantess returned she smelt human blood. The daughter bluffed her and they all went to sleep. At night the Lohar came out of his hiding place and killed the giant and his mother. When he was about to go out of the hole, the giant's sister gave a pull to the chain and was dragged above with the chain by the Lohar's companions. The Lohar remained inside only. Meanwhile it was about day-break and the cock of the underworld, appointed to announce day-break was about to get out of the place. The Lohar saw the gigantic fowl and told him his story. The cock took pity on him and told him to catch its legs well, and dragged him up. The giant's sister was a kind and beautiful girl. Now all the three friends started quarrelling about her. But the Lohar was her sweetheart, so she married him.³⁸

(20)

The Story of Ganja

In a village lived a Marar Patel with his daughter. A sadhu came to the village and paid a visit to the Marar's farm. The sadhu was very fond of ganja (hemp). He filled his pipe tightly with the ganja leaves and started smoking. The pipe burst out and the mendicant got burnt and died. The Marar got scared and left the village secretly and went to his son's place.

His daughter went to the farm, with his meal of basi (rice-gruel) for her father, but found the charred body instead. Thinking her father to be dead she collected the people from the village and performed the funerary rites. She also sent men to her brother's place informing him of her father's death.

The son took the old man to be a ghost and started persecuting him. The poor Marar tried to explain what really hap-

38. From a Marar in Drug.

pened, but no one would listen to him.

While the son was taking his food with his family, the old man pounced on him, snatched the food from him, tied it in a cloth and went out of the house abusing him.

He saw a tree with a big hollow in the trunk. It so happened that the king was going for hunting all alone that day, and was very tired. The Marar saw him and offered him food. While they were eating, a servant of the king came there and saw his master eating with the ghost. He took the king also to be a ghost and started shouting, till people gathered and saw the ghost and the king sitting there. The crowd started throwing stones at them. When the king realized that it was useless explaining matters to those excited people, he took to his heels. The Marar followed him. The Kotwal (watchman) met him on the way and inquired on the cause of the hubbub. The king explained him the truth. The Kotwal being a sober man kept both the king and Marar in his house and told the people the fact about the mendicant's death and the Marar's exile. And he rebuked the Marar's relatives for their folly.

'Now, you realize how I have suffered, oh king', said the Marar.

When the crowd was appeased, the Marar receiving a handsome present from the king went to his house.³⁹

(21)

Friends

There were seven young friends. Once they were talking about their love-life. They discussed their first meeting with their wives and their happy experiences in married life. One of them was married when he was quite young. So young, that he hardly remembered his wedding. He longed now to meet his wife and so arranged to go to his father-in-law's place to bring his wife back.

On his way he got tired and sat under a Semar tree to rest. He felt drowsy and slept. A ghost lived on the Semar tree. It smelt the 'rotis' (breads) in his bag and came down and ate three of them. When the young man awoke he found that there was only one bread left for him. He looked around and saw no one. He heard some one laughing. He got perplexed. The ghost laughed loudly and appeared before him. 'I have eaten

39. From a Gond in Drug.

your 'rotis', young man' said it. 'Now we are friends. I shall always be grateful to you and help you when you are in need', and it disappeared.

He went to his father-in-law's house, but no one received him well. On the contrary his wife who was in love with the with him. 'But my father has paid the bride-price for you and so you must come with me' said the young man.
you must come with me' said the young man.

'I shall come, only on the condition that you bring me a pumpkin grown in one night' said the wife. The young man pulled a long face and stepped out of the house. He stayed in a wayside inn. At night the ghost appeared before him, and said 'Don't despair, my friend, here are the pumpkin seeds which bear fruit in one night. Take them!' The young man thanked the ghost and took the seeds to his wife. He planted them in the courtyard in the night and in the morning it bore large brown pumpkins.

The woman now could not refuse to go with him. When the Kotwal heard of this he was very much upset. He saw the woman and said how much he loved her. By no means could he part from her. The woman also loved him and consented to whatever plans he made. He murdered her brother and buried his head under a tree. In the morning the headless body was found in the house and the young man was charged for the murder of his brother-in-law. The young man was being taken to the gallows, the wicked Kotwal walking by his side. Now, the ghost came there riding a white horse. It looked like a majestic figure, quite awe-inspiring. People took it to be some great officer. 'Release the man' said the ghost, 'he is innocent. The Kotwal is the murderer and the head is buried under a tree in his courtyard'. When the head was found where the ghost had pointed, the Kotwal was tried for murder and convicted.

As his last wish the Kotwal said, he would like to meet his lady-love at night. When the woman went to meet him, on the pretext of kissing her he bit off her nose. Next morning the woman charged her husband of biting her nose and took him before the village court. Again the ghost appeared on a black horse, and explained the truth and also declared the sentence of death on the wicked woman. Next day both the woman and her lover were hanged.

The ghost then found a nice young girl for his friend and got him married. 'I ate you rotis, but I have paid off my debt

now' said the ghost and disappeared.⁴⁰

(22)

Three Friends

A prince, a Marar's son, and a Dhimar's son were friends. All the three were addicted to 'ganja'. Day and night they were doped. Many a time the king warned them to give up the vice, but they could not live without it. At the end the king got furious and drove them out of his territory. The three friends crossed the boundary of the kingdom and sat underneath a tree for rest. The fire they carried went out and they could not smoke 'ganja'. The Marar's son then climbed a tree to see if fire could be available anywhere near. He saw a streak of smoke rising in the sky, at a distance and went in that direction. He saw the celestial carpenters building a temple. He took some fire from them and gave it to his friends, and bid them goodbye. He returned to the carpenters and requested them to teach him their art of building golden temples. And on their consent he lived with them and learnt it. Again the fire went out, and now the Dhimar's son climbed the tree to search for fire. Again he saw a streak of smoke. He also walked in its direction and saw a Sadhu sitting near a fire. The Dhimar's son took fire from him and coming to the prince gave it to him. He also bade him good-bye and stayed with the Sadhu to learn medicine. At the end of his studies the sage gave him a fruit of nectar. The boy ate half of it and preserved the other half.

The prince was now left alone. He walked aimlessly, he came across a temple on the bank of the river. He saw on the upper story a nymph standing in the window. He could not climb up. But the 'devakanya' threw a rope down and he reached the window and got inside. The maiden instantly fell in love with him and they married and lived happily for some days. Once the river was flooded and one of the golden shoes of the princess fell into the river and was carried away by the current, and was swallowed by a fish. The fish was accidentally caught in the net which was laid in the river by a prince of a distant country. When the fish was cut the golden shoe fell down. The prince liked it so much that he called all the wise men of his place and asked them to whom the shoe belonged. They all said that it was a lady's footwear. The prince then declared his

40. From a Gond in Drug.

intention to marry the lady whom the shoe fitted.

Among the people he sent in search far and wide was a prostitute. She wandered from place to place and by accident came to the temple where the nymph and the prince lived. She heard the prince and his wife talking about the shoe. She then entered the house and asked for service. She was engaged by the prince as a cook. While she cooked the food she put poison in it and served the prince first. The prince died immediately. The woman threatened to kill the girl also if she did not come with her. The poor girl kept the corpse of her husband in a box full of ghee and secretly pasted a tablet on it, on which she wrote the following message—"He who considers himself to be my friend should open this box and rescue me from the hands of the new prince within a year".

The two friends of the prince after they had learnt the respective arts were in search of him and they found his corpse instead and the strange caption on it. The Dhimar's son with the aid of his nectar-fruit brought back his friend to life. They immediately started to rescue his wife. The princess had been kept by her suitor in a separate house. The princess gave consent to marry if her suitor would leave her alone for a year. Every morning a gardener's wife used to take flowers to her with which she performed her worship. Now only a day remained for the completion of the year when the three friends arrived in the city. By accident they stayed in the house of the same gardener's wife who took flowers to the princess. With her the prince sent his ring to his wife and a message. The princess recognised the ring.

The marriage preparations were in full swing, but the suitor was stunned when he heard the message from his bride that unless he sent a chariot of gold and silver for her next day she would not marry him. No one knew the art. He became anxious. The Marar's son then offered his services to the suitor and ordered six 'khandis' gold and six 'khandis' silver from the treasury. He made a beautiful chariot which could fly in the air. Next day the Marar's son sat in the front of the chariot and the prince and the Dhimar's son as the pages, behind. When the princess and the two bride's-maids got into it the Marar's son drove the chariot with such skill, that within a second it flew into the air and was out of sight of the people who had come to see the wedding. The party then reached the prince's kingdom. The two brides-maids were married to the two friends of

the prince. And all of them lived happily.⁴¹

(23)

The Brahmin and the Barber

One day a barber met a tiger in the forest. The tiger was sitting under a tree with a heap of ornaments lying about him. The clever barber saw it and took out a mirror from his bag and held it before the tiger. The tiger got frightened of the tiger in the mirror and ran away. The barber collected the ornaments and came home.

There was a Brahmin in the village who came to know about it and asked the barber where he met the tiger. The barber dissuaded him but he would not listen. The barber then told him the place. The Brahmin then went to the forest with the barber and climbed the tree which the barber pointed out. Underneath the tree tigers began to gather. They began discussing about the theft of the ornaments and the tiger in the mirror. 'We must catch the one who was hidden inside', said they. The Brahmin thought that the tigers had spotted him out and fell down the tree trembling with fear. Immediately the tigers tore him to pieces. When the tigers had gone, the barber came down from the tree, and went home.⁴²

(24)

The Gond and the Bear

A Gond entered a thick jungle and before he could come out of it it was night. So he climbed a tree. Under the tree a tiger came and slept. After a while came a bear, and seeing the tiger there climbed the tree. On the branch there was space only for one. The bear saw the Gond's black woolen blanket and took him to be a bear. 'Make room for me', said the bear. The Gond got scared and kicked the bear; it fell on the tiger who tore it to pieces. The Gond then threw his blanket down. The tiger got frightened and ran away.⁴³

(25)

The Tiger's Cub and the Calf

Once a Ganda and an Ahir went to the bazar. The Ganda

41. From a Marar in Drug.

42. The Gond in Drug.

43. From the Gond in Drug.

gave his cloth to the Ahir and in exchange took his pregnant cow. He brought the cow home and said to his wife, 'I have brought goddess Laxmi home!' The wife shouted, 'Instead of bringing money you bring a pregnant cow. With what shall I feed the children now? I will not have her in!' The Ganda then took the cow into the forest and left her there.

In the forest a tiger saw her and jumped on her. 'Do not eat me, I am pregnant', said the cow. The tiger took pity on her and took her to his house. The cow soon gave birth to a small and jolly calf. The tiger's cub liked it very much as a companion and the two always played and jumped together. One day the tigress got nothing to eat. 'How shall I give milk to my baby if I have nothing to eat', thought she and ate the cow. The two young ones watched it from a distance. The calf got nervous. 'The danger is on me', said it. The cub, however, soothed its companion and the two then went to the tigress.

The little cub then asked its mother, "where is the mother of the calf?" The tigress did not reply and called the cub to suckle her milk. The spirited cub refused to suckle, and said, 'I will suckle your milk only if you bring the calf's mother back'. The tigress entreated the cub not to be obstinate as she had only eaten her proper food. But still the cub refused to suckle, and soon died of hunger with the calf. The tigress also succumbed to the shock soon afterwards.⁴⁴

(26)

The Bania and the Brahmin

A Bania once climbed a palm tree and then could not get down. A Brahmin was passing by the way. The Bania called him and said that if he rescued him, he would pay him fifty rupees. The Brahmin climbed the tree, tied the Bania on his back with his turban, and came down. 'I shall pay you twenty five rupees tomorrow', said the Bania and went home. Next day the Brahmin went to his place and the Bania said, 'I will give you ten rupees tomorrow'. Next day the Brahmin again went to his house and the Bania refused to recognise him. 'Give me at least, two rupees and a dhoti', said the Brahmin. But the Bania drove him away. The Brahmin had a neighbour who heard this story. Next day he went to the Bania and offered him help in his worship and asked only for a meal and four pice.

44. From a Gond in Drug.

The Bania agreed to this, and sent him inside and sent a word to his wife to give the Brahmin what he asked for. The Brahmin was very shrewd. He asked for a mound of jaggery, one tub of ghee, forty mounds of rice, two dhoties and two hundred rupees. The Bania's wife gave it to him, obeying her husband's order.

When the Bania came to know how he had been cheated by the Brahmin, he went to his house. The Brahmin saw him coming from a distance and slept on a cot yelling horribly. His wife, weeping, sat at his pillow. When the Bania went in, the wife charged him of poisoning the food-stuffs and said she would report the matter to the police. The Bania got scared and gave her a gold chain which he had tied round the waist, to keep quiet. Next day the Brahmin shaved his head clean, and passed the Bania's house. The Bania called him. The Brahmin said, 'I am not that person. My brother died yesterday of poisoning and I am going to the king to inform him about it.'

The Bania again requested him to keep quiet and gave him five hundred rupees.

Now the first Brahmin also got a chance to get something from the Bania and he threatened him to break his secret to the king. The Bania cursing his unlucky stars gave him also five hundred rupees.⁴⁵

(27)

The prince and the magician

There was a king who had no child. He practised severe penance but his wish was not granted. He and the queen were always dejected on that account. One day a magician in the disguise of a Sadhu came to the palace and said that he would give two sons to the king if the king would keep up his promise. The king said he would do anything to get a child. The sage then said that he would get two sons soon, but he must give them to the sage ten years afterwards. "Ten years is a long time", thought the king and made the promise to the sage. Soon the king got two sons. The boys were sweet and clever. The parents did not know how the ten years flew away.

One day the sage came back and demanded the boys. The king refused but by the force of his magic the sage took them away. He stayed in a far-off jungle. There he trained the elder

45. From a Gond in Drug.

boy as a king and made the younger one a magician.

The parents now longed for the children. They went in search of them. By accident they saw the younger boy on the river side. They asked him to go back with them, and the boy also wanted to go with them, but the sage who kept a close watch on the movements of the boys, noticed this meeting. He was very much offended. He abused and drove away the parents. But now the boy's determination to become a king and live with his parents rather than to become a renowned magician became very strong and urgent. He changed into a horse and one night ran away to his parent's house, he told them not to give the reins to any one. Next day he asked his parents to sell him to a neighbouring king for five hundred gold coins but not to part with the reins. They did so. At night the horse ran away from his stable and came to his parent's house. They got money and also the horse. The sage now in search of the boy came to know about the horse. He went to his parent's house and asked for the reins. He paid five hundred gold coins to them and took away the reins. The horse understood things now, but had to follow the possessor of the reins. The sage took him to a river, where he intended to take a bath. The horse then became a fish and jumped into the river. The sage then bribed a fisherman and asked him to catch the fish. The fish was caught, but before the sage could take it in his hands a kite took it and flew away. The sage became a hawk and followed the kite. But the kite with fear dropped the prey down.

The fish fell luckily into the garden of a princess. The princess was sitting near the window. The fish now turned into a man and told his story to the girl and seeing that she had fallen in love with him married her. He then transformed himself into a pearl necklace which the girl wore round her neck. The sage also reached the palace and offered to give a grand performance of acrobatic feats to the king and his people. Grand preparations were made and all the men and women gathered in the courtyard. The performance was exquisite and the king was very much pleased with the sage and asked him what he wanted for it. 'I want the pearl necklace which your daughter wears, oh king', said the acrobat. The princess refused at first, but at her husband's suggestion threw the necklace on the ground. It broke and the pearls were scattered. At once the sage became a cock and was about to swallow a pearl when the necklace turned into a cat and killed the cock. Now the prince appeared

in his real form and received a warm welcome from all.⁴⁶

(28)

The Boy Husband

A king had no issue and he and his wife were pained on account of it. One day a sage came to the palace and told the king that he would soon get a son, but he would die on the tenth day only. The king and queen now became hopeful with the prospect of getting a child. Soon the queen became pregnant and gave birth to a pretty boy. All the time the prophecy was haunting the parents. On the sixth day they performed all the ceremonies of 'satthi' and eager to see their son getting married, married him with great pomp to a beautiful princess who was twelve years old. When the marriage was over the girl was requested by the queen to take care of her baby husband. This at least might avert the terrible fate of the child, thought the parents. On the twelfth day the parents of the boy told about the prophecy to their daughter-in-law and they began to weep bitterly. The girl also became very sad, but with great determination she took the baby in her arms and went straight to the jungle. The baby died on the road only. The girl then sat weeping under a tree with the corpse in her lap. She resolved to go "satthi" with the husband next morning. Now, it so happened that Mahadeo and Parvati were passing that way and they heard the girl crying. Parvati was touched when she heard the tragic story of the girl and asked Mahadeo to put life into the child. When the child began to cry, the girl took it and went to a village near-by and brought up the child. The boy now a youth, did not know their real relation and called her 'mother'. The boy had made the prince of the city his mahaparshad, the best friend, and the two always lived together. There was a barber in that city, who fell in love with the girl and in order to remove the obstacle in his way persuaded the prince to go for hawk-hunting in the forest. The prince and the boy-husband went in the forest and ran miles after miles to get a hawk. The two friends separated for a while and the boy lost his way. He went to a city. The king of the city had a beautiful daughter but no son. So he let an elephant with a garland hanging on its trunk choose a bridegroom for his daughter. The elephant garlanded the boy, and with great pomp was he married to the prin-

46. From a Gond in Drug.

cess. The boy however did not feel quite happy, because his 'mother' was not there to participate in his joy. He had not even informed her. So he thought it his primary duty to go to his place and inform her about it. The king gave him permission and the boy came home and told her everything that had taken place. Exactly at that time the girl had decorated her bed and was eagerly awaiting his arrival. Now he had become a man and she wanted to disclose the secret of their relationship to him and punish the wicked barber. For a while she was stunned. But she recovered soon afterwards and told the true story to her boy-husband. The boy marvelled at her courage, devotion and patience. He would be her husband. Both of them then went to the house of his young wife and told the real story to the king. The king appreciated the honesty of the two and gave them a warm reception. Now, the boy and his two wives went to the place of his old parents, who had become now quite old, and shattered in spirit and body. His first wife then introduced herself and her husband to the old couple and told them the whole story of what had happened since she left them. The old people rejoiced to get their son back and thanked their daughter-in-law.⁴⁷

(30)

The princess who brought to life a dead child

A king had four sons. They left their father's home when he became poor and remained in service of another king for four thousand rupees. The king, their master, was a very kind-hearted and good man. But he was very unfortunate. No sooner he got a baby than it died within six months. The king had lost several children like that. When the princes joined his service, his son was six months old. The goddess of fortune was crying loudly one night beyond the river which was running past the city. The king heard the moaning and sent the youngest of the princes to inquire who was crying at that dead hour of the night. The boy went and saw a beautiful woman crying, 'Who are you', asked the boy, 'and why are you crying?', 'I am Laxmi, the goddess of fortune', she replied. 'I am crying because the king is going to lose his son this very moment'.

'Can we do anything to save the baby', asked the boy.

'Keep a vigil on the burial around day and night with the

47. From a Gond in Drug.

corpse of the child with you and see what happens'. And she disappeared. When the boy returned to the palace the child was really dead, and the king had become mad with grief.

'We shall bury the child', said the four brothers and took the corpse and went to the burial ground. Now the brothers decided to keep watch in turns. First the eldest brother sat with the corpse in his lap, and the others slept. A ghost came in the form of an old woman, and said, 'I am very hungry, give me something to eat'. I have nothing to give you, said the boy. 'But you must give me something', said the ghost. 'Eat the guavas', replied the boy. 'You must climb the tree and give me. I cannot climb', said the ghost.

As long as the corpse did not touch the ground the ghost was powerless. It had to find some trick to make the boy put it down. But the boy was very cautious. He tied the corpse to his back very tightly and climbed the tree. The ghost now lost patience and climbed on his shoulder to untie the knot of the cloth at his neck. The boy now knew who the old woman really was and with his sword cut her throat. The ghost died and he again sat down, the corpse tightly held in his arms.

Now the second brother got up and on hearing the adventure of his elder brother held the body securely in his arms. Another ghost, now more kindly disposed than the first one, came there and gave a very kindly smile to the boy. The boy smiled back. 'I have come to invite you to our city, which is full of wonders and if you really want to restore life to the child, come with me'. The boy tied the body of the child securely at his breast and walked along with the ghost, and entered the city of the ghosts. The city was dark and suddenly red flames flashed up, showing the faces of all the dead relatives and friends. The boy did not lose courage. They paraded the whole city and at the end came to the palace where the king of the ghosts lived. The boy went straight to him and demanded the life of the child back. 'I can take possession of the dead only. I have no power to give life back. I will give you a ring as I am very much pleased with the courage of you two brothers, who will save you from all odds and may help you to get your desire fulfilled!'

The boy then returned to the burial ground and woke the third brother, gave him the ring and told his story.

The third brother now kept vigil. A ghost came and offered to take the prince to a beautiful temple. The boy followed. The temple was of a goddess and its courtyard was filled with heaps of human bones. The boy did not even shudder at the ghastly

sight. The goddess in the temple was greatly pleased to see a living man enter it for the first time. 'Since you are the only man to come here alive', said she, 'I grant you a boon'.

'Let all these dead people devoured by the ghosts arise', said the boy. The goddess then brought nectar from the city of Indra, sprinkled it on the heaps of bones in the courtyard and the men came back to life. The boy then shut all of them in the temple and returned to his brothers with the corpse.

Now the fourth brother took charge of the corpse. It was the early hour of the morning. While the boy was watching, he saw the sweeper of Indra descending from heaven in a chariot. He came down and swept the courtyard of the temple near the burial ground. Then all the gods assembled and started a concert of heavenly music and dancing. Bhagvan listened to the music as usual but was not pleased with the drum-beating. 'The drum is out of order today. It cannot keep pace with the music', said Bhagvan as he was fanning himself with a golden fan. When the fan turned to the right the corpse of the baby became alive. When it turned to the left the baby again became dead. When the boy saw this he thought it a good opportunity to show his skill in playing on the drum and restore the child's life. He got up and requested Bhagvan to allow him to play the drum. When Bhagvan consented he played it so well, that Bhagvan was pleased with him and granted him a boon. The boy asked for the celestial fan and requested Bhagvan to keep the fan going on the right side only till the baby became quite old. God gave him the fan. With the baby alive in his hands the boy returned to the burial ground. The four brothers then returned to the palace with great joy.⁴⁸

(31)

The Mongoose Prince

There was a king who had seven queens but no children. There came a sage and told the king to beat a mango tree at night. Only if seven mangoes fell, the king should take them, not otherwise. The king, accordingly, beat the mango tree, and got seven fruits only. Delighted, he went to his queens and gave each of them a fruit. The youngest queen's fruit was half-eaten by a mongoose at night, the remaining half only she ate. All the queens subsequently became pregnant. The first six

48. From the Gond and Marar in Drug.

queens got six sons but the youngest one gave birth to a mungoose only. When the children grew up the king became poor. So they left their father's house to earn money. The mungoose also wanted to go with them. The elder brother dissuaded it, but it would not listen. At last they took it with them and started on their journey.

On their way they met a giantess. The six sons of the king got scared, but the mungoose remained quiet. The brothers then asked its advice. It told them to say 'Ram, Ram'. 'If you do not say so, she will kiss you in the form of a woman and eat you', it said. They did so.

The giantess now assumed the form of a woman and approached the princes. She invited them to her house. They could not refuse. The giantess said she had seven daughters and the princes would make good sons-in-law for her. The girls assumed beautiful forms and welcomed the guests. The mother giantess then began cooking. She put poison in the food. The mungoose was sitting on the roof and watching the proceedings, and no detail escaped its notice. So it went and told its brothers not to touch the poisoned food. So, the princes discussed about the food and they resolved not to eat it.

The girls overheard the talk and went and told their mother about what they had heard. She then threw away the food and cooked again, this time, good, delicious food. The mungoose told the brothers that they could eat it without suspicion and they did so. When they took their food the brothers sat in a row and in front of them making another row sat the girls. Then they retired to bed and the giantess on the pretext of grinding corn went on whetting a knife. The mungoose whispered audibly 'I am awake', and the giantess, out of fear, kept the knife down. The giantess then went to bed. The mungoose then woke its brothers and told them what had taken place. It then advised them to remove their bed-steads to the adjoining room where the girls were sleeping and to place their beds in the first room. They did accordingly, and covered the faces of the girls with bed-sheets. When the giantess got up after a while she went to the room where the girls were now sleeping. And taking them to be the strangers stabbed the sleepers right into the heart. Her six daughters thus succumbed to the injuries inflicted on them, without uttering even a cry. In the morning, the youngest daughter got up and asked her mother for a breakfast. 'Eat your brothers-in-law', said the mother. The girl went in the bed-room and instead of the delicious human flesh she saw

the hideous corpses of her own sisters. She cried loudly, and the giantess hearing the forlorn cry, rushed into the room. She now knew the trick played upon her. She got furious and entered the room where the boys were sleeping. By that time the boys had climbed a 'bel' tree at the instructions of the mongoose and began throwing the stony fruits of the tree at the giantess when she located them. The mongoose also bit her hard, till she died. The boys then resumed their journey.

The six brothers served in various capacities in various places and brought home some money. The parents were very much pleased. 'I shall also earn money', said the mongoose and left his father's house.

It went to an old woman and asked for a menial job. She engaged it. One night the daughter of the old woman wanted to attend nature's call; it was then midnight, and she was frightened to go out alone. The mongoose was a good companion, thought she, and asked it to accompany her. No sooner they went a little away from the house when the mongoose threatened her, and asked where her mother kept her money. 'In the cooking-stove', replied the girl, frightened out of her wits. The mongoose then left the girl there, ran home quickly and dug the mud from the stove. It found a heap of gold coins. It stuffed the money skilfully in a mattress and carried it on its back.

In the morning it reached a village nearby and sold the mattress to a Marwari: 'My mattress showers money, will you buy it?' It shook the mattress and two coins fell from it. The Marwari was tempted to buy it and paid the mongoose five hundred rupees for it. By the time the Marwari kept the mattress in his bed room, the mongoose got in the room stealthily, and recovered all the treasure that was stuffed in. For a few days more it stayed in the village. When the Marwari saw that the mattress did not yield him any more coins, he went to the mongoose and asked it an explanation for it. 'What do I know about it? Something must have been wrong about your place, which has deprived the mattress of its magical powers'. The Marwari knowing how many people he had duped before, kept quiet. The mongoose then came home and handed over all the money to its mother and said, 'People need not jeer at you now, mother, for giving birth to an animal. I have earned much more than my human brothers'.

One day the mother watched the mongoose when it went to take a bath in the river at nightfall. It was its habit to bathe

at night. The mother saw that the mongoose could take out its skin and keep it aside. Then a handsome young boy came out and took a bath. Before he got time to put on the skin on his body she threw the skin into the fire and embraced her son with love. After his father's death the youngest son, the mongoose prince, then became the king.⁴⁹

(32)

A Marwari boy and the ghost

In a village seven Marwari brothers lived in a house which was haunted. The ghost used to kill a woman and her husband when she was pregnant. First died the man and then his wife. So all the seven brothers and the wives of the first six brothers died. The youngest woman ran away to her mother's place when her husband died and gave birth to a boy. Twelve years passed when the boy used to play with other children. They tauntingly called him a 'jutha' (who eats food which is tasted by others and left). The boy did not understand why he alone should be treated insultingly and one day asked his mother for an explanation. The mother said, as she had left her house long ago through fear of the ghost and as the boy had lived on the food of his maternal uncle, he had become an object of insult and ridicule of his companions. The boy then decided to leave his maternal uncle's house and go and stay in the haunted house which belonged to him, in spite of his mother's appeal to him, not to do so. The boy and his mother then came to the haunted house. At night the ghost came and said, 'I have been hungry for many years and as your mother has tricked me long ago, I am going to eat you now'. The boy requested the ghost to spare his life and said he would give it something to eat every night, to which the ghost agreed, rather reluctantly. Soon the ghost became a bit friendly with the boy and told him all its adventures and programmes. One day it told the boy that every midnight it had to go and pay a visit and homage to Brahmadeo. The boy was delighted at this information 'When you go to Brahmadeo tonight, kindly ask him how long I am destined to live', he said. The ghost agreed to do so. Next day it told the boy that he was destined to live sixty years. The boy again said, 'Please ask Brahmadeo either to make it one year less or more. It should be either fifty nine or sixty-one'.

49. From the Gond and Marar in Drug.

The ghost turned up next day and said that the rule of Brahmadeo never changes. It would not be a moment more or less than the time fixed.

Now the boy stood face to face with the ghost, slapped it and said, 'Now you cannot touch my hair for many more years. Get away from here or I shall go to a magician.'

The ghost knew it was trapped and went away.⁵⁰

(33)

*The tiger-boy*⁵¹

A Bhil woman once went to the forest to collect wood, and gave birth to a boy. She kept the baby in a basket and went on with her work. A tiger came that way and carried away the baby. The tiger couple brought up the boy. He was called the tiger-boy.⁵² When the boy attained youth, his foster parents contemplated his marriage. The tiger according to their plans, carried away a princess of the neighbouring city, and got her married to the boy. All the tigers in the jungle attended the wedding. Next day as usual the boy took his bow and arrow and went out hunting. In the afternoon he slept underneath a tree and was killed by a barber who desirous of marrying the princess had kept a watch on the tiger-boy's movements. When the girl learnt of the death of her husband she returned to her father's house. The barber followed her to the palace and told the people that he was her husband. The king accepted him as his son-in-law, but the girl refused to call him her husband. In the meanwhile the tiger, the foster parent of the boy came to know about his death. By magic he brought him to life. Then the boy went to the palace and claimed his wife. The girl recognised him and rejoiced to see him happy and healthy. The barber was put to death by the king and the tiger-boy became the king when the princess's father died.

50. From a Gond in Drug.

51. From a Baiga in Drug.

52. Singbaba: which in reality means a lion-boy, but conventionally it is understood as the tiger-boy. Sterndale gives quite a different version of the story of Singbaba. Singbaba here is said to be the son of Sandsumji by his seventh and the youngest wife. His step-mothers got jealous of his mother and threw him in a tiger's cave and he was brought up by the tiger couple. When he grows up he kills his step mothers and gives them to the tigers to eat.

(34)

King Bisesar and Queen Bismotin

There was a king called Bisesar. He had a beautiful queen by the name of Bismotin. In a catastrophe, the king lost all his money and became poor. He did not like to live in the place as a poor man where he once ruled in glory. So with his two children and the queen he left the country. On the boundary of his country ran a river. The party stopped under a mango tree on its bank. They had nothing to eat. 'I will go and beg some food in the neighbouring kingdom', said the king. But the queen said, 'You are a king and should not beg. I shall go instead and you look after the children till I come back'.

She crossed the river and reached the capital of the country and went to the palace to beg. The king was enamoured of her beauty and locked her up in a room. She told him her story but it did not impress him. The queen wept in her prison. It was the rainy season and the river flooded in the night. When the queen did not return the king said, 'Now I have become poor, so she has left me!'

In the morning the flood subsided. The king took his two children and tried to cross the river, but another flood came and the father and children went floating with the current and separated.

The king went floating to a far off country and stuck in the mud. A sage took him out of the mud and taught him medicine. The king then went in search of his wife in the disguise of a mendicant.

One of the children survived and was rescued by a fisherman who belonged to the kingdom where Bismotin was a prisoner. The fisherman sold the boy to a sage who begged from house to house. One day the queen from a hole of her prison-wall saw her child and recognised him. She then told the king when he came to her at night to persuade her to marry him, that she must feed beggars before she married him. All mendicants came to the palace now and Bismotin with her own hands gave them food. One day her son and the mendicant also came. The son also recognised his mother. He then told the mendicant that this same woman was his mother. The two then made plans to rescue her. In the meanwhile Bisesar came to the city as a mendicant and reached the palace. He saw his son and the other mendicant there. Now he was delighted and was im-

pressed by the faithfulness of his wife. He then bribed the watchman who guarded Bismotin day and night, and gave her a drug. When she took it she fell down in a deathlike swoon. The king became nervous and ordered all kinds of physicians to treat her. No one succeeded. Now Bisesar came forward and said that he would cure her if he was allowed to stay with her in a hut near the river and no one should come near. The king consented and removed her to the hut. Bisesar gave her an antidote and with the aid of the other mendicant crossed the river and reached his own country.⁵³

(35)

The sister

Once upon a time there was a king, who had seven sons and one daughter. When the girl was quite small, an astrologer made a prophecy that she would be married to a corpse. When the king heard this he was surprised and said, 'How is it possible for a king like me to offer his daughter to a corpse?' The daughter grew up and her father soon forgot everything about the prophecy.

Once it so happened that the seven brothers set out for hunting and the sister insisted that she also would go with them. The party arrived in a thick jungle and saw a house. They were all thirsty and wanted some water to drink. The servants fetched water from inside the house where no living soul was found but all the same it was full of all material comforts. When the thirst was quenched they all felt sleepy. The brothers slept in the verandah and the sister in the inner hall. When they woke up, the sun was high up in the sky. The brothers woke up the sister and asked her to get ready for further journey. The girl brought water from inside and the brothers washed their faces. But all of a sudden the doors of the house were automatically locked when the girl stepped inside to leave the water-vessel in its proper place. The sister and brothers started weeping at this calamity. The doors were so firmly locked that no one could open them. The girl inspected the house and told her brothers that the house was well furnished. In one corner of the hall were all utensils, in another corner other household requirements, in the third corner were beautiful garments and in the fourth corner there was a corpse of a man covered with

53. From a Pardhan in Mandla.

a piece of cloth. From head to foot the body were pierced with innumerable pins. When the brothers heard this they said, 'This is your destiny after all and we cannot avert it', and so they went away. When the brothers went out of sight the doors opened. The girl however had no desire to go back to her father's place and sat near the corpse and picked out the pins one by one.

The brothers went home and told the father all that had taken place in the jungle. Her mother made a doll of rag, put life into it and sent it with a maid-servant to the girl to the jungle-house, while the princess had already taken out all the pins. Only those on the face had remained. She gave the maid-servant water to drink and asked her to take out the remaining pins while she would take a bath. While the princess was taking her bath, the woman removed all the pins and the corpse became alive. 'I am a prince said he and on account of a curse for twelve years I was sleeping like that. I am very hungry, kindly prepare some food for me'. The princess had by this time finished her bath and stood in the door, full of joy and overwhelmed with shyness. 'Who is she?' asked the prince. 'Oh! she is my servant—you need not pay any attention to her', said the woman. The maid-servant cooked dinner and when they both had dined she gave the remaining food to the princess. The princess did not eat it. She buried the food in a ditch and went to the river-side with her doll. She placed the doll underneath a banyan tree. The doll became alive and attended upon the princess like a devoted servant. She bathed her fondly and gave her sweet food to eat. The girl was overcome with this affection of the little doll and poured out her sorrow before her. 'See how the servant-woman has tricked me', said she and began to cry. 'Do not be disheartened my lady', said the doll. 'Your sorrow will last only for four days!' In the morning the doll became lifeless and the princess taking it in her arms came to the house. The prince and his wife had just woken up. The woman saw the princess, came in and kicked her and showered abuses on her. The princess cooked food for both of them but did not eat a morsel herself. Till night she kept on working. When the prince and the woman retired to sleep, she took her doll and went to the river-side. The Lamans, in the service of the prince followed her and then they saw that several women who had come out of the earth were making preparation for bathing the princess. Some were cooking, some were making grand clothes for her and flower-ornaments. When the Lamans saw this 'phantom scene' and

fainted. They reported the matter to the prince next day.

In the morning the princess went to the house with her doll and again she was abused and ill-treated. The whole day she worked for the prince and the woman and at night she started for the riverside. The prince followed her. He also saw the women coming out of the ground and the great pomp that followed soon after. He fainted.

Next day when the girl went to the house in the morning, the prince seized her by both the arms. 'Tell me who you are and what you do on the riverside at night' he asked. The girl then told the true story to him and the doll also confirmed it. The prince already bewitched by her beauty, married her and asked her to follow him into his bed-chamber. 'I shall come, but you must first stuff the wicked woman's mouth and nose with marking nuts and cowry shells and bury her alive on the door steps. Then I shall sit in a palanquin and cross the door-steps'. The prince did so.

The girl then entered the hall and lived happily with the prince ever after.⁵⁴

(36)

The deer

There was a king who owned huge fields. He had engaged a servant boy to look after them. Every day a deer used to eat wheat in the field. Once the boy caught the deer and said 'Run away, oh deer, otherwise the king will kill you'. The deer said, 'Come with me, I shall take you to a holy place'. The boy sat on the deer's back.

On the road the boy accosted a group of Ahirs and their herd. 'Make room for my deer', said the boy. 'Why should we make room for you. Your deer is alone; we are so many', they said. The boy said, 'Let us then make your cattle fight with my deer. If the cattle win I shall give you the deer, if you lose I shall take away your herds'.

Then the fight took place and the deer won. The boy took the cows. The deer and the cows went along and there came along a herd of buffaloes. Again the boy made the deer fight with the buffaloes and got them. In the way he met herds of sheep, horses, camels and elephants. The deer vanquished them all and the boy took all of them with him. With the herd of

54. From a Bharia in Mandla.

elephants he also got a girl whom he married.

He reached the bank of the Ganges. When the king saw the huge herd of animals he thought that if he killed the deer he would get it. So he went to the boy and said, 'I make an iron pillar and bury it in the courtyard! If the deer breaks it I shall give you my kingdom'. The pillar broke but one piece of it injured the deer on the head. And it fell on the ground. The boy began to weep. The deer said to him, 'When I die bring new pots from the potter and put my limbs separately in each of them and bury them. When you are in need, remember me and I shall give you what you want'. The boy did so when the deer died. Now the boy and his wife were penniless. They left the city and went to another city but did not find any work. So they came back to the city where the deer died and asked for service. The king's barber saw the boy's wife and said to the king 'you give me your wife and marry the wife of the boy who is very beautiful'. 'How can this be done', said the king. The barber said, 'You keep the boy in your service. Then take out one eye of the queen and ask the boy to bring the milk of a tiger for cure'.

The king engaged the boy in his service and agreed to pay the boy a million coins every day, as the boy demanded. The boy since then was called Lakhtakia. He went into the forest with grams in his pocket. Underneath a tree he saw two tiger cubs playing. He climbed the tree and threw the grams down. The cubs liked them very much and started eating. When they looked up they saw Lakhtakia. They asked him, who he was. When Lakhtakia told them that he wanted their mother's milk, the cubs agreed to give him that. They took a cup of leaves from Lakhtakia.

When he saw the female tiger coming Lakhtakia climbed the tree. The cubs sucked the milk and spit it in the cup. The mother said, 'I smell a man'. The cubs replied, 'there is no one here except us. If you want to eat, eat us'. The mother said, 'I shall eat fire and burning coal but how can I eat you?'

After suckling her cubs the tigress got up to go. 'Are you going near or far?' asked the cubs. The tigress used code language when she was going in the jungle and left the cubs alone. If the tigress said she was going near she went far and if she said, she was going far she was near about.

'I shall be near about', said the tigress. When the cubs saw their mother disappear in the wood, they called out Lakhtakia and began to go with him. Their mother saw it and came run-

ning. The cubs went to her and while sucking bit off her breasts. With pain she fell down. The cubs and Lakhtakia ran away with the milk and came to the town.

The barber saw that Lakhatakia had brought not only the milk but also two tigers, he went running to the king and told him what had happened. He then advised the king to ask Lakhatakia to bring a root of the plant of Sanjivani (life-giver).

Next day at the king's demand, Lakhatakia took four sheep with him and began to walk with the two cubs. On the way he met a giant. He gave the sheep to the giant and the giant was exceedingly pleased with Lakhatakia and promised him an alliance in his adventure. The giant used to sleep underneath the Sanjivani tree. He uprooted it and began to walk with Lakhatakia. They came back to the city and planted the tree in the courtyard.

The barber saw the tree and the giant and terror-stricken went to the king and told him about Lakhatakia's success. Next day the king asked Lakhatakia to bring the lotus from the sea. The lotus was guarded by a monstrous crocodile. Lakhatakia took a bag-full of corn-seeds with him. His friends the giant and the cubs followed him to the sea. The giant and Lakhatakia went in the water and the cubs remained on shore only. The crocodile and fish began to eat them. Lakhatakia took the lotus and was turning back. In the meanwhile the crocodile turned back and swallowed the lotus. The giant brought huge pillars of Semar tree by means of which he drove the water of the sea back and the sea began to get dry. The fish were then torn up by the cubs. The giant tore the crocodile to pieces and took the lotus.

Lakhatakia walked home triumphantly with the lotus.

The king and his accomplice now were entirely at a loss to find any other work for Lakhatakia. Ultimately they gave him an open challenge to fight with their army.

Lakhatakia prayed to the deer. The deer came back to life and defeated the king's army. All were killed except the king. The king then gave Lakhatakia his kingdom and went away.⁵⁵

(37)

The boy who was seized by a snake

An old man had seven sons. The youngest was the fairest

55. From a Bharia in Mandla.

of them and a pet of all. In the morning the six elder brothers used to go and work in the field and the youngest remained in the house with his brothers' wives. One day the young boy insisted that he would go to the field with them. The elder brothers said that it was their heart's desire that he should do no work but play and have a merry time all his life. Still the young boy persisted. At last the brothers had to yield.

Now the young boy took the pot of the rice-gruel for his brothers to the field. When the brothers saw him they wept. The boy left the pot with the brothers and went to the river to fetch them some water. He entered the stream, where the water reached his waist. As his ill-luck would have it a big water-snake entered his penis and would not come out. The boy got frightened. He wrapped the dhoti properly and gave the brothers water to drink and started weeping. He then told the brothers what had befallen him. The brothers also wept with him. After some time they tied the tail of the snake to the plough-share and pulled it hard. Still the snake would not come out. It became so fierce that it dragged the boy to a forest and no one could prevent it. In the forest the boy saw a ber tree. He requested the snake to leave him alone for a while till he had a feed of the fruits. The snake came out and the boy climbed the tree. And as soon as the boy finished eating the fruits it seized him again and dragged him to Brindaban, where there was a huge jamun tree. Again the boy desirous to eat the jamun fruits requested the snake to leave him for a short time and when the snake did so he climbed the tree. The snake spread its hood and sat under the tree. The fruits were ripe and though the boy liked them so much he was unable to eat them. So sad he was. On the tree there was a host of monkeys. They said to him 'why do you not eat the fruits?' The boy burst into tears and told them about the snake. The leader of the monkeys was moved by hearing this and promised to help him. He then brought a knife and killed the snake. The boy overwhelmed with gratitude offered his life-long service to the monkey. He stayed with it for over a year when the monkey pleased with his devotion told him that it would take him to his brothers. The boy said that the monkey should give him its form in return. The monkey agreed to this request and the boy soon became a monkey. When the boy was about to leave the kind monkey said: 'In case you are in danger remember the monkey-god Hanuman, so I will know it and your difficulties will be removed!'

The monkey-boy now started homewards. He met an old

woman on the way. He went to her and requested her to allow him to stay with her for some time. The old woman said that she earned her livelihood by begging food and used to get only a handful of corn every day. Yet she would support the monkey. The king of the village had a daughter who was not getting a suitable husband. So, the king had proclaimed that all young men desirous to win the princess's hand should assemble in the courtyard; the princess then would throw a flower garland and would marry the man on whose head the garland would fall. The monkey said to the old woman, 'I want to marry the princess and so let me go'. 'She won't marry you, so do not go', said the woman. Yet he went and hid under a heap of dried cowdung. Thrice the girl threw the garland and thrice it fell exactly on the spot where the monkey sat under the cow-dung. Disgusted with his daughter's fate the king asked the servants to dig the heap. Before the operation began the monkey came out. To the monkey was married the princess. "To whom does the monkey belong?" asked the king. 'It is my monkey, sire', said the old woman. The king then gave her a broken cot and a half ruined chula (hearth) and drove the girl and monkey away. 'Had it been a man I would have given him my kingdom. What shall I give to the monkey?' said the king.

The girl and the monkey continued to live with the old woman. At night he would take off the monkey-skin, go to the king's palace and ride his horse in the courtyard. In the morning he again became the monkey and came home. 'Who rides my horse in the night and spoils the courtyard?' inquired the king. He ordered his men to keep a watch in the night. All the men were sleeping. Only a half-blind servant was awake, and saw the boy take out the monkey-skin and ride the horse. This time however when the ride was over, the boy threw the monkey-skin into the fire and went home and slept. The servant reported the matter to the king, but he would not believe it. He ordered his barber to go and see what his daughter was doing. The boy was sleeping, and his feet had come out of the covering. When the barber saw these handsome feet he was astounded. He returned and told the king that his son-in-law's feet were as fair and delicate as the king's tongue.

The king went to the old woman's house himself and saw how handsome his son-in-law was. He was so delighted that he took the boy in a great procession to his palace. He celebrated the marriage with great pomp and offered him his kingdom.

While the boy was thus happily married, his six brothers,

now poverty-stricken, came to his kingdom to earn a livelihood by cutting wood. They did not recognise their brother but the boy recognised them at once. He called them to his palace, 'Where do you come from?' he asked them. They said that since their beloved brother was seized by the snake, luck had left them and they were driven to utter misery. 'We used to eat by our brother's luck' said they. The young boy then told them who he was and all the brothers lived together happily.⁵⁶

(38)

The old woman and a fox

There lived an old couple who had no children. The old man used to work in the field and his wife used to take him his food. One day while she was taking his rice gruel as usual, she met a fox. The fox gave her fruits to eat and said 'Come, mother, I shall see the lice in your hair'. The old woman sat down and the fox behind her. The fox ate all the gruel, tied the pot in the cloth neatly and pretended to pick out the lice. The old woman took away the pot to her husband and found that it was empty. She now understood who the thief was and resolved to punish him.

Next morning she told the old man to hide in the house and went to the jungle weeping. The fox met her 'What is the matter, mother', said it. 'My husband is dead and in his honour I invite you and all your relatives to dinner, to my house', said the woman.

All the foxes assembled in her courtyard. The woman threw a little food in the courtyard. The foxes fought for it. The woman then tied them all with a rope and called the old man out with a stick. He beat them all. She then let the others go but the thief she tied near a well and beat him every day. All women who came to the well to fetch water threw stones at it and kicked it. 'The whip is the biggest master. It rules well', said the fox to himself.⁵⁷

(39)

The boy and the pig

There lived an old couple who had seven sons. When they

56. From a Bharia in Mandla.

57. From a Bharia in Mandla.

were unable to do any work in the field they sent their first son to keep a watch at night in the field. He went and saw a wild pig coming from the jungle to eat the crops and drink water. He sang the following:—

‘Drink water, oh pig,
Above is the Kunjalban!’

when the pig began to drink water. He shot it with an arrow. The pig was not hurt. It killed the boy and took the body with it. This happened with the six brothers. Now the youngest one’s turn came to keep a watch. When the pig came he only sang the song his brothers sang. The pig drank water and went away. Then came a tiger to drink water. The boy kept on singing till all the beasts came, drank water and departed. Last came the pig again. Now the boy did not sing but shot it directly. He killed the pig. He found out the corpses of his brothers, covered them with a cloth and sang:—

‘Wake my brothers,
Get up my good brothers.’

They all came back to life. They took the dead pig home and feasted on it.⁵⁸

(40)

The forest queen

There lived a king with his queen. Once the queen got ill and died. The king threw her body into the jungle. The queen was pregnant then. A fox and his wife came to eat the corpse and tore it. They found a beautiful baby girl in the womb. The girl began to cry. The fox-couple had no child and they thought of adopting the girl. They licked the baby with their tongues and cleaned her and took her to their home. The mother fox then ate medicinal herbs which yielded milk and suckled the girl. Gradually they fed her with birds and fish, etc.

The girl grew up in the forest and was now called ‘Banawati Rani’ or the ‘Forest-queen’.

Once a king came to the forest for hunting and he aimed at the old fox. ‘Do not kill me’, said the fox, ‘I have a beautiful daughter. I give her to you’. The king then married the girl and took her to his city. The fox-couple refused to go with them

58. From a Bharia in Mandla.

to the city and remained in the forest only.⁵⁹

(41)

The prince in search of hunger

On the point of a needle there was a city with nine million inhabitants. The king of the city had a young son. Once the prince saw some poor people who had come to ask the king for money, clothes, and food. 'Why do you want money, clothes, and food?' asked the prince.

'Because we are seized by hunger', replied one of them. The prince wondered. He had not known hunger. 'What is hunger like?', thought he. 'I must have it, and he set forth in search of hunger.

His parents grieved at his decision, when he told them about it. 'Hunger is within you. It cannot be seen. It cannot be bought', said they. But the boy did not listen and walked away. He asked every one on the street where hunger could be found and every one laughed at him.

He searched hills and dales, and rivers and planes, by day and by night. But hunger was not to be found. Now the supply of the food which he had taken with him from home dwindled away. 'What shall I do now—I have not yet found hunger'. So he sold his horse and bought food. One after another he sold all his possessions. Then nothing was left and he had to sell his arm for food. Then the other arm also was sold and the legs also. Now he hopped on his trunk only. Within a few days all his limbs up to the neck were sold and only the head remained. The head could jump. It went to a grove of palm-trees, where the king used to feed the labourers who worked in his fields, and the princess used to distribute food. The head stood under a palm tree where the girl also had come to pick up ripe dates. The head went near her. She was scared at the sight of it and ran away but the head followed her and at last jumped in her lap. It would not go away. The people when they saw a head in her lap took her to be a witch and drove her out of the village. The girl stayed in a cottage with the head. No one spoke to her or even went near her. One morning the head said to her 'what shall we eat? What shall we drink?' The girl went out in search of food. A Sadhu was eating a pumpkin at a little distance from the hut. Four seeds of the pumpkin were lying on

59. From a Gond in Mandla.

the ground. After the Sadhu went away she picked up the seeds and came home. 'We shall sow the seeds and grow pumpkins', said the head. She tied the axe to its neck and the head went hopping to the field. There it stood weeping bitterly. Bhimsen heard it and asked what the matter was. The head told the story of its adventure and marriage with the princess. Bhimsen then took pity on it and tilled the ground and then the head put the seeds in the field. Bhimsen warned the head not to tell anyone about what he did for it. Soon the seeds grew and in one night they bore fruit. The girl went to the field and brought two pumpkins and she found rubies in one and diamonds in the other. Another night the head also grew the limbs which were sold formerly and assumed the form of the prince who stayed happily with the girl. Now the girl wanted to show her father how happy and wealthy she had been. And she invited her people. No one went to her house. Only the Kotwal and a shepherd went to dine. They had never tasted such food in their life. When they left she gave each of them a gold dish and beautiful clothes and ornaments. When the rest of the people saw it they repented and behaved well with the girl and her husband.⁶⁰

(42)

The four brothers choose their wives

There were four brothers who used to work hard on the farm during day-time and used to return home fatigued at night. There was no one to look after them and cook food for them. They thought 'we must have a wife now'. So they went into the jungle and prayed to Mahadeo. Mahadeo asked them what they wanted. 'A wife,' all the four brothers said together. Mahadeo asked them to wait and went inside and taking out dirt from his chest made a woman and put life into her. The three elder brothers got tired of waiting outside and left the place. The youngest brother remained. To him Mahadeo gave the woman. 'This is your wife', said he. The woman was beautiful, obedient and clever at everything. She kept the house well and cooked marvellously. The three elder brothers now repented for their haste and again went to the jungle and prayed. Again Mahadeo appeared and asked them what they wanted. 'A wife', said each of them. Mahadeo then asked each of them to bring a bone to him. The eldest one brought the bone of a cow, the second one

60. From a Gond in Mandla.

of a mare and the third one of a bitch. Mahadeo took the bones and made women out of them. With their wives the brothers came home delighted. But soon they were disappointed. The elder brother's wife was dull and lazy like a cow and would do no work. The second one's wife would eat a lot and jump about. The third brother's wife would always abuse her husband and quarrelled with every one.⁶¹

(43)

The fox and the girl

There were once upon a time twelve brothers who had only one sister and there were twelve sisters in another family who had only one brother. The sister in the former family was married to the boy and he came and stayed in his wife's family. One day his wife was taking boiled rice to her husband who was working in a field; on the way she met a fox. The fox greeted her and said, 'Come here, oh sister, where are you going?' She came and stood near it, and placed the pot of rice on the ground. The fox said 'Give me your sari and I shall show you the whole kingdom'. She gave it her sari. 'Give me your black beads', it said and she gave them also. 'Give me your anklets' it demanded and she gave them as well. 'Now I shall show you a fine dance' said it. The fox danced and sang:—

I wear black beads, yet my face is long.
 I wear anklets, yet my face is long.
 I wear a saree, yet my face is long.
 My face is long, oh my face is long.

When the dance was finished, it said 'Come now I show you the entire kingdom'. It tied her to its back with the end of the saree and climbed the tree. It reached the top where four branches had joined. It sat on them and pretended to show her the view.

'Now, I must attend to nature's call, so you sit here', said the fox, and came down. It ate all the rice and left only water inside. It took the pot to her husband and said from a distance 'My husband, I have brought rice-gruel for you. Drink it, I have got fever, so I go home now', and with these words it left. The fox came to the girl's house, its face hidden in the saree. It started moaning loudly and said, 'I have got fever, I am dying,

61. From a Bharia in Chhindwara.

and went and slept on a cot and covered itself with a blanket. In the evening the husband went to its bedside thinking that it was his wife. The fox was moaning.

My hands are breaking
 My vagina will burst now.
 I shall not live
 Go my husband
 Call my eldest brother,
 Call my youngest brother,
 I shall die,
 If you touch me
 Your hand shall fall off,
 If you touch my feet
 Your feet shall break.
 The Paretin⁶² is sitting on my tongue.

All relatives gathered round the bed. But no one would touch the sister. The youngest brother was not there. The fox said, 'Bring my youngest brother, I shall die after seeing him.' The son-in-law accordingly was sent to call the youngest brother. The brother was very much hurt to hear the sad news. 'I shall cook rice for my sister and come after a while with my wife. You may go ahead', said the brother. On the way they heard a voice saying—

Its fine of you to take vegetable,
 Its fine of you to take rice
 to the fox.

They looked here and there but saw no one. Again the voice came from the tree top. Attracted by the sweet voice they started looking around. The girl said 'I am hanging on the Dhoura tree'. They thought it was only a bird; but again the song was repeated and the brother said 'It's no one but my sister'. He climbed up and saw his sister, quite stripped and in a helpless condition. He gave her the rice to eat. He then sent her to his house with his wife and proceeded with an axe in his hand to his brothers' house. When the fox saw him, it started moaning ever so loudly. The brother went near it. 'Don't touch me', said the fox. 'I am possessed of the god'. The brother said 'Show me your hand', 'I won't' said the fox. 'If you touch me I shall die'.

When the brother stepped near it the fox shrank back and went inside the house. The brother also followed him, one of

62. Female ghost.

his hands thrust out to catch the fox, the other with the axe held behind.

The fox repeated its song. The brother caught it by hand and killed it with the axe.

His brothers and sisters prevented him. 'Don't kill your sister', they shouted. Still the brother did not obey them. He removed the covering from the body of the fox and showed them who the pretender was. He then brought his sister there and they all spent the night in rejoicing.⁶³

Tales of the Korikus

(44)

Once upon a time there lived a brother with his younger sister. They were very happy and loved each other deeply. Not many years passed when the brother got married and brought his wife home. Now as it usually happens in most cases, his wife considered the girl a rival in her husband's affection. She conceived so much hatred for the poor girl that she could not bear to see her in the house any longer. One day the woman made ready to go to her mother's place. One of her sarees was washed and thrown on the fencing for drying. Since it was wet she did not take it with her. Before she left she told her sister-in-law, 'You shall not wear my saree when I am gone. If you happen to do so, I shall kill you'.

Still the saree was so nice, and since her brother's marriage the girl was so much neglected, that she could not resist the temptation of wearing it. The brother's wife returned much sooner from her mother's place than she had intended and found that her saree was being worn by the girl in spite of her warning. She at once went to her husband who was completely under her spell now, and asked him to kill his sister and dye the cloth with her blood. The brother killed the sister. He dipped the clothes in her blood and took the bundle to his wife.

The sister however was betrothed to a young man in a neighbouring village and her intended father-in-law said to the brother that it was proper time for the marriage to take place. They could not wait any longer. The brother and his wife were frightened lest the terrible secret be out. They however, prepared a beautiful statue of wax which exactly resembled the bride. To this statue the bridegroom was married. The statue

67. From a Kumar in Raipur.

was seated on horseback and brought to the bridegroom's home. All this was managed so skillfully by the couple that nobody suspected the trick. After some time however the wax began to melt and the colour on the face began to fade fast. The bridegroom and his father were extremely grieved at finding out how they were tricked. They went to the bride's brother and demanded the girl. The brother however said that he had fulfilled his promise and it might have been through witchcraft of some one in their house that such transformation must have taken place. He was in no way responsible for the loss of the bride. The bridegroom's party were very much dejected at this retort and started for home. On their way they stopped near the stream where the murder had taken place. They saw a very beautiful and unusually large flower of Chameli (Jasmine) which was guarded by a bitch whom the girl had formerly fed affectionately. The bride-groom's father went near and tried to pluck it but the flower shrank back and his hand could not reach it. This flower was no one else but the missing bride. When the father-in-law drew near, the flower—viz. the girl said:

'Who is it, who is it, that shakes the branch?' The bitch replied 'Not I, not I, my friend.

The father-in-law is shaking the branch,
Let go the branch, O, father-in-law,
Pluck the flower alone.
The brother's wife killed the sister
And dyed the saree with blood.'

When they heard these words they grew suspicious. Then the bridegroom's mother proceeded to pluck the flower. She caught hold of the branch and the flower again said:

'Who is it, who is it, that is shaking the branch?' The bitch as before replied:—

Not I, Not I, my friend,
The mother-in-law is shaking the branch
Let go the branch, O, mother-in-law,
Pluck the flower alone,
The brother's wife killed the sister,
And dyed the saree with blood!'

The flower again shrank back and the woman was unable to reach it. In the same way the bridegroom's brother and sister also tried to pluck the flower and failed. At last the bridegroom got up from his place and touched the branch. 'Who is it', asked the bride as before. The bitch replied, that it was her sweetheart, and repeated the verse. The flower now yielded and he could

easily pluck it. As soon as it was plucked the jasmine plant disappeared and the girl was seen instead. The young man and his people were very happy to see the beautiful blushing bride and took her home where they lived very happily.

(45)

The Missing Prince

Once upon a time there was a king who had seven sons. Many a days he was in search of a family in which there were seven sisters. In the vicinity of Vrindavan he came to know another king who had seven daughters. The girls' father also wanted his daughters to marry into one family and stay together. So the engagements were announced. There was great enjoyment and merry making in the city on that day. A great feast was arranged and food was given to all castes. When it was over both the parties arrived at Vrindavan, where the king ordered all to dance, sing and make merry. At ten o'clock the king ordered the people to stop dancing and retire for the night. While all of them were sleeping, a fairy king (who is called Bhagvan, i.e., God, by the Korku woman) descended on the earth with his attendants and began to dance. The king got up and angrily demanded 'Who is yet singing when I had ordered to stop it?' The youngest prince also got up and according to the direction from which the noise came proceeded to see who it was. He had not proceeded long when he was caught and killed and his body was carried away.

When the bridal party awoke in the morning they found to the greatest horror of all, that the youngest prince was missing. In vain they searched; no trace was found of the lost prince. At last the six elder sisters were married to the six princes. The youngest princess refused to marry anyone else except the lost prince and was consequently married to his dagger.

Immediately after the marriage celebrations were over the seven brides began to stay with their father-in-law. The six fortunate princesses had six separate halls, where they enjoyed themselves in the company of their husbands. The youngest princess however refused to have a hall for herself and spent day and night attending upon the aged parents of the prince. Never once did she disclose her grief to them. All the time she kept on a smiling face and tried to amuse the old people. Seven years thus passed. One day while the old king was taking his meals, a tear dropped from his eye and he exclaimed 'Oh God!'

'Why are you so sad?' asked the princess. 'Seven years have elapsed' said the king, 'and I have lost all hopes of seeing my beloved boy'.

'Do not weep' said the princess, 'I shall now go and try to find him out'. She took the dagger and went out of the house.

Days and nights she rambled, but she did not find any trace of her husband. She went on and came near Vrindavan. One night she happened to sleep under a tree on which a pair of birds had made a nest. No sooner the girl lay down to sleep than the serpent came stealthily out of a hole and began to climb the tree. The girl at once got up and attacked the serpent with the dagger. The serpent immediately died. The birds were so happy to see their enemy dead, that they thanked the girl for saving their offspring from peril, and giving the girl two feathers said 'Whenever you are in need of anything please remember us and rub these feathers against a stone. We shall be at your service'.

The girl again resumed her journey. For many days she rambled in the place where the prince had disappeared. Suddenly she remembered the birds and when they appeared asked them to show her husband. She then saw the body of her husband guarded by the fairies. She moved towards them, but before she was near, the fairies ran away from the place taking the body with them. The birds however consoled her and brought nectar from heaven by means of which they brought the prince to life. 'More than this we are unable to do' said the birds to the girl. 'If you go and wait upon the old sage who lives in a cave nearby he will be able to restore your husband to you' and the birds flew away.

The girl went to the sage and waited upon him for six months. The sage was pleased with her services and said 'Child, you get married to another prince'. The girl refused. The sage then asked her to fry one seer of grams and cut some grass. He told her that she had to feed a horse and mare on the bank of the river. She would see some people bathing in the river; all she was required to do was to throw the grass about and carry the clothes away. The girl followed the instructions but while she was carrying the clothes away the people saw her. They snatched the clothes away from her and beat her. She wept bitterly and told the sage what had happened. The sage consoled her. He told her to fry two seers of grams and carry away the clothes. This time also the same thing happened. She then prepared three, four, five and six seers of grams but each time

she was disappointed as before. She thought of trying her luck for the seventh and the last time. She took seven seers of grams with her and did everything as before. This time she was successful in carrying away their clothes. The men who were bathing in the river came out naked and chased her; but she had already reached her destination and they were helpless. The men approached the sage and said 'Your daughter has stolen our clothes, give them back to us'. The girl gave other clothes to them which they refused to take. 'Give back the prince and take away your clothes' said the sage. The men who were really fairies handed over the prince to the sage and disappeared.

Thus after many years of separation the princess was united with her husband.

Conclusion:—The folk-lore of the aborigines is vast and scrappy, and so far an item neglected by anthropologists. Though it is not possible for us to arrive at a hypothesis about the folk-tales at the present stage of research, we can all the same notice some marks which are quite positive and may be helpful to form more assertive generalizations in future. They are:—

(1) The tales are growing more and more Hindu in spirit on account of two reasons. The one is that the tribes have in many places given up their tribal tongue and use the local dialect. It is natural, that the dependence on the local dialect means dependence on the local ideology also; and looking to the innate tendency of the folk-tale to spread, the tribal ideas are changing their garb and also the spirit rapidly. Another reason is, that the basis of the tribal tales, viz. their mythology, is in a condition of decay. The tribal pantheons are extremely elastic and dependent on the Hindu gods. So here also, the Hindu element is predominant. Again as the aborigines have no clear idea about their gods and goddesses, it is not possible to have elaborate records of the deeds of either the gods or the heroes and so the basis of primitive mythology in this culture area remains shaky.

(2) The primitive contribution to Indian folk-tales, however, in spite of all its drawbacks, is its mythology. In the creation legends we see the primitive genius at its best. The finding of the earth, the twenty-one kinds of the soil, origin of menstruation and sex-antagonism are some of the points which are worth consideration.

(3) About ordinary tales we can say that they form a legitimate part of 'the Indian tale' and we have to collect heaps and

heaps of such tales before we can demarcate the primitive element from the Hindu one.