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Hem Barua

FOLKSONGS OF INDIA

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Preface

Criss-crossed with mountains, plains and river-valleys, India is a honeycomb of different races and social groups. The thread that binds them into one is the heritage of art and culture, both at the philosophical and folk level.

Folksongs are a natural flowering of the rural landscape. From the mountain-tops to the solitary groves of forests in the valley, it is one broad river of songs. The songs of the different social and linguistic groups are the rills that enrich this river.

Life is fast changing. Urban life is, slowly but surely, making a rude inroad into folk-life, on its inherent beauty and cultural wealth. The gramophone-record is an onslaught on the natural song. The radio seeks to replace the group-festivals of people's song and dance. These challenges are inevitable.

The songs of the people must not die. In order to live, opportunities of life must be secured to them. In this tiny book, I have tried to give specimens of songs belonging to different social and language-groups. Besides, I have tried to draw from the great reservoir of songs of our tribal people, both of the hills and plains.

In doing this book, I had to face the lamentable paucity of

anthologies of our people's songs in English. I was further handicapped by my want of knowledge of our different languages, even, barring a few, of the principal ones. Most of the songs, not all, represented in this book are taken from folklorists like Dr. Verrier Elwin, W. G. Archer, D. Satyarthi, S. C. Dube, D. Hutton and Von Furer-Haimendorf. I acknowledge my indebtedness to them. I have excluded the ballads and longer poems from the purview of this book and chosen only the lyrics for study. The life of the lyric is its inherent song-quality.

New Delhi,
June 1962

Hem Barua

CONTENTS

The hills and the sea and the earth dance,
The world of man dances in laughter and tears.

—KABIR

1

Nature Songs

The folk people are steeped in poverty. But there is little or no bitterness in their songs. They are the children of Mother Earth; their life depends on her blessings. This has given birth to cycles of songs, for instance the *Banbhajans* of the Chhatisgarh areas of Madhya Pradesh or the *Bangits* of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. These are really forest-songs; they are intimately connected with nature, and the feelings that nature gives rise to. Nature also provides emotive inspiration in love-songs. The following *Thadi Dadaria* is an illustration:

> Slender is the *munga* tree,
> Slender are its branches,
> Slender is your body,
> O give it me, desirous.

Here is an Angami Naga song.

> When we go into the jungle, hide no word,
> To speak all that is in the heart and be friends is well.
> We have never been into the forest together,
> I have never plucked wild herb to fill my lover's basket,
> For this I am sad.

The peasant has watched with "awe and wonder" the change of seasons and celebrates them in dance and song. For instance, the *Chait Parab* of Orissa, a spring-festival, has

given rise to a rich corpus of songs; the peasant sings as he works in the field.

The lower leaf drops,
The upper leaf laughs,
The middle one says:
My day draws nearer.

The Kol of Chota Nagpur has his own nature-dances, enacted round a cut branch of the *karma* tree. The Majhwar enacts the dance when the monsoons come, and again when the monsoons end. Other Chota Nagpur tribes do it in the middle of the rain, in August, when the crops spring up in the field, and they celebrate the joy of creation. The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa do it when the crops are harvested. The Bihu dances of Assam celebrate the joy of nature and creation in the middle of April before the onset of the monsoon.

All these nature-festivals have fertility of the earth as the *motif*. The primitive man regarded fertility as a blessing "within the bestowal of the gods", according to Ruth Benedith, who must be propitiated with song and dances. In his mind the fertility of field and man are closely associated. Bertrand Russell says: "It was thought that by promoting human fertility, the fertility of the soil could be encouraged."

Dalton describes a nature-festival of the Uraons in which the fertility-*motif* dominates, thus: "The seed is sown in moist, sandy soil, mixed with a quantity of turmeric, and the blades sprout and unfold a pale yellow colour. On the *karma* day, these blades are taken up by the roots, as if for transplanting, and carried in baskets by the fair cultivators to the *Akhra*."

The "fair cultivators" carry cucumbers in their baskets, a fertility symbol. The *motif* of these nature-festivals is beautifully expressed in the following Konyak Naga song:

May the spring never forget to enter our village,
O Gowang, give us rice in plenty,
O Gowang, be kind to fields and women,
O Gowang, as a woman embraces her lover,
May the earth embrace the seed.

For cultivation, rains are essential; they fertilise the earth. This has deeply occupied the imagination of the folk-people. Here is a Baiga song:

Which cloud rains?
Which cloud roars?
The white cloud roars,
The dark cloud rains,
The cloud rains and helps the corn,
The world lives on the corn.

How the fertility-*motif* of the rains is used as a symbol in human experience is seen in the following song from Bihar, translated by W. G. Archer.

June is the month of parting, friend,
The sky glowers with gloom,
Leaping and reeling the God rains,
And my sweet budding breasts are wet,
All my friends sleep with their husbands,
But my own husband is a cloud in another land.

The following Tamil song is just a rhapsody.

It will rain nicely, mother,
The country will turn green, it will rain.
Shining like the needle,
The village will turn green, it will rain.
Shining like the cowrie,
The forest will turn green, it will rain.

The village may be under the weight of water,
It will rain, mother.
Roundly, roundly, it will rain,
Everywhere in the world, it will rain, mother.
Rain of wealth,—it will rain,
It will rain nicely, mother.

According to Telugu folk-lore, there is a Harvest-God whose blessings are necessary for a bountiful crop. He is called Poli, and more familiarly Yaggenna.

Poli, O Poli, oh why don't you come?
Oh, why don't you come?
Pray, do come, O Poli.

Poli, O Poli, oh you have a concubine,
So fond of the swing you are, O Poli,
Lo, there stands a pair of *bilva* trees,
Their flowers and leaves
Are all for the worship of *Ganapati*.

Poli, O Poli, oh why don't you come?
Oh, why don't you come?
Pray, do come, O Poli.

Our Poli, the Yaggenna, as he sits
Looks like a *kundi* mortar,
While he lies down he looks like a pig,
As he gets up, he is a deer.

Poli, O Poli, oh why don't you come?
Oh, why don't you come?
Pray, do come, O Poli.

In contrast to this, here is a Nepali folk-song on a different note.

Earth Goddess, you are my mother,
Give us a smiling look,
It is time to reap paddy,
Our heart is full,
We must spend the day in songs.

The seasons are celebrated in a variety of ways; each season leaves its own impressions on the folk-mind and has produced seasonal songs of nature. They are known as *Bara Masi* songs in Orissa, and *Bara Mahi* songs in Assam. Some of these songs have love as the theme.

There are two different cycles of seasonal songs in Bhojpuri. One of them is sung in Chait; the songs are called *Ghatos*. The other cycle is sung during the rains; this is called *Kajri*. In Bihar, the *Kajri* songs are generally sung by Hindu women of the higher castes. These rain-songs, more often than not, are on the themes of love and sex. The Pardhan songs, on the other hand, are slightly a departure; they are mostly of a descriptive import. The theme of separation is subtly suggested in the following poem.

O, my love is on his way to the honey city,
He is flying to the honey city,

Asadh[1] has come covering the four quarters with clouds,
The lightning flashes in the clouds,
The rains have filled the lakes and turned
The country into Brindaban,

How happily
We drink together the rainy water.

Sawan[2] has come, and O my friend,
He is offended with me,
For my enemy, my co-wife
Has aroused his love for her.

Terrible are the nights of *Bhadon*[3], my friend,
No sleep comes to the eyes,
Come, my God, come if you desire me,
But do not trick with false promises.

He promised he could come,
In the light of the spotless moon,
But the moon's light
Only tortures me like fire:
Were I a *Jogi*,[12]
I would go from forest to forest,
My body smeared with ashes,
For my lord has gone to the honey city.

Kartik[4] comes and the girls,
Will burn lights in their courts,
But while he is away, my body burns,
As if all the lamps were in it.

Aghan[5] brings bad news from my bird,
For now I know my enemy's love delays him,
While I sit pining for him.

Pus[6] is very cold,
There is no sleep for my two eyes,
I sit with rosary round my neck,
And say "Ram, Ram" with all my strength.

Magh[7] brings the spring,
But how can I put on my ornaments,
If he is not in the house?
Friend, my peace and joy is taken
By my enemy—may she be burnt.

In *Phagun*[8] they all play with coloured water,
But on whose body should I throw my coloured water?

Chait[9] is full of *Tesu* flowers,
And greedy for them come the bees,
But my body is burning like a forest fire.

O *Baisakh*,[10] come and with your heat,
Bring out my sweat and quench
The burning of my body.

1-11: Months in the Indian calendar;
12. A mendicant.

In *Jeth*,[11] I send my message,
My Pihu, my pihu,
I am thirsty, I am thirsty.

Here is another folk-song in which the season of rains is celebrated, and the *motif* is love and separation.

Sawan is pleasing,
These are the days to fall in love,
Tanks are full;
These are the days to bathe together;
Red garments and *hamel*[13] for the neck,
These are the days to adorn;
My darling left for a distant land,
These are the days for him to return.

The following *Dadaria* of the Gond is a typical seasonal song:

In *Sawan*, there are mushrooms,
In *Bhadon*, young bamboo-shoots,
How can I spend my days
While my body is green?

"Mushrooms" and "bamboo-shoots" are used as symbols for the developing body of a girl. In such a season the girl, as she matures into youth, is longing to be loved; her body is "green".

Here is an *Ahir Dadaria*, a rain-song, which suggests a secret love.

Cloud to the east, the rain falls in the south,
You delight in the play of love, but you are
anxious as you go.

Clouds and rains are generally accepted by folk-people as conventional symbols of the act of love. The following is a Bondo rain-song that is simple in its appeal.

The clouds roar from hill to hill,
They hang like long tresses,
Don't be wild, O rain,
I cannot hear my dark girl's voice.

Sexual frustration, natural to the rainy months, is expressed in the following *Chaumasa* song from Bihar.

Happy is the woman's lot
Whose husband is at home,

---

[13] An ornament.

Wretched is my fate,
Whose husband has gone away:
Absence with its flame
Tortures me each day,
And my lotus heart is on fire.
His heart is hard,
How my breasts tingle,
And burst at the slips.

Speaking of the months of *sawan* and *bhadon,* associated with the rains, W. G. Archer points out that this is usually the period that is connected with sexual frustration, for the gloom, natural to this period, "turns loneliness into an active fear and intensifies the need of a wife for her husband." The common symbolism of rain and storm, as he says, evokes sexual longing.

The impact of the seasons on the emotional life is self-evident in the following song from Gujarat. This girl who is a bride expresses her joy in the rains.

Mighty things were made in the world,
First the earth, second the sky;
Day of greetings has come.
The sky showered the rain,
The earth bears the weight of the water;
Day of greetings has come.

The swing, traditionally associated with Lord Krishna and Radha, is a sex-symbol, as pointed out by Frazer. It rouses passions. Associated with the rains, its effect becomes acute and intense. The following song from U. P. is significant.

The great king is swinging in the cradle,
The black gathering of clouds begins to thunder,
And it begins to rain and pour.
The cradle is studded with gems and the seat
is made of sandal wood,
The ropes are silken and the eastern wind is blowing,
The king of the mountains is singing.

It is not in the world of human beings alone that the influence of spring is felt. The following Kachari song,—the Kacharis are a tribal people of Assam—is an idyll.

The rock won't move in any season,
The bird comes and asks:

Will you like to fly with me?
The rock sits mum.
The doe comes running and asks:
Will you like to run with me?
The bird says, I am greater than the sky,
The doe says, I am greater than the forest.
The rock dreams:
Lo, I fly,
Lo, I run.

The following Angami Naga song poses a beautiful contrast. Ear-rings and anklets can participate in the joy. The hills and rocks are silent.

O my ear-ring, spring has come,
O my anklet, spring has come,
O hills, you cannot speak,
O rock, you cannot sing.

Phalgun announces the advent of spring; the winter veil of fog and mist is lifted from the face of the earth; *Magh* precedes *Phalgun;* the whisper of spring is in the air. The harvest is a gift of the sun. The following *Magh Mandal* song from Bengal is a song of simple faith and pictorial beauty.

This year *Magh* is very cold,
As sun *mama*[1] ascends the eastern fringe of the thatch,
We shall sing our song.

Our *anchal*[2] full of the red *java*[3] and the white *bhati* flowers,
The *doob* grass wet with dew,
The dew drops look like pearls.

We sit with old ashes in a broken winnowing fan,
When birds will call us from bushes,
We shall feel relieved basking in the sun.

Come, elder sister, if you will see,
Dawn Queen leaves for her father-in-law's,
The garland on her neck, the veil drawn over her face,

We sit facing the east to observe the *brata*[4],
We are not fully dressed,
Our parents' barns are full with grace of *Surya Thakur*.[5]

It is not only the bright and colourful aspects of nature

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[1] Maternal uncle; [2] hem of a cloth; [3] a kind of flower; [4] penance; [5] sun-god.

that find expression in songs. Here is a song from the Maikal Hills.

The heat rains down,
Our bodies have grown hot as iron;
The heat comes,
As though heat itself were blowing.

Here is another. It is a folk-song from Chhatisgarh.

The wind blew, the fire whirled in the sky,
There was dust on every side, fire shadowed all the sky.

The river with its distinctive panorama has inspired a rich corpus of folk-songs of charm and appeal. The *Bhatiali* songs of Bengal are an illustration.

The *Bhatiali*, as it is sung against the wide expanse of the river, gives a resonance to the voice of the singer; his boat glides with the stream, for *Bhatialis* are downstream songs. The singer seems to imbibe an undertone of sadness from the river, and the river from the singer. The *Bhatiali* more generally has for its theme both love and spiritual musing.

There are other songs of the river too. The themes of these songs are mostly love and the life of the river. The Mansi is a quiet stream that runs across a tiny village in Bengal. Here is a folk-song from Bengal in which it figures:

Across the Mansi, along the bank, my **didi**,[1]
The golden friend sings as he walks,
Across the Mansi, along the bank.
Is he your friend or mine, **didi**?
Listen **didi**,
Across the Mansi, along the bank.

The elder sister pounds the paddy,
The younger sister does the winnowing;
The middle one's tears roll down;
Listen, **didi**,
Across the Mansi, along the bank.

How shall I call him, **didi**?
Ever at a distance he walks **didi**,
ever at a distance.

---

[1] elder sister.

Within my heart ever burns a fire,
Is he your friend or mine, didi?
Listen, didi,
Across the Mansi, along the bank.

The following is a Santal song and a *Dadaria* from Chhatisgarh.

(i)

Play not, Badan dear, on your flute,
At the river bank, don't play this tune,
Water lies asleep below the rock, O Badan,
What for do you churn it?
What for do you tease it?

(ii)

O, the clear water of the Agar river,
When will the passion of my love stir your cold stream?

The following is a Marathi *Ovi*, nostalgic in its appeal.

I visualise the river at my mother's village,
Stands my mother filling her pitcher.

Almost a similar feeling of sadness and nostalgia is expressed in the following song from the Simla Hills.

O stream, going downward,
With stones in your course, you flow,
What makes me come beyond my village?
Ah! me, I was destined to share food in a distant land.

In those distant days when land-routes were not developed, people had to depend mainly on the river-routes; the rivers were the arteries of commerce and communication. The following Malayalam song is evidence.

Whose boat comes upon the waves?
Is it not the merchandise boat of a Cochin merchant?
What are the goods in the boat?
Stores and throne and many a fish without intestines.

The men-folk take to the commerce of river-routes; it means long absences from home. Each returning boat brings hope to the women only to be followed by despair as it approaches. The seasons, as they change, make this long waiting more agonising. A rich corpus of songs has grown round this theme.

There is a folksong called *Baramahigit* in Assam; it describes a woman's pangs at separation from her husband and

the moods that the different seasons of the year evoke in her. This theme of separation appears in a Chinese poem also, translated by Ezra Pound; the *Baramahigit* follows a close parallel with the poem in theme and spirit.

If you are coming through
the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come to meet you,
As far as Cho-fu-so.

The river is not merely a symbol of romantic associations; the peasant is not oblivious of its destructive power and potency. During the rains, it sweeps across the fallow lands destroying harvest and cultivation, cattle and at times men. As the floods recede, diseases break out; the economic structure of the village is rudely shattered. The life of the peasant, in Assam and Bengal particularly, is one long struggle against the vagaries of nature. The following song from Bengal voices it.

It was not in my fate,
The flood came and the river overflowed,
Everything that belonged to me is gone,
It was not in my fate.

With your miraculous power, Allah, you created man,
Today you have taken away all my paddy, all my jute;
Everything that belonged to me is gone,
It was not in my fate.

How many sorrows you wrote, O God, in my fate?
I will sell my jute to get you a good nose-ring, I told her,
The same jute is gone with the cruel flood,
It was not in my fate.

This Bengali song is addressed to a boatman.

Listen to my woeful tale, O listen, O brother boatman,
How many men and cattle died,
In the monsoon storm, O brother,
In the monsoon storm?

The *salik* bird is hatching its eggs on the toddy tree,
O brother, it is hatching its eggs,
My wife is gone to her parents, her father's sister has died.
Listen to my woeful tale, brother,

The symbolic use of the *salik* bird "hatching its eggs" deepens the tragedy.

Birds, flowers, snows, hills and even tigers and grasshoppers are used as thematic material for songs. The following is a little Uraon song, translated by W. G. Archer.

The storks came down
In a long chain,
In a long rope they came,
On the bank of the Sanki and Koel.

In a long chain,
In a long chain,
In a long rope the storks came,
On the banks of the Ganges and Jumna,
In a long chain,
In a long rope they came.

This simple Uraon poem reminds me of a Chinese poem of the 8th century A. D. by Li Po.

The great flake of snow which has just floated
Over the lake was a little heron,
Motionless, at the end of a sand-bank,
The white heron watches the winter.

The parrot is a symbol of wisdom and affection, according to Indian folk-lore; it is generally used as a love-symbol. The *maina* is a gentle bird; it is colourful and sprightly. To the folk-mind, it is an object of love and affection,—a "blithe spirit". As such, it is eminently suited as a girl-symbol. The following is a Gond song in which the symbol is explicit.

O playful maina, don't go to that village,
She should not go there, should she parrot?

The Raja's son there is too free a lover,
Don't flirt with me, boy, I'll tell my father.

I'll make your father drunk, parrot,
And carry you away,
She should not go there, should she parrot?

The quail is also a symbol of love and affection and a darling of the Gonds and Baigas.

The quail calls in the stream,
On the bank of the lake it cries,
Burnt is the oil seed,
Burnt is the grass of last year.

In the middle of the forest the quail calls,
And the Raja comes and hears the quail calling,

On the bank of the lake.
The house is of mud,
The door of cotton wood,
Milk-sweet of the brown buffalo
Is being cooked.

The Raja comes hastily,
But all he hears
Is the quail calling on the bank of the lake.

The following is a Tamil bird-poem. It is known as the song of the *Ak-kati* bird and is generally sung by shepherds.

Ak-kati bird, O ak-kati bird,
O, where did you lay
Your eggs?

Raising the small stone
On the rock in the dense forest,
I laid my eggs.

I hatched and got only three little ones,
Searching the grain for the first little one,
I crossed three *kadam*[1] distance.

Searching the grain
For the middle one,
I crossed four *kadam* distance.

Searching the grain,
For the third one,
I crossed greater distance.

The cruel washer-boy
Sat there seeking game,
He spread his net.

My feet were caught in the snare,
Fluttering my wings, I lamented,
Tears of sorrow flowed back
the four *kadam* distance.

The following is a Kamar song.

The tigress walked slowly, slowly, O,
By the side of the hill,
The tigress walked slow, hai re.[2]

The following is a Lahaki Karma song on the grass-hopper:

Hark to the song of the grass-hopper,
How ugly to look at,
How sweet to hear.

---

[1] a measure of distance. [2] a note of approbation.

In which month sings the bird of sin?
In which month sings the grass-hopper?

The following song on the fire-fly is from Orissa; it is a four-line piece. Songs of this sort usually have a refrain *Jamu dali lo,* O branch of the *Jamu*-tree.

O fire-fly,
Don't be sad that you are nothing,
There is light at your back,
O branch of the *Jamu*-tree.

Flowers are possibly the most flawless creation of God; they find direct references in folksongs either as emblems of decoration for the beloved or for their own sake. The following is a Lujhki poem:

In the middle of the village,
Blossoms a *Gulanchi* flower,
Daily my love weaves a garland:
The needle pierced through your finger.

O, my love, at night and at dawn,
You weave a garland.

The following is another flower-song from Ladakh:

I have come,
I have brought flowers for you,
Distant violet flowers,
Don't be silent like a rock now.

The lotus is a symbol of purity; the episode of Shri Ramchandra and the lotus is in the epic tradition. Here is a Bhojpuri song:

The lotus calls upon Rama,
I feel lonely in the pond,
Leaves are picked and sent to the dining room,
The lotus is offered to Siva.

The following are two poems, one about the *semar* flower of Bihar and the other about the *madar* flower of Assam. Both the flowers are scarlet red; both are beautiful. But they have no fragrance; they are discarded by man and god. The poem from Bihar sings thus:

The *semar* tree meditates,
Why are my flowers red?
Why are my flowers not offered to gods?
Why the gardener does not make garlands?

A girl without a lover is often called a *madar* flower. The *madar* is odourless. It does not draw honey-bees to it.

What for do you bloom, O pretty *madar*?
Why do you bring forth buds?
You are neither for the gods,
Nor for the priests.
You drop into heaps merely.

The following song from Bundelkhand also draws upon nature:

The pipal leaves are soft,
Day and night they shine,
Love that began in childhood,
Day and night it strikes.

The story of the "pipal leaves" brings to my mind a little Tamil song.

O dew drop, that sleepeth
On the bamboo leaf;
O sun, that drieth the drew drop,
Sleeping on the bamboo leaf.

Snows and mountains, because of vastness and solitude, suggest the "beyond". The following song is from Ladakh.

Snows are white like silver,
Snows are white,
Snows say: we are great.
Love says: I am greater.
What is beyond the snows,
What is beyond?

The following Nepali song is apparently an expression of simple joy. Nevertheless, the quest is there.

O, the path, above the Himalayas,
O, when will the snow gather,
The rippling stream and the flying heart,
O, where will they stop?

2

Love Songs

Love constitutes the principal theme of folksongs in India as in the rest of the world. The folk-mind is nurtured through quiet contact with nature and the experiences bred by it. The beloved is compared with objects of nature, often at a level which Sokolov defines as "psychological parallelism".

A girl in Indian folk-poetry is often compared to a young bamboo. The bamboo is tall and straight. It is slender, and gracefully sways in a wind. Here is an Assamese folksong on the theme.

I looked onto the bamboo-top,
To see which one is straight,
I looked into the face of my beloved,
O, it was a full moon.

The following is a Ho song which likens her to a paddy ear.

While coming from the river,
While coming in the field,
You swing like the paddy ear.

The images, more often than not, are "stated", to use the words of A. Waley, "on the same footing as the facts narrated". This direct-image technique is to be found mostly in Chinese poetry: "Her swaying hips are a young bamboo."

There are instances of the bamboo-imagery used in an unusual setting. The following is a Lao song, translated by E. Powys.

If the arms and the legs of the lover
Hollow about my tender flesh,
Such furrows as a liana leaves upon
The tree she loves,
Surely the points of my breasts
On the breast of my lover
Shall be as sharpened bamboo branches,
Piercing the elephant.

In gracefulness, the plantain tree comes next. It is an object of adoration all over India, connected as it is, with religious ritual almost everywhere. It is its gracefulness and youthful robustness that occupy the folk-mind more. Here is an Assamese song:

The girl blossoms in her mother's house,
As does a youthful plantain tree.

In a song from the Maikal Hills, this imagery is developed.

Jhir jhir ripples the stream,
Plantains are growing on the bank,
Your body is like the stalk of a plantain,
Sweet as the divided mango is your body.
The koel longs for a mango,
And my life longs for you.
I cannot hold my life in patience,
Your body is like a plantain stalk,
Sweet as a divided mango.

In the following Chhatisgarh song, the girl is a 'cane flower'; she is a "water lily". The boy is a "cane bee", a "black bee".

You blossomed into a cane-flower,
I sucked you like a cane-bee.
You blossomed like a water-lily.
I sucked you like a black bee.

The lover as a bee,—more often a bumble bee—is a common image in Indian poetry. The following song from Madhya Pradesh takes its metaphor from fruit.

There stands the mango-tree in the forest,
The ripening fruit is full of juice;
Lone is the girl, in her blooming youth,
There is none, none to console her.

This song from the Maikal Hills goes to the same source:

He saw ripe lemons on her tree,
How could he control his hunger?

The following song from Madhya Pradesh has its own appeal.

The graceful leap of the deer,
And the thrill of the tiger's roar,
The firm and rounded breasts of my girl,
They make me mad, O friend.

So also this Bhojpuri song.

In one forest wanders an ant,
In one forest wanders a cow,
In one forest wanders the daughter of the Ahir's mother,
With bells fastened on her breasts.

The Punjabi song which follows is more positive.

Layers of cream appear on your bosom,
O drinker of fresh milk.

The terms of endearment generally used in Indian folk-poetry are all objects from the world of vegetation: "red spinach", "honeycomb", "sweet cinnamom". Love is "eating", according to the folk-mind.

There are tribal folksongs in which references are made to jewels; although it is not probable that the poor tribes have seen them. W. G. Archer gives the following Uraon song:

Come and visit us brother,
With your diamond girl,
In the morning, brother,
With your diamond girl.

There are liberal references to gold and silver in Indian folk-songs; they are used mostly as symbols of value. The following Gond song is an instance.

The pans are of gold,
The scales are of silver,
Better is it for us to talk in secret,
For in the village they are saying:
That we shall one day run away.

The bird is a common image in Indian folk-poetry. Birds are considered as epitomes of fidelity. They are often employed as messengers of love,—a recurring theme in the

classical mythologies of India. The swan finds a place of honour in Sanskrit mytho-romantic poetry. In Indian folk-poetry, it is the parrot that occupies the position of pride. The *maina* comes next.

The mutual attachment of the *sarus*[1] cranes is a deep tradition.

Without its mate,
What great sorrow for the crane,
Only if fate demands,
Will it ever live solitary,
When it is left alone, it weeps at midnight.

Devoted couples, husband and wife, are lovingly called *sarusjuri*[2].

The following bird-poem of the Lushais—the Lushais are a hill-tribe on the India-Burma frontier—is a playful piece.

The birds are calling, my love,
The birds are calling.
The she-pigeon's wedding is near,
We must go to the wedding dance.

W. G. Archer gives a pretty Uraon song. A girl is married off and goes to live in a distant place. Then after a long absence she re-visits her old village.

Kahua, kuha, the *koel*[3] calls
Sitting in the mango-branches,
Koel, you went away for twelve years,
And in the thirteenth year you come,
and gladden the grove.

Another image that is profusely used in Indian classical as well as folk-poetry is that of the bee. In folk-poetry, the bee is the lover. The beloved is the honey. The following is a tribal folk-poem in which the bee-image is heightened to a fine point of excellence.

Talk not of love,
For my heart is bursting,
The black bee is hiding in my flowers,
And my heart is bursting.

[1] **Sarus**: These are the ruddy sheldrakes and ducks;
[2] A conjugal relation ideal as that of a sheldrake and duck;
[3] A cuckoo.

The following Uraon song also uses the bee image.

You planted a *munga* tree, father,
The *munga* has spread its branches,
The *munga* is in blossom,
The bees hum and fly,
They come to suck the honey,

To the Konyak Naga, a girl is a "red berry".

Our girl friends
The red berries of the *ben* trees.

The flower-image is used with equal deftness in Indian folksongs. In the following tribal song, the image is used at different levels, from a decorative symbol it passes into a symbol of deeper meaning.

Blossom is in her hair,
Beautiful is it as the plantain flower:
Some flowers bloom in the dawning,
Some flowers bloom at the dead of night;
The flowers of holiness
Bloom in the morning and in the evening,
At midnight blooms the flower of sin.

The following is a *Chait Parab* song from Orissa.

Come, my dearest girl,
My heart goes up with delight;
Every night, O fair-faced singer,
I see you in my dreams.

Subtly suggestive as it is, a *karma* song from Chota Nagpur uses the dream *motif* with greater felicity.

Where has my dark love gone,
My bird, she put magic on my eyes,
Where has she flown away?
She has black and yellow bangles,
Brass bracelets in the middle,
By day I see her with my eyes,
At night she's but a dream.

To this, the following song from Punjab might be cited as striking a chord of response:

I embraced him in my dream,
I opened my eyes, and saw him not.

Love ruffles the soul; it grows restless and overflows with emotions and passions. Love is wishing as in the following Assamese song:

I shall be a swan and swim in your pond,
I shall be a fish and get caught in your net,
I shall be perspiration rolling down your body,
I shall be a fly and settle on your cheek.

Music is the "food of love". The folk-festivals of dance and music, festivals of communal joy and feasting, pin-point love-urges. Music in these festivals is produced with the help of instruments like drums, timbrels, horns and flutes. The flute is a popular instrument with the Ahirs, cowherds of U.P. and Bihar. Lord Krishna with his symbolic flute "for ever piping songs for ever new" is a deep tradition in the folk-mind. Thus the flute is established as a symbol of romantic love in Indian folk-imaginaton; round this theme many songs of love and romance have grown. Some of these songs are beautiful as morning-flowers. The following Santal song is exquisite in its imaginative appeal.

You are inside, my love,
Your flute is outside,
Your flute trembles in the dew,
You are weeping for your flute, my love,
Your flute trembles in the dew.

This soft note is transformed into the upsurge of a passion in the following tribal song from the Maikal Hills.

The young flute player
Pipes on the river bank,
All my desire is resting in his flute,
And house and court no more content me,
Let them be burnt with fire,
Those bamboos make the flute.

Love means desire to meet. The villages have certain usual meeting places. They are the paddy-fields, woodlands, pasture-grounds, river banks, at the sides of village wells or ponds. In tribal society, of course, the scope is wider. The Murias, for instance, meet in their *ghotuls i.e.* village-dormitories. The Nagas and Abors of NEFA meet in their *morungs i.e.* their bachelor-clubs.

To the *ghotuls* the Muria boys and girls retire every evening for rest. There they dance, sing and sleep. The eldest boy in the group is known as *Siledar;* this means supreme leader. The eldest girl is called *jhalivaru* which means

supervisor. The girls in the dormitory are her responsibility. A corpus of songs has naturally blossomed in this atmosphere of freedom.

Leja, leja, leja,
The road has many sharp turns,
Do not walk over clods, O girl,
You will fall.

Slightly philosophic in intent, this song gives a gentle warning to youth. In the Naga Hills where they enjoy greater freedom, "boys and girls leaning affectionately against each other" alternatively sing songs; these songs are inevitably on the "inexhaustible theme of love". The girls have their own dormitory as the boys have theirs. The boys visit the girls in their dormitory and sing pleasant songs of love and amour with arms round the waists of their girl-friends. The following is a Konyak Naga song that testifies to such a "going".

To the village, to the girl's house,
To our girl-friends we go.
Of food, we don't think,
Of drink, we don't think;
For love alone, we have come:
Walking we come,
Walking we go.

The usual pattern of village life in India is not as rewarding for young folks as it is amongst the Murias or Nagas. They have to be satisfied with the usual haunts of love in the countryside *i.e.* the well or the riverside. Here is a Pardhan poem that is picturesque in every detail:

O water-girl, with tinkling anklets,
That sounded under the dark mango-tree;
O water-girl, your pot of bronze
Is shining in the setting sun,
Your lips are dry and thirsty as my heart,
O water-girl, with swaying hips
Go to bring water from the lonely well,
Fear not the dark, I will go with you,
My heart is thirsty, water-girl.

A girl with a full pitcher on her hips by the well is a picture of plenty and profusion; nowhere does her body silhouette to more advantageous proportions as here. A Pardhan

naturally associates the two, water and girl, and says: "A flower cannot live without water, nor can a girl." He goes further and says: "A tree cannot grow without water, nor can love."

How shapely is the pitcher on its stand,
How sweet my water-girl down by the well.

We come across a similar image in the following Andhra folksong, picturesque and suggestive.

My eyes are beautiful with *kajal*[1],
A pitcher between my hip and arm,
Didn't I fill it with tears?
Come on, charming Ranga,
Didn't I fill my pitcher with tears?

The river has given birth to a large cycle of boat-songs with love as the dominant theme. The *Bhatiali* songs of Bengal are an instance in point. Perhaps these songs originated at a time when the boatman drifted with the current of the stream, and had not to ply his oar. Whatever that may be, the riparian man sings as he leisurely paddles his boat down the stream or draws his net in the silent lagoon. These are mostly love-songs or songs of spiritual abandon. The undertone is invariably melancholy. The following is a *Bhatiali* song from Bengal with love as the theme.

At sunset I go rowing my boat,
The breeze is sweet, the waves look purple;
Where the river takes a winding course, I see a house of red clay.

Across the river on the green grass
Whose blue *sari*[2] is spread to dry?
At sunset, I go rowing my boat.

The evening shadows seem to be stooping,
From the temple across the stream,
The sound of the bell comes ringing.

With anklets on her feet ringing **jhumur, jhumur,**
Whose young daughter comes at the ghat and stoops,
While at sunset I go rowing my boat?

Love burns. Some of the folksongs give vivid and colourful expression to it. If poetry is the expression of a full

[1] A pitch-black cosmetic; [2] a woman's garment.

and spontaneous heart, then these songs come from the very source. The following Lao song, translated by Powys Mathers, has a dream quality.

When the tempest of a boy's love
Comes up about us
Suddenly,
Our thoughts and our blue and orange scarves
Are whirled away together.
Who has not seen
A great wind drive the orchids
And birds together from a tree
In a coloured storm?

The following folksong illustrates the depth of pining that is natural to the age of youth and dreams.

How can I tell the love I have for you?
At midnight my life burns,
Before my eyes in a dream I see my love;
In July the rain falls **rinjhim rinjhim.**
But in August, it is deep and silent as a river:
So when I desire you,
Water flows from my eyes
As a deep and silent river.

The wind symbolises the tempest of love; the rain symbolises the act of love.

Love means the urge for fulfilment,—a matter of biological compulsion. The impulse reaches a point when it means the desire to elope or meet secretly under the cover of night as in the two songs given below from the Maikal Hills.

(i)

O my sinner, let us spend this night together,
My mind whispers, come, let us run away,
But I am afraid of that long journey;
I look at you and long to live with you for ever,
But, at least, my sinner, we will spend tonight together.

(ii)

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

This suggestion of midnight meeting is aptly brought out

in the following Naga song. Boys and girls as they retire at night from their distant paddy fields across deep mountain ranges sing suggestive songs.

At night time,
At sleeping time,
From the *morung*[1] calls my bed.
Searching, searching,
A sleeping place
For a bed I have to search.

The *Bihu* songs of Assam are rich in themes of elopement and secret meeting as are the *Dadarias* of the Maikal Hills. The aspiration to meet is raised to the level of an evocative art in the following song from Bengal; the lover is a *bhramara,* a bumble bee.

At midnight come to the woodland, O **bhramara,**
At midnight, come to the flower woodland.

I will light the lamp of the moon,
All the night I will keep awake;
To dewdrops I will tell my tales, O **bhramara,**
At midnight, come to the flower woodland.

Should I drop asleep,
I shall tread the path of dreams towards you,
Come with silent steps, O **bhramara,**
At midnight, come to the flower woodland.

So your song stops not,
See my sleep breaks not,
See the twigs' sleep breaks not, O **bhramara,**
At midnight, come to the flower woodland.

Here is an Ao Naga song, translated by J. P. Mills, which is a record of the secret joy of fulfilment.

From far Lungkungchang,
All the long road to Chongliyimti,
Have I come to where my beloved sleeps.
I am handsome as a flower, and when I am
with my beloved,
My dawn lingers long below the world's edge.

The moon is an ideal source of inspiration to lovers,—the "lamp of the moon", it is often called in folksongs.

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[1] Common dormitory.

There is a note of frustration, however, associated with it also.

He promised he would come
In the night of the spotless moon,
But the moon's light
Only tortures me like fire.

This song from Madhya Pradesh reminds me of a poem by Walter de la Mare equally poignant and intense; here it is the girl who fails.

She said, "yes, I'll be back again
Before the sun is set."
But the sweetest promises often made
Are the easiest to forget
Whatever the grief and fret.

The moon now silvering the east,
One shadow casts,—my own.

But such instances of "grief and fret", associated with the moon, are usually rare in Indian folksongs. The moon is a lyric; it is an object of endearment to young lovers. The following is an instance from the *Song of Ranga,* prevalent in Andhra Pradesh.

Don't you feel a joyful throb, my love?
Under the sweet bright moon.
Don't I pray you to come and sleep?
Come on, charming Ranga,
Don't I pray you to come and sleep?

.. ..

If you become the moon, my love,
I'll be the light of the moon,
How close ever I'll follow you.

Love's course seldom runs smooth; in the Hindu, as also in some cases in non-Hindu tribal society, there is the tyranny of castes and clans. The following is a Gond song of a girl who loves a man "handsome as a lamp", but marriage is not possible because they belong to the same clan.

O mother, what am I to do
With my forbidden love?
The moth does not realise the lamp
Is fire and dies.

Love often disobeys social dictums; barriers are chal-

lenged and obliterated. The following *Bihu* song is an instance of revolt.

If you are willing
And I am willing too,
What would castes do?

There are folksongs in which images spiral into exquisite dream-work. Here is a folksong from Bengal in which the girl dreams of marriage with the sun and weaves her dream into patterns of infinite beauty. Possibly the idea is drawn from the mythological episode of Kuntidevi and Surjyadev, —their love and fulfilment.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for cloth:
I shall make in every town
A weaver's colony, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for vermilion:
I shall have in every town the bania's[1] *shop, my love.*

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for oil:
I shall have in every town,
The oilman's colony, my love.

I shall go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for rice;
I shall have in every town,
A peasant's colony, my love, etc., etc.

Conversely, "sun" might mean a mortal lover also, called so by way of endearment. The poem is rich in homely imagery.

Folksongs give a rare insight into the different social structures, obtaining in our country. Some of these social structures are liberal and allow an air of freedom. There are others that are full of taboos. Because of them, there emerge difficulties and often disasters. There are the usual sources of disappointments, of course: Despair due to non-fulfilment of love's natural aspirations or due to separation, long or brief. Here is a Kannada folksong:

When will you come back, my sweet-scented lover?
Your head-dress full of fragrance,
When are you coming back, my love?

---

[1] Merchant.

Here is the simple complaint of a Tamil girl. She waits with her heart throbbing for her lover who promised to come. He does not come. Nothing is more painful than fruitless waiting. The song is brief, but sung over and over again, as it is done and rising to a crescendo, it casts a spell.

Filled with flower's fragrance,
In this forest of small thorny bushes,
Asking me to keep standing,
You left this place for good.

The following *Thadi Dadaria* speaks of the separation of love; it has a subtle undertone of reproach.

She called me saying,
If you go picking mangoes,
I will come to eat them,
But it was all deceit, my friend.

The girl also complains:

Where is the forest where mango grows?
Where is the forest of *jamun*?[1]
And where has my bumble-bee flown away, my friend?

Yet, the quest perpetuates itself. It never ceases. That is the burden of the following Ao Naga song:

The road looks longer as I go to meet her,
The stars seem to whisper,
The moon seems to welcome;
The rising sun says: I know you.

Roads in that part of the country are only bridle-paths that lie across wild mountain ranges and deep gorges. But the moon and the stars weave romantic dreams for the Naga boy. Significantly enough, the rising sun says: "I know you". To the sun, he is a familiar sojourner. This is love.

[1] A kind of delicious wild-fruit.

3

Marriage Songs and Songs on Married Life

Marriage songs are essentially lyrics sung by women. Indispensable to different rituals, they cover a wide range of subject-matter. Other subjects that are connected with marriage or married life also come within the purview of these songs: a girl's longing for love and marriage, initial inhibitions, usual apprehensions, and the actual ceremony.

The ceremony of wedding over, begins a new life. There are songs expressing the joy of it, the sensation of two young souls living together,—the warmth of heart and embrace. This is not all of it; often, problems beset their life, problems of the heart but more often of economic life. These have found an adequate expression in folksongs, for, in the vast reservoir of peasant lyrics, the majority have grown out of the peasant's immediate experiences of life.

These lyrics are generally women's songs and they give a glimpse into the woman's heart as nothing else. Some of them describe the heavy lot of a woman in a strange house and her emotional reaction to this life. There are other songs that might be called the apotheosis of agony; the core of it is the problem arising out of the system of compulsory

acceptance of bridegrooms by girls, obtaining in our society. Some husbands are domineering in attitude. Besides, there is the problem of unsympathetic parents-in-law. The joint-family structure, a compulsion of agrarian economy, naturally adds edge to the problem. There are taunting sisters-in-law also. All these factors contribute to making married life a problem of deep magnitude.

To add to this, the problem of poligamous family remains. In agrarian economy and undivided patriarchal families, the daughter-in-law is a worker. She is an economic unit of production. She must have health, energy and vigour, and must be capable of hard work. The outward beauty of a girl was seldom a matter of consideration in the choice of a daughter-in-law. Outward beauty is an evanescent thing; she must be healthy in order to discharge her second responsibility *i.e.* the production of a healthy progeny to replace the older folks as workers in the field. More energy and vigour are to be ploughed into the field; for this, a vigorous posterity is needed.

It was found that one woman was not enough to discharge all these responsibilities. This is the starting point of poligamous families in our peasant society,—a compulsion of agricultural economy. This aspect of life is celebrated in folk-songs. Often, these songs are full of the joy of life. Often, they are sad as dirges, and moan, as does a bamboo-grove against high tropical winds.

Not the problems of economic life alone. There are songs that give expression to problems of the heart also. They are songs of longing for some one "near and dear", possibly left behind in the native village. The compulsory choice of a man for a woman as it obtains in our society naturally gives rise to such problems of the heart. These are songs of personal emotions; they are mournful in tone and rhythm. Some of these songs express a certain level of revolt and anger. Thus, a whole gamut of experiences find a consolidated expression in the songs of married life.

Youth means an urge for companionship of the sexes. A strange loneliness captures the heart of youth at this age.

The following Uraon song is an admirable portrait of loneliness. A girl begins to feel lonely even in the midst of her home surroundings; her heart catches fire. She longs to be free and desires companionship of a man. The "dove" in the song, as pointed out by W. G. Archer, parallels the "feeling of the girl."

The dove, the dove
Calls in the hills, the hills,
I have no mother, and I cannot sleep,
I have no father, and I cannot sleep.

The brown dove gathers in the hills,
Hearing the dove, mother, I cannot sleep,
Hearing the dove, father, I cannot sleep.

The brown dove coos in the different hills,
Dove, my mother is not here, I cannot sleep,
Dove, my father is not here, I cannot sleep.

To a young girl, marriage is both a matter of anticipation and apprehension. Marriage means the uprooting of a girl from the soil and family in which she has grown into womanhood. Here is a Pardhan girl who wails, for the future is not known to her.

Father, had I been your son,
I would have stayed to thatch the roof,
To take the cattle out to graze,
To drive the plough across your field,
But I was born your enemy,
A daughter who must go away;
At home I used to laugh and dance,
Today I leave you weeping.
The crane despairs beside the lake,
Your enemy weeps on the threshold,
Your daughter weeps on the threshold.

This song is in a sense a trepidation of the heart. The following song from Assam is an echo.

The birds brought up their offspring,
That beautify the branches of the tree,
O, my mother brought me up with love,
Only to adorn a stranger's house.

The climax of all marriages is separation from old ties; this is the burden of these songs. The women sing them; their

plaintive tones sharpen the sorrow. The following Awadi song is an elaborate treatment of this theme.

Don't cut this *neem* tree, father,
The *neem* gives rest to sparrows,
Let me clasp you, brother.
Daughter will leave for father-in-law's places,
Mother will feel lonely,
Let me clasp you, brother.

The sparrow-image is aptly reflected in the following Bhojpuri *Biraha* song:

All the sparrows will fly away,
Each in its time;
I, a sinner, confined in a cage,
I die in deep sorrow.

Drums are an inevitable part of the Indian marriage ceremony; they often produce music, voluptuous as love. The tension on the nerves which the music produces drowns everything else, and before the girl realises what is actually happening, she is transported to a different world. From this standpoint, drums have a symbolic significance. The following is a drum-song from Tripura; women address the drummer thus:

Beat the drum, beat the drum,
Beat the drum to such a rhythm,
Beat, it may please the ears,
You will get a good reward.
Beat the drum, beat the drum,
Beat that it might please the ears.

In the Kangra song given below, the girl is apprehensive of her marriage; in arranged marriages, partners are uncertain. Thus a maiden's dreams of romance and life get shattered.

Marry me not to an old man, uncle,
Marry me not, uncle;
With fresh tresses, I shall become a widow.

Marry me not to a servant, uncle,
Marry me not, uncle;
As he receives the call, he will run away.

Marry me not to a sick person, uncle,
Marry me not, uncle;
With fresh tresses, I shall become a widow. etc. etc.

The following Russian folksong of the pre-Revolution period embraces the problem of arranged marriages most succintly; it adequately reflects conditions prevalent in traditional society.

Not will she be joined in equal wedlock,
Nor will a suitable husband turn up,
He may be a thief, and he may be a drunkard,
He may be old and wheezy;
He may be young and unfriendly,
He may be your own age and haughty,
Always supercillious and stirring up trouble;
And then, he lies crosswise on the bed,
And he speaks words that are crosswise too,
And he commands you to loosen his girdle.

Dowry is an evil that, more often than not, vitiates the sweet sanctions of love and marriage; because of it, often it is difficult to find grooms for girls. And in consequence, they are forced to fade into "definite unmarriageableness", to use Aldous Huxley's words. Thus a girl withers away. The following song from Bengal is a sad undertone.

In the prime of youth, my marriage did not take place.
How long shall I live here all alone?
O my cruel fate!

Often the girl protests. Invariably the complaint, inspite of Freud, is directed against her father. It is seldom against her mother, for she knows how helpless her mother is, particularly in a joint family. The following two Marathi *Ovis* illustrate the truth of it.

(i)

Father says, daughters are my rice sacks,
Father acted like a trader selling his daughter
in the full assembly.

(ii)

The day is over, the shadows are vanishing,
None except mother has a real affection.

This second *Ovi* expresses the woes of joint family life. The girl in her new home must work; there is no sympathy, no affection. Things become so unbearable for her that at times she desires death,—the warm embrace of the flaming pyre. In the midst of miseries, she has only one solace, the

thought of her mother's affection. But the mother is a distant star. This is how songs reflect our social conditions and the woman's lot in society.

In tribal or such other social groups, where woman enjoys a certain measure of freedom, such problems seldom arise. Under normal conditions, she marries the man of her choice. There is no social taboo. In Mishmi society of NEFA, for instance, pre-marital courtship is in the order of things. Let me quote the following Baiga song as an illustration in point.

You say, "when I've combed my hair,
And put red powder in the parting."
Every day you trick me so,
But tomorrow I will myself come to your house.

In such social conditions boys and girls meet in the hills, forests and other secret coverts of nature to exchange assurances of life-long partnership. The truth of it is evident in Gond, Baiga and Pardhan songs generally. The following is a Baiga *karma* song.

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

Lovers send their messages through songs. By certain emphasis and intonation as they sing the songs, they suggest the place of meeting. The symbolic significance of the image of "panting" because of "climbing" the hill is obvious.

When the beloved is away even for a brief absence, the lover must have something to remember her by. Here is a Gond boy who says thus to his beloved.

You are going to a far distant place,
Give me the cloth that hides your breasts,
Morning and evening,
I will take it out and look at it.

In most cases, courtship is a prelude to marriage in simple tribal society. Their songs have a freshness and frankness

that is natural in such conditions of social freedom. It is a Gond boy who can say in such a straightforward way to his girl:

You have brought pearly beads,
You tied them in your hair,
But now stop dancing in my eyes,
Or I shall tie you round my neck.

Indian marriages, particularly Hindu marriages, are an elaborate process. As such, they have inspired a considerable number of folksongs. Most of these songs are of a documentary character and seldom have any symbolic significance. In Assamese Hindu society, for instance, both the bride and the groom are given ceremonial bath at their respective places. This ritual of bath is attended by a series of songs of haunting melody. Bath over, the bride's mother asks:

Do you need any making up?
You bloom like a *ketaki* flower.

The girl asks:

Bath I have finished,
What cloth shall I put on, mother?

The mother says:

Put on a piece of cloth,
(so transparent) that it dries up in the shade,
And can be pressed into the palm.

Thus the bride is dressed up, and she shines like a column of gold:

On the eves shine purple beans with leaves.
Our bride looks so darling,
As if made of diamonds and pearls.
Like the burning candles, her fingers,
Bracelets add to her beauty.
Behind her dark hair, like a rose she blooms.
In the midst of all, her face is another moon.

The bride feels shy. This adds a new lustre to her beauty. Here is a song from Orissa that suggests such a picture of bashfulness, and the cause too.

Rub your bangle, rub your finger-rings,
All know including your neighbours.
Why do you feel shy now;
O branch of the jamun tree!

Soon shyness turns into sadness. The time of departure for the bride is one of sorrow and dejection. In the following farewell song from Orissa, the girl sings of her grief gently.

O koil,[1] my silken swing on the sandal tree,
With tears I sat on it, O koil.

O koil, the gold comb I have at mother-in-law's,
The sandal oil I left back at my mother's home, O koil.

O koil, the honey at mother's home was so sweet,
My childhood days I passed in joys, O koil.

O koil, has my mother no memory of mine?
Is her soft heart a stone now, O koil?

O koil, I am a fish out of water,
Shall I not once see my mother, O koil?

Some of the social groups use an earthen pot called *kalsa* or *dulari* as a part of their marriage ritual. The pot is filled with rice to the brim and on it is placed an earthen lamp that is lighted. This is a custom distinctive of the Baiga, Gond, Pardhan and the Assamese. It has its own songs.

Who will tatto the *kalsa*?
The seven suasins are asleep in the booth.
Who will tatto the *kalsa*?
The bridegroom's sister is the sugar of love,
She will tatto the *kalsa*.

During the ceremony, often there are competitive songs between two groups of women, representing the bride's and groom's party respectively. These are mostly taunting and mocking songs. In Assamese, these songs are called *Joranam* and constitute the lighter side of the ceremony. Among the people of the Maikal Hills, songs of the filthiest abuse are often exchanged between the two parties, which, according to W. G. Archer, results in "release of repressed energy which when applied to the marriage must necessarily make it fertile." In other States like the Punjab and U.P., similar

[1] Cuckoo.

songs of filthy abuse are sung, more particularly by women, which lend colour to the occasion. These songs are inevitably symbolic in significance.

(i)

The bridegroom is sitting,
His teeth red with betel,
And looking like a pimp.

(ii)

Give me son, your golden comb,
And I will do your hair,
For twelve *kos*[1] lies your matted hair,
Full of eight score scorpions,
Where have you come from, *jogi-fakir*?[2]
To carry off my maiden?

There are some "teasing songs" of a different nature. These songs are to be found mostly in Madhya Pradesh. The bride is invariably coy; she is gentle and tender. The man is not. He is aggressive and assertive.

The *dichua*[3] is wedding the hawk,
The heron marries the wealthy *maina*,
The parrot the big-eyed panther.

The hawk, the *maina* and the panther are all symbols of the aggressive male.

Thus a whole process of social rite is gone through. There is nothing of religion in it. It simply adds colour and life to the ceremony. This is what Dr. Verrier Elwin and Mr. Hivale have to say:

> "There is little religion in it, but it has great social and symbolic value. It is hard to conceive of a better way of impressing upon a man and woman their social and sexual union. The tieing together of the cloths, the exchange of rings, the first meal together, the processions hand-in-hand, the sitting together with the knees closely pressed against one another, the ceremonies by the river that symbolise mutual aid in domestic, sexual and food obtaining activities, are of great significance."

---

[1] measure of distance; [2] mendicant; [3] a kind of bird.

The *sendur* or vermilion put on the parting of the girl's hair amongst the Hindus at marriage time is a sex-symbol. The vermilion-mark is a blood substitute. This mark on the forehead and in the parting of a girl's hair, symbolises a girl who has matured, her capacity to receive and hold. Red appears frequently as a colour scheme in Indian folk-poetry.

The banyan tree adorns itself
With new leaves,
My darling adorns herself
With a red *rika*.[1]

Beatrice has become a Psyche.

The fish is a fertility symbol; it is accepted as such in the marriage rituals of most of the social groups in India. The fish occurs as a fertility symbol in a world-wide tradition. In China, for instance, the two principles of creation are represented by the symbol of two fishes, male and female. Among the Palaungs of Burma, the fish is a wedding gift of the groom to the bride's parents; so also in Assam and Bengal. In Bengal, however, fishes significantly are presented in pairs, one taller than the other.

The completion of a marriage amongst the Ao Nagas is announced by the presentation of fish. The Lohars of U. P. have a peculiar custom, as recorded by Crooke. The bride holds in her hands the prototype of a fish made of flour; the groom tries to strike it with arrows. The significance of this symbol is obvious.

The following song is from U. P. It is prevalent amongst the Kayasths of the State. The fish symbolism in this poem is deftly used. The idea suggested is enchantment.

Fish of the Makhdum pond,
Come into the river and stream,
Yes, into the river and stream.

O mother, my charm,
What sort of girl,
Enchants my son,
Enchants my son?

---

[1] A girl's breast-cloth.

O mother, my charm,
What lovely boy
Casts his net
Casts his net
O, mother, my charm.

In the following Uraon song, the fish-symbolism is used to indicate a married girl.

The fish sport in the pools,
The fish sport in the pools,
The fish sport:
The bride sits in the mother's lap,
The bride sits on the father's knees;
The bridegroom catches fish,
The bride jumps in the corners.

The fish is a sprightly creature; when caught, it shows its restlessness. The fish is a girl-symbol.

Some of the wedding-songs have a pronounced mythological background. There are direct or indirect allusions to epic legends or scenes *viz.* the marriage-scenes of Hara-Gauri, Rama-Sita, Rukmini-Krishna, etc. These are songs with a spiritual touch, often of a lyrical rapture. The following is an Assamese marriage-song of this type:

Do not weep, O little girl,
Do not scatter your necklace,
Truly shall I
Unite you with Madhava.

The *Sajani* songs of the Kol and Baiga give admirable portraits of a bride's departure from her parents' home. They are usually sung when the bride is dressed up for departure. There is a procession of weeping; the character of each individual in the family is aptly brought out in the following song:

Where do the dark clouds gather
Where do the rain drops fall?
In the sky the dark clouds gather,
On the earth the rain drops fall,
Who weeps like a rippling river
Whose little life goes restlessly to and fro?
Who sheds tears from eyes of pearls?
Whose eyes are cold and hard?
Father weeps like a rippling river,

The following Gond song is an open revolt:

It is growing lighter: we can see the fields,
The hour of parting has come,
My heart is full of anger against the dawn,

For in this field, we must part, one another,
Now home will be no longer home to me,
The forest is no more a forest,
I will be restless in the village,
Where I found rest till now:
But part we must, for our enemy, the dawn, has come.

This is a song of unrivalled sweetness. The emotional reaction of the heart is brought out in exquisite shades of light and colour.

Here is a song from Gujarat. The girl's husband is away. She is alone and solitary. Nature opens out into light and colour, but this is nothing to her without her husband.

In Malava grows the *henna*
It has dyed Gujarat entirely,
The *henna's* colour comes up.

My younger *dewar*[1] is dear to me,
He brings the *henna* plant for me,
The *henna's* colour comes up.

He pressed the leaves and made a paste,
and filled a cup,
Bhabi, dye your hands with *henna*,
The *henna's* colour comes up.

What shall I do by dyeing my hands, dewar,
One who would see the *henna*-dyed hands has gone,
The *henna's* colour comes up.

One lakh of rupees in cash shall I give,
If someone will go across the river,
The *henna's* colour comes up.

Write to my lord this much,
Your mother has passed away, come home,
The *henna's* colour comes up.

Often, a girl is inexperienced in the ways of married life.

---

[1] Husband's brother.

In her modesty, she makes a frank admission of it. The following *Dadaria* is an instance in point.

The bullock wears a bell, the buffalo a clapper,
Do not be angry, I am still a raw girl.

These songs belong to peasant society. Their imagery is naturally drawn from everyday life and experience and generally belongs to the world of agriculture. The following is a song of separation; the joy of living together is suggested through the imagery of the bullock with "sounding bells".

My bed is a bullock with a sounding bell,
But when you leave me it is quiet,
Ignorant ploughman, when I first bathed,
You were to come in ten days' time,
Instead you took a month,
And yet my Raja, though you are away
From me, every day,
Your memory stands like a pillar.

Every girl has the picture of a man in her dreams. A man, robust and bold and with "eyes of sin", who can inspire dreams and emotions. Here is a song from the Maikal Hills.

His teeth are white as curds,
His eyes are full of sin,
His face is beautiful as a wild creeper,
His eyes are full of sin.

When a girl is blessed with such a man, her joy knows no bounds. Any absence, however brief, is an agonising experience for her. It destroys her bit by bit. The following Christian song from Kerala is a pulse-beat.

My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet
My mind melts, when I don't see him,
My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet,

I made an offering of a buffalo calf to Etatua Church,
I cannot see my darling,
My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet

I made an offering of a small bird to Raiumala Church,
I cannot see my darling,
My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet.

There are songs that reflect the character and attitude of a girl's relatives in her new home. She is a newcomer.

and her conduct is under the searching scrutiny of almost every one in the family. There are the ever-vigilant eyes of the mother-in-law from which there is no escape. There is little of sympathy or affection for her. Barring her husband, there are only two other inmates in the house on whose sympathy and affection she can depend. One is her husband's younger sister. The other is her husband's younger brother. The affection between the *Bhabiji*[1] and *nanand*[2] is admirably reflected in this folksong:

Between the *nanand* and *bhabiji*
What a happy bond there is,
There is none like it anywhere.
For a while we have been parted,
And I feel like crying,
When I remember her.

But there is the mother-in-law, obviously tyrannical and without consideration. This is a psychological fact; she is jealous of the young woman who comes to share her son's affections. The girl is in perpetual apprehension of her mother-in-law's wrath.

My roll of carded cotton won't finish,
My thread won't break,
My mother-in-law won't say,
Go out to fetch water.

This is a song from Mandhi. The burden of the following *Biraha* song is this: a girl goes out to fetch water. Accidentally, she breaks her pot. As she returns home, she is subjected to the taunting and angry comments of her mother-in-law.

There is no thunder in the sky today
Nor are the clouds driven to and fro;
I know, I know,
It was a dry cloud thundered,
Fie on your earthen pot,
That breaks at the first touch of water.

Marriage means children. The child-bearing capacity of the woman is a thing that is admired most in society. A

[1] Elder brother's wife; [2] Husband's sister.

woman, incapable of it, is socially looked down upon. The woman is conscious of it. She knows how unfortunte it is to be a barren woman. The following is a Kannada song on the subject.

Better be mud than a barren woman,
On the mud will grow a tree,
Giving shelter from the sun.

The Pardhan woman depicted in the following song is a healthy woman. Her legs are "strong as pillars"; yet she is childless. The song is full of sex-symbols and each image obvertly suggests an idea:

Your red skirt swings **lahang luhung,**
The parting of your hair,
Is red like the centipede,
Like a red bead is your husband,
Has not your red flower blossomed?
Your legs are strong as pillars,
And shine like yellow *haldi*[1];
Your hair smells of *ajawain*,[2]
The incense of your cloves,
Fills the world.
Has not the red flower blossomed?
How is there still no fruit?

In the following song one comes across the same suggestive note:

Your eyebrows are like sesamum,
Like the striped seed, the parting of your hair,
Your body is soft and lustrous as a snake,
Then why, O why, my fair,
Are you still without a child?

Besides the compulsions of agrarian economy, childlessness is one of the causes that leads to polygamous homes, the honey-comb of dispeace. The following *Dadaria* expresses the woes of a woman whose husband has taken a second woman.

Rust destroys the wheat,
She has destroyed your love for me,
How I long to cover you
As the moon is hid by clouds.

---

[1] Turmeric: [2] Kind of flower.

How I long to take you,
All to myself,
As a mother takes her child.

The wife is likened to a piece of "cut bamboo". He can bend her in any way he likes. But instead of doing it, he seeks pleasures elsewhere.

(i)

Bend it as you will,
The cut bamboo,
Why then seek favours
From another's love?

(ii)

Could I remove the stones from the river?
Could I steal the beauty from your face?
Could a silver ring turn into copper?
Another's wife cannot content you,
For she is brief as the twilight,
I will hide you, hide your very name,
So I may have you ever for myself.

Often, this does not remain a silent complaint. The girl is sick of the atmosphere of her polygamous home. The only way out is to run away. The following song gives an account of it. The girl runs away with her husband's younger brother, her *dewar*.

Last week the *maina* hopped about the court,
Last week she sat in the threshold,
Today she has flown away:
The cat in the house
Became a tiger of the jungle,
And carried her away.

The theme of her relation with her *dewar* has produced a good number of songs.

Generally the *dewar* claims greater affection of the *bhauji* i.e. the sister-in-law. Often, it dwindles into unwelcome intimacy. The following song from Madhya Pradesh is an illustration:

Slightly he twisted my fingers in the night,
And woke me up!
O parrot, in the night he woke me up;
"*Dur, dur*",[1] said I:

---

[1]. Away, away.

Is it a cat or a dog,
Or a sinner that opened the door?

"Not a cat, nor a dog,
Never has a sinner opened the door;
It is Nandalal, your *dewar*, **bhabiji,**
who has opened the door."

Come, you may, **Babu,**
But go and sleep on your brother's cot.

"Not there, **Bhauji,**
There the mosquitoes will eat me up,
With you will I sleep;
I will sleep **happily** on your cot!"

Not here, not here, **Babu,**
There are sharp knives on my cot,
And there is a deadly she-cobra,
Which will take your life.

"How then, **Bhauji,**
Does my brother save his life?"

Great is the magic of your brother, Babu,
Powerful is his spell,
It is through that he saves his life,
O parrot, his magic makes this cot his own.

Sometimes a girl is unhappy in her new home not so much because of the problems, social and economic, that beset her life, but because of forced separation from the man of her youth. Silently she weeps for him. In Telugu folk-poetry the *mama i.e.* the maternal uncle, mostly figures as the lover. Marriage between the two is socially permissible. The *Chandangiri Sari* is a famous song from Andhra Pradesh. It is a silent lamentation.

Putting a ladder to the lemon tree,
My hand as I stretched to pick some fruit,
A thorn pierced my breast, O my golden **mama**!

O, do send me some Chandangiri *saris*,
Between you and me, O what a strange remoteness befell,
Yon blue hills impede our way.

To the hill I went, the sheep were grazing,
O handsome youth, my golden **mama**,
Send me some Chandangiri *saris*.

Strange dreams often loom before the eyes; the longing for the lost lover persists even in the midst of her altered life;

the lover "dances" in her "eyes". In the following *Dadaria,* the *motif* is explicit.

Your husband dances on your breasts,
And your lover dances in your eyes,
Send him messages,
Send all over the village,
Begging him to come,
But there is no news of him.

There are occasions when old lovers do come, but then, meeting is seldom possible. The social and family barrier is there. The following song is a picture in contrast. The bird enjoys freedom of movement from one branch of the mango-tree to the other. The girl does not. She is confined to her husband's courtyard. She cannot come out to meet her lover.

The *kussera* bird is swinging,
Free on the mango branch,
But you stand in the court,
How can I call you to me?

The problems of incompatible marriages are also sung in songs. This is natural. Often, husbands are minors, because of early marriages prevailing in our society. Often, they are too old and physically not competent. The following songs illustrate both the aspects. In the Punjabi folk-song given below, the girl sings her apprehensions as she spins. The song is admirably fitted into the music of the spinning-wheel. The girl seeks the advice of the spinning-wheel:

Ghoon, ghoon, O spinning-wheel,
Should I spin the red *pooni*[1] or not?
Spin, girl, spin.

Far off is my father-in-law's house,
Should I live there or not?
Live, girl, live.

Long is my woe,
Should I tell or not?
Tell, girl, tell.

---

[1] a ball of cotton

My husband is a minor,
Should I stay with him or not?
Stay, girl, stay.

Ghoon, ghoon, O spinning-wheel,
Should I spin the red *pooni* or not?
Spin, girl, spin.

There is none to share her innermost thoughts. The spinning-wheel is the guardian angel of her life. She unburdens her rebellious heart to it. A girl's heart is a mine of secret thoughts closed to others.

She goes with her pot for water,
But who can tell the sorrow of her heart?

The following *Dadaria* sings of the marriage of younger girls to older people.

The young girl makes her bed,
Weeping she spreads the rags,
And waits for the old man
Who cannot content her.

Often, a husband's conduct makes the woman jealous. He beats the drum in the dance and makes the women wild. The enthusiasm of other women for her husband is difficult for his wife to tolerate. The husband has to defend himself against his wife's charges, and promise good conduct in future. This is a *Karma* song:

Why do you doubt me?
I was only playing the drum,
Like all the rest:
If I have betrayed you,
You may drown me in water,
Like a bucket in the well,
If I have betrayed you:
Henceforward my wheels will run with yours,
As the cart runs on the road.

Generally, the quarrel between husband and wife is a trivial thing, a little misunderstanding, a whimsical boy-and-girl affair which is resolved with the same suddenness with which it starts. It lends colour to life. The following two Garo songs,—the Garos are a hill-tribe of Assam—depict such an incident of life.

The husband's complaint

Her footprints say, she is gone to the forest,

I go to the forest and find her nowhere,
High up on the hills, I wander,
Down in the villages I wander,
She has suddenly disappeared,
Tell, Ye Gods, if you saw her anywhere.

The wife's complaint

I said, bring me gold anklets,
I said, bring me gold earrings,
He said, wait till next year,

I did not shed tears of sorrow,
He did not utter a single word,
Tell, Ye Gods, if you saw him anywhere.

Here is a Kannada song.

The quarrel between husband and wife
Is like rubbing sandal wood;
Like pouring water on the image of god,
Like the swift flow of a river.

The pre-marital romance dwindles in the face of the hard facts of life. Economic problems soon impinge upon life's placid flow. Life is "dammed". Poverty mocks it in the face. The two *Jhulania* songs, given below, draw the difference into bold relief. In these songs. it is the loss of physical charms which is referred to.

(i)

I went to fish and dammed the stream,
I jumped the fence and broke the bamboo,
What happened to you girl?
What happened in the river?

(ii)

You have washed the *kajal* from your eyes,
You have lost, O bird,
The hours of dalliance.

I am reminded of Keats.

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

The folk-people know it. The folk-imagination has caught it.

She is very beautiful;
But her young breasts are fallen,
He fondles them no longer,

That once were his loved playthings.
Youth passes quickly, quickly,
But a girl's youth endures
The shortest time of all.

The following *Bhojpuri* song is a symbolic document; the symbolism is no doubt primitive, but it is the lyricism of the song that brings colour to it.

I was slim, I became more slim,
I became a string to draw water from the well;
I gave my lord sweet water to drink,
Without vessels, without strings.

Rajput wedding-songs are a thing apart. Rajasthan is a land of war-songs. The *motif* of war and the brave passions it rouses, dominate Rajasthani folksongs, including marriage-songs. The song, given below, strikes the key-note. Bravery on the battle-field is an honoured virtue.

The shell awaits the fall of the *swati*[1] dew,
The *chakari*[2] awaits the rising sun;
The Rajput awaits the renewal of the battle,
The damsel awaits the brave man.

The drums beat on the battle-field and produce a frantic music. The man fights bravely. The girl dreams:

May I be true to my husband,
Go on, go on, O drum,
May I have my honour in the village assembly,
May my words be true amidst my female friends.

A husband's bravery in the battle-field gives his woman honour in the village; she basks in the reflected sunshine of her husband.

My husband's mellow drum,
Sounds full of courage,
The enemies get startled,
The friends jump with joy.

Here is another Rajput song that sings:

At marriage time, I could say,
Looking at a frown on his forehead;
He won't fall alone in the battle,
He may fall after he has smashed many.

---

[1] flower; [2] a bird;

Life is hard. The struggles of economic life wear out a man and often whip the sweet current of family life into a tempest. But the spirit of man is indomitable. In the following song from Orissa, the call of the East inspires the man; in the east, there are tea-gardens where he could work. He promises a good life to his wife, thus:

Come, O diamond girl,
We will leave for Rangoon,
Rice and vegetable curry,
What more will I say?
Tea leaves in that country,
You can save money and keep in your hands.

Trunks and boxes in that country,
Rupees you can keep one row above other,
Come, O diamond girl,
We will leave for Rangoon.

Here again is a song from Orissa which can be described as a register of confessions. It shows how acute is the economic struggle for life. This is true social realism.

For this stomach,
For this stomach, I left for Bengal,
For this stomach, I had all struggle,
For this stomach, I pounded rice,
For this stomach, I reaped the paddy,
For this stomach, I worked on a shop,
For this stomach, I received cane beating on my back,
For this stomach, I went on dancing,
For this stomach, I took to spinning,
For this stomach, I find abuses on my lips,
For this stomach, I met Yam Raj,
For this stomach.

This economic aspect finds an adequate expression in Tamil songs. The marriage is over; the economic problem remains and multiplies.

We have rice and we have *dal*[1],
No oven, and that's the trouble,
The wind blows carrying dust,
Alas, we have no door, that's the trouble,
My wife comes and stands before me,
No *sari* to present her, that's the trouble,

[1] pulses.

The beggar comes and stands at the gate,
Not a *dhela* to give him, that's the trouble.

Here is a girl's complaint. This is also a Tamil song:

On many occasions, O mama,
The toe-ring is sold,
If you buy me a toe-ring, O mama,
I shall see how it looks on my toe.

In every village, O mama,
The wooden pestle is sold;
If you buy one pestle for me, O mama,
Pounding, pounding,
I shall get some flour, O mama.

At distant places, O mama,
The bridal veil is sold;
If you buy one veil for me, O mama,
I shall see how it adorns my shoulders.

4

Lullabies and Cradle Songs

As the mother rocks the cradle, she sings. Invariably, these songs have a haunting music and soft and tender feelings natural to the theme. They are fresh and innocent like the child. Often, they unfold the moods and aptitudes of the child or depict simple episodes dear to the child's imagination. These are mostly episodes of 'pleasant illogicality", to use Tagore's words, with which the child's mind is coloured. Thus the child is transported into a magic land of dreams and fancy. Cradle-songs are mostly lyrical rhapsodies.

The Manipuries are an artistic people. The lullaby, given below, shows the depth of their fancy.

O, you are like the tender cotton worm
O, go to sleep, my tiny bubble.

The mother allows her fancy to play as she bends over the child and fondles it, weaving a gossamer world of tenderness and beauty. Here is a Konkani cradle song:

Shall I call my child, fair-complexioned?
Shall I call him turmeric dark?
Who has blamed the fair-complexioned child?
Who has spoken ill of him?

The following is a lovely little picture. It is from the Maikal Hills.

The cradle blooms,
Its flower is beautiful,
Its red fruit shines.

Here in the following song, the mother asks the moon to bless her child. The moon in the sky and the child in the mother's arms,—it is a beautiful composition.

Mother moon, bless baby,
Let him live a hundred thousand years,
Moon, give him milk and *basi*.
Let it come swaying this way,
Let it come swaying this way,
And straight into baby's mouth.

In Assamese, there is a lovely little song that depicts a conversation between a mother and the moon. The mother wants an elephant for the child to ride on. She starts by asking for a needle.

O moon, give me a needle,
What for do you want a needle?
Just to stitch a bag with
What for do you want a bag?
Just to put money in.
What for do you want money?
Just to buy an elephant with.
What for do you want an elephant?
Just for riding on, etc.

A mother and a child,—"Madonna and the child",—is a divine picture. Turgeniev says that there can be no picture more sweet and divine than this. There is the same depth of feeling in the *Bhojpuri* cradle-song given below.

A bunch of mangoes looks lovely on the branch,
The *palas* trees are blossoming in the forest;
The child looks lovely in the lap of the fair bride,
As though the moon appeared on the sky.

The following is a sleep-song from Gujarat. As she fondles baby into sleep, the mother allows her fancy to roam.

The cradle is made of gold,
The bells make a jingling sound,
Sleep, baby.

Four dolls on four pillars,
Peacocks sit on strings,
Sleep, baby.

But in point of beauty of conception and magic of imagination, nothing can rival the following Tamil lullaby. It has the beauty of a flower drenched in morning dew.

The milk overflows from your lips,
The coral string I have attached,
The milky, silken cloth I spread in the cradle,
My green parrot, go to sleep.

The Kaveri flows into two streams,
Between them stands the Shri Rangam temple,
Like a lotus closing its petals,
Close your eye-lids and go to sleep.

Laughing and sleeping in the shell,
O little pearl of the southern sea,
Drink up the whole milk from the earthen pot
O red flower, go to sleep.

Sucking the juice from the new flowers,
O you buzzing bumble bees,
Till the new flowers blossom,
My golden bumble bee, now go to sleep.

While the moonlight pours down milk,
The shining stars are winking their eyes,
My white flower, close your eye-lids,
On your soft bed go to sleep.

The following lullaby of the Mikirs,—the Mikirs are a hill-tribe of Assam—is an exquisite piece.

Sleep brings pearl necklaces, do not cry, baby,
Sleep brings sweet dishes, do not cry baby,
Do not cry, baby,
It is time, you must sleep now,
As the fish sleeps in the pool.

The sister is a mother's replica to her younger brother. Tagore lovingly calls her the "representative of the mother". The mother has her household duties to perform. If the baby does not sleep, the work is retarded. The song is from Gujarat.

Sleep, sleep,
O prince of my hopes, now sleep,
My dearest brother, sleep.

If you weep,
Mother will feel uneasy,
Sleep, brother.

There are certain cradle-songs that are woven round interesting episodes of life. Dr. Verrier Elwin and Mr. Shamrao Hivale have given the following episode round which cradle-songs have grown in the Maikal Hills.

"Long ago there lived an old widow who had an only son. He took service with a Lamana and was always away on long tours with the bullocks. He married a very beautiful girl. A few days after the marriage, the boy had to go away on his master's business. As soon as he had gone, his mother turned the young wife and her little brother out of the house. They made a little hut of leaves under the mango tree and stayed there in miserable poverty. The girl was pregnant and when the child was born she sent her brother to get the necessary ceremonial food from her mother-in-law. The old woman prepared rice and curry of a cobra, cutting it up into little pieces so that it would look like fish. She put this in leaf-cups and sent it on the boy's head. Rai Gidhni, the vulture, came sweeping down from the sky and carried away all the food from the boy's head except one little bit of rice that stuck to his hair. When he reached the hut, the girl was greatly concerned and said: Let's see if Rai Gidhni has hurt your head. As she was examining it, she saw the scrap of rice and was so hungry that she ate it. Immediately the strong poison of the cobra turned her legs into the tail of a she-cobra and she found herself a woman in the upper part of her body and from her waist downwards a snake. She went to live in an ant-hill nearby and used to come out to feed her child and then glide back to the ant-hill. In her absence, her little brother would swing the child to and fro and sing the song":

The swing goes to and fro, my baby,
Among the mango branches,
Your father has gone away,
With his laden bullocks, little son,
Your mother has become
The she-cobra of the ant-hill;
The swing goes to and fro,
Among the mango branches.

Often, the childhood pictures of Lord Krishna in the mythopoetic land of Brajdham are drawn into cradle-songs to lend them colour. Lord Krishna is pictured as eternally a child, a Peter Pan. The greatness of his personality is revealed through his frolicsome pastimes and childhood pranks in these nursery rhymes. This has inspired a cycle of songs called *Kamkhowa* in Assamese. Here Jasodadevi, mother of Lord Krishna, sings:

Sleep, O ye Kanai,
O, the ear-eater is coming,
After eating off ears of all the children,
He comes to thee.

This Vaishnava influence has permeated into a number of folksongs. The following song is an evidence in point. This brings to mind the picture of Lord Krishna as a child:

My darling boy has herded the cattle,
His teeth shine in the sunbeam,
I have kept for him curd, milk and sweets,
I have kept for him a bed with pillows.

The birth of a male child is a great distinction for a woman. It assures her a place, it is believed, in heaven. The following song from Orissa illustrates this:

O *kharkhari* flower, I worship you,
And Goddess may keep me under her protection,
The rice is seven-year-old,
Let the son of my lap in the folds of my *sari*,
While I die, send me to heaven.

There is a song from U. P. in which a crow predicts a son to a woman who is pregnant. She has so far given birth to female children only, which has given great displeasure to her husband. She finds it difficult to believe the crow's prediction. Then a male child is actually born to her. She is so happy that she sets the whole neighbourhood in search of the crow. She wants to cover its beak and wings with gold, and offer it milk in a cup of gold. A child is a gift of God. The following song from Gujarat illustrates it.

You are my gift of gods,
You are my boon of prayers,
You have come, now live long.

Hurriedly I went to Mahadeva to offer flowers,
Mahadeva was pleased and a precious thing like you,
I got.
You are my cash,
You are my fragrant flower,
You have come, now live long.

Hurriedly I went to Hanuman to offer oil,
Hanuman was pleased and I got cradle in my home,
You are my cash,
You are my fragrant flower,
You have come, now live long.

Rajasthani cradle-songs are different. Like all other songs, they too have the burden of bravery in them. The following is the type of song that the mother sings as she rocks the cradle.

Leave not your land in foreign hands,
Fight like a hero on the battle-field,
So sings the mother, as she rocks her son,
Asking him to live and die with honour.

In contrast to it, the following Lakher song is a statement of simple joy.

Old hut, new doors,
The bird's nest has fallen,
The eggs have broken;
Laugh, O fool, laugh,
Loudly cries the mother bird:
Who will give me eggs now?
Mother, mother, do not cry,
We shall bring you new eggs.

5

Work Songs and Festive Songs

The socio-economic aspects of life find their own expression in songs. Some of them sing of productive relationships in society and of the instruments of production. Spoken language grew out of the process of labour habits, and so also literary forms, initially songs. Most of the folk-songs in fact arose and developed in direct connection with labouring processes. These songs naturally throw floodlights on the socio-economic life of the people.

Primarily the people are peasants, tillers of the soil. Most of their other occupations, besides agriculture, are of a subsidiary nature. And these songs, broadly speaking, are fitted into the usual agricultural pattern of economy. There have grown a rich variety of songs,—songs of the paddy-field, of the cowherds, fishermen, boatmen, basket-makers, village-smiths, etc. The agrarian economy of the village is the principal thread of these songs.

The blessings of nature are necessary for good harvests. But nature is not always kind. There are forces of nature that often destroy cultivation and life. The people sing of them in song. They sing with all their heart and mind and energy too. Songs sustain them; the tedium of work is relieved through songs.

The Pullayas of Kerala have a kind of paddy-transplantation songs. These songs are sung in chorus; a woman or a girl leads the song and others join her. Likewise, in the harvesting field, the Assamese woman, as she is engaged in reaping the corn, sings. These songs may not be connected with the actual process of cultivation, their burden might be different, but then, somehow or other, they are fitted into the picture. The Pullayas of Kerala sing thus:

(i)

Sitting on the stone, O crab,
Move a little,
From the stone, O crab.
Let me plough the field, O crab,
Move a little,
From the stone, O crab.

(ii)

O pretty maiden,
Where have your brothers gone?
They are out to collect the reeds,
What is the use of reeds?
The reeds are good for making cots.

Songs of cultivation are plentiful. Agricultural economy has given the largest number of songs to our country. When civilisation, particularly industrial civilisation, makes an inroad, folksongs are bound to decline. When power-plants and factories enter our rural economy, songs of the existing variety are bound to decline unless new songs about machines evolve.

During the rains in June and July, the Uraons sing some of their best cultivation-songs. Women are engaged in the transplantation of paddy in the field; they have to stoop to do it. Songs relieve the strain. The following are examples of Uraon cultivation songs.

(i)

The lightning dazzles in Jashpur,
The rain is streaming, mother,
The fields are filling;
The crab has gone to plough,
The snake is levelling the soil,
The dragon flies are sowing,

The egrets plant the seedling,
The scorpion summons the boon companions,
The frogs perform the songs,
The *dichua*[1] takes the chair,
The sparrow brings the blossom,
The owl dons his hat,
My mother.

(ii)

Raining, raining water,
Raining faster,
Where is a sheltering rock, my sister,
Raining, raining water,
Raining faster.

(iii)

A bachelor boy went to fetch the young bamboos,
The flooded river took him in the current,
A married man: his wife and children would have mourned him,
A bachelor: who will weep for him?

The prospect of a good harvest is the focal point of a peasant's dream; the swaying paddy-field fills his heart with joy and life. His sweet-heart is a "bountiful crop". Conjeevaram in the south is known for rich paddy-fields. In the following Tamil song, the peasant's beloved is bountiful as the "paddy of Conjeevaram". The picture of the paddy and the beloved emerges before the eyes as a Picasso piece.

What are the things your mother gave you?
She gave milk and boiled rice,
And unripe fruit for me,
A ripe fruit for you.

Search and bring,
Come, O unripe fruit,
Come, O ripe fruit,
Come, O paddy of Conjeevaram.

The following *Dadaria* paints a similar picture:

O Reaper, you are letting the sheaves fall to the ground,
How I desire that slender waist of yours.

In ancient folk-society, at the root of agrarian economy lay productive magic, incantation, etc. The crop had to be

[1] A kind of bird.

protected from hostile "unclean forces". This gave rise to certain rites, ritual apart, called "prophylactic magic". "Productive agrarian magic" had other rites aimed at securing for man certain positive values: fertility, crops, children, etc. This productive magic was depicted in dance and songs. The whole process of sowing and other labours of the field was often depicted in detail. The Konyak Nagas have a special ceremony dedicated to sowing of seeds. This is a solemn act. A chicken is sacrificed ceremonially in the field and the sky-God Gowang is addressed thus:

> Let there be many blossoms this year: be gracious, O Gowang,
> Give us rice, give us millet, O Gowang.

Then the seed is thrown into the field and it is muttered thus:

> May my rice sprout first, shut the beaks of the birds,
> Bind the mouth of the rats and mice; may the crops prosper.

The fertility of field and of woman is a synonymous thing. As pointed out elsewhere, the promotion of the latter aids the promotion of the former. The songs, related to this aspect of life, usually operate on the "twin levels of an image system". These songs may be about the fields; the reference is mostly apparent. But underneath it, lies a deeper significance,—the idea of productive magic. Unlike symbolism in present-day English poetry, this is "public symbolism", the symbolism of a social group. Therefore, immediately a song of this type is sung, the significance is understood. The following Uraon song is an evidence in point.

> The fawns frolic in the ploughed field,
> No, it is not the *sambar*. It is not the barking deer,
> This is the girl selected by the father,
> The bride chosen by the mother.

W.G. Archer says: "The importance of these clue poems is that they dissect the image and expose a level of submerged meaning, thus indicating that the poem is meant to work through the interaction of the two levels."

The fertility of the field is to be increased. This can be done by song and dance enacted through twin levels of

association. In this light, the *Bihu* dances of Assam are a fertility festival. The Koir, Munda and the Kol of Chota Nagpur use a similar *motif* in their songs and dance. The songs are generally interspersed with certain repeat-words that bring the sexual symbolism of the songs into bold relief. The following *Karma* song is symbolic in its purport; the symbolism of it can be described as "public".

I have slipped in the mud of Mundla,
I have slipped in the mud;
I cannot eat, I cannot drink:
The memory comes,
And nothing else contents me.

The following two songs,—Assamese and Uraon, are similar in intent, in their naughty suggestions. According to the folk-mind, cultivation is a biological operation.

(i)

The reptile crawls and lives,
I crawled into my father-in-law's gateway,
and slipped,
Nobody washed the stains off my clothes.

(ii)

Juri, leave me,
My clothes are coming down,
Are coming down:

Let them come down, Juri,
Let them come down,
We will dance the *bheja*[1] naked,
We will dance the *bheja* naked.

The drums beat. Emotions are generated by tensions that the music of the drums causes on the sinews. Boys and girls dance together in the golden lure of dreams and songs. They constitute the core of the "productive magic", already spoken of. The significance of the following song from Kerala is obvious.

Kunnan and Chakki got over the bridge,
The bridge shook with alarming sound.

The background of these songs, ritualistic or of the variety of simple joy, is the field, and fertility is directly or in-

[1] A kind of dance.

directly the *motif*. In agrarian economy, woman has a distinctive role to play. This is why she is so much in the songs. Robert Briffault says:

> "The magical or religious rites intended to secure the fertility of the fields were naturally within the special competence of the women who cultivated them, and whose fertility was linked to the earth."

With the coming of spring, the peasant's mind turns towards thoughts of cultivation,—good harvest, fruitfulness and satisfaction. By representing the aspects of agriculture in songs and dances, the peasant thought that it could be possible to produce an influence on the field, and cattle-stock too. With this erotic idea is connected the eroticism of words. This is natural, for the peasant's thoughts and feelings are directed towards the earth,—the ploughland. Most of the symbols used in the songs are fixed in the popular poetic consciousness. These songs are invariably of a lyrical and melancholy character.

The instruments of production have inspired songs also. There are at least loving references to them in some of the peasant-lyrics. In ancient peasant-Russia, they used to carry about the plough in a ceremonial ritual. Such customs of veneration obtain in almost all peasant-societies. Here is a Savara song on the plough:

I salute your hand, O plough,
I salute your feet;
The *sal* tree, I ever praise,
You are made of *sal* wood.
May you be ever strong,
May you be ever ready,
I salute your hands, O plough,
I salute your feet.

The following songs from Orissa are illustrations in point:

(i)

Tiny, tiny, the black bullock's eyes,
Put your feet nicely, O black one,
Fine sand will rise before us.

(ii)

Go on, go on, O bullock, do not brood over,
After a while, you will be free.
You will get green grass and cold water.

(iii)

For the gold plough, the silver yoke,
The bullock made of diamonds and gems,
Banmali himself is the ploughman.

Here is a Kondh song. This song might be described as an invocation.

I shall make a golden plough, O bullock,
I shall make a silver yoke,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

The monsoon rains will come,
The paddy will grow fast,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

Get along, O why don't you move?
You are my dearest comrade,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

These songs paint the rural landscape in vivid and colourful touches—the bullock-cart creaking on and the "fine sands" of village roads formulating clouds of dust. The whole picture is a Japanese poem suggested with a few gentle strokes of the brush.

We have songs on the bullock and the plough. There are songs on the bullock-cart *motif* too. The following is an instance from Orissa. Along miles of land, the cart moves. It is an inordinately slow movement. In keeping with the slow rhythm of the wheels, the cartman sings his lone, plaintive songs. His "fair-faced woman" awaits his homecoming.

The bullock cart makes the creaking noise,
By the side of the Bentu tank,
The cartman's face looks pale,
He longs to see the fair-faced woman.

Most of these folksongs are of a functional character. These are, broadly speaking, work-songs, *dubinushka*, as

they are called in Russia. The burden of these songs generally is the different aspects of agricultural activity, *viz.*, cultivation, harvesting, threshing, etc. Besides them, other activities like weaving, spinning, rearing cattle, fishing etc., also come within the purview of these songs. All through the rainy season the peasant is pre-occupied with work in the field; it is only in autumn that he gets some rest and leisure. In spring and autumn, he sings and dances. He sings, engaged as he is in work also. These songs might not be, strictly speaking, work-songs; they may not be "syncretic" as work-songs usually are. They may be called field-songs at best. Yet they may not have the burden of the field in them. Nevertheless, they are a balm to weary limbs and mind. The following song from Orissa is a fine example of such a field-song:

The bird of this side of the stream,
Flew across,
The dark-faced girl,
Got one pice from me.

The cow is an inevitable unit of our rural economy. The Ahirs or cowherds are an important functional group. Bihar and U.P. are considerably rich in songs of cowherds. Mysteriously enough, these songs are known as *Biraha* songs. They embrace a wide avenue of social and individual experience.

The *Biraha* we raise not like a crop, brother,
Nor it ripens on a branch,
The *Biraha* lives in the heart, O Rama,
Sing it while the heart is full.

The Ahir's heart and soul are lost in the cow. Often, he dreams of a thirsty goddess of the pastures whose thirst he thinks of quenching with the cow's fresh milk. George A. Grierson puts the Ahir's connection with his pasture-lands thus:

> "Even when away from home on service, the cowherd longs for his congenial occupations and looks back to the happy days when he wandered free over the rich pastures on the Kaimur Hills (Shahabad)...each one is a miniature picture of some phase of village life."

The unsophisticated Ahir in the broad expanse of the fields sings these *Biraha* songs in his deep and massive voice and sways his audience as a tempest sways the reeds. The following songs are popular with the Ahirs of Bihar and U. P.

(i)

The bamboo grove I played in with my friends
Never fades from my mind,
I shall make a bamboo flute from the same forest,
I shall sing the *Biraha* from door to door.

(ii)

I sent the bumble bee for juice, O friend,
It brought me a little juice;
How many girls shall I share,
The whole village is dear to me.

The second song operates on a twin-level of consciousness and contains a double meaning

In his cowshed sings the Ahir's son,
The fair bride inside her home discovers the voice;
Where does a cow have mother's home, O friend,
And where do the tenant farmers have a motherland?

The songs of the Ahir girls are mostly love-songs. They simply help to dissolve the tedium of work. It is a hard economic life for the Ahirs. A few songs of Ahir girls are given below:

(i)

The east wind blows as I yawn,
My body is filled with lassitude while standing;
Who is the dandy who looked at me?
The home nor the forest pleases me.

(ii)

My accursed sister-in-law will not listen to me,
She stands leaning over the yard;
The mosquitoes will bite her flower-like breasts,
She will not lend them to me, even if I ask.

This is the picture of a newly-matured *nanand*. The *bhauji* has lost her physical glamour and points of beauty. She is just jealous of this girl in the prime of "youth and glory".

The Gond and Rawats have some songs that are directly functional in character. They are known as *Dohas* and *Bas-*

gits. The latter obtain their name from the fact that these songs are sung by the Ahir in accompaniment with bamboo flutes while tending cattle in fields or forests. The *Dohas* are generally festival songs; they are sung on the occasion of the Dewali or Marhai festivals.

On the Dewali night, the Ahir moves in groups; he visits the cowsheds, beats the cattle with *memri* sticks and wakes them up with shouts: "O the linseed; O the cow-dung scraps! O the dust of the cow-dung! Awake; awake, my lucky cow. Today *Amawas* is fulfilled". The following are a few instances of *Dohas* and *Basgits*:

Doha

(i)

Round the field,
We graze the cows,
In the bed of the stream,
We graze the she-buffaloes.

(ii)

O the moss in the river,
Let us all dance together
As if we were children of one mother.

(iii)

Hare, hare, the pigeon drinks
Waters from the little stream,
That is how the Panka girls,
Kiss in this village.

Basgits

(i)

Slowly flows the stream,
The golden girl is catching fish,
Both her young breasts,
Are smeared with mud,
When those are seen, who would gaze
Even at her decorated hair?

(ii)

On the bare branch
A fig has ripened,
The parrot glances at it sideways,
The Gond Girls of this village
Would give their lives for me.

Weaving and spinning are two of the time-old occupations of Indian village women. The loom and the spinning-wheel are deeply associated with their life. Sarojini Naidu says:

> "Centuries ago poets used the simile of the spinning-wheel and the weavers' loom for the destiny of life, the Fates weaving and spinning out man's destiny."

In Assam, weaving is a traditional art and occupation of the women-folk. Proficiency in weaving was considered an asset for marriage. This has given rise to a number of songs. These songs are not concerned with the actual process of weaving. Their *motif* is mostly love.

I sit at my loom,
But my eyes are there in the street;
And the shuttle drops,
And drops.

In Kashmir and Punjab, there are songs that are really concerned with the process of weaving. Weaving is an elaborate process. Before the loom is set, it goes through a number of processes and many helping hands are needed to set the loom for the shuttle. This is what the following song defines:

From the east came the dark cloud,
From the west came the cruel rains,
Who will help my rolls of carded cotton?
Who will help my spinning-wheel?
My brother's wife will help my rolls of carded cotton,
My brother will help my spinning wheel,
Her platted tresses got wet,
His check wrapper got wet.
Where will her plaited tresses dry up?
Where will his check wrapper dry up?
Her plaited tresses will dry up in the palace,
His check wrapper will dry up in the garden.

Punjab is a honeycomb of spinning-wheel songs. Women have their spinning-bee called *Trinjan;* girls, young brides, and women of all ages sit in a group and spin. This community spinning gives rise to community singing. During the lean months of winter, they have a special fascination for spinning. The cadence of the songs consents to keep tune

with the rhythm of the wheels. And the thread spins out in tune with the lyricism of songs.

The songs of the spinning-bee are made of the stuff of life *i.e.* the joys and sorrows of people's life. Some of these songs are purely documentary in character. They are often impressionistic; there are some that are intensely symbolic in intent and purpose. Usually, these songs are in couplets. They are very simple, simple as the machine that the spinners employ for their work. There are considerable resemblances between the spinning-wheel songs and the *Gidha* dance songs. In the dance songs, there are often references to spinning. Originally, these *Gidha* songs appear to belong to the spinning-bee.

My friendship of the spinning-bee,
I recalled on the bullock cart.

Here is a girl who is married off. As she goes to her new home, to unfamiliar surroundings, the joyous memory of the spinning-bee and her friends there sparkles before her eyes like a dream.

To the reservoir of old songs are often added new pieces or expressions which enrich the song. The spinner adds a piece here or a piece there and the theme gains in emotional intensity. Changes spring from the heart; music keeps tune with emotion. The *Boli* variety of spinning-wheel songs is an instance in point.

I can build a bridge with the *Bolis*,
I cannot win the world.

The simple objects connected with the spinning-bee have their own songs. The girls have their *kattani*, a small basket made of reeds in which sheaves of yarn and carded cotton are kept. The reed-basket and the spinning-wheel are for the spinner invested with life.

My *kattani* recites poems,
My spinning-wheel sings the couplets.

The girl wants a new basket of reeds. The quills of a peacock are needed to make it. The quills give it ivory polish. She sings to her lover thus:

Go and kill a peacock for me, my love,
I have to make a new *kattani*.

Fishermen are a class apart. They have their own songs. There are other classes of people, particularly of the riparian areas, who catch fish as an occasional pastime. These people usually indulge in community fishing. In Assam, long lines of girls down to the hips in water, engaged in catching fish, is a familiar sight. But seldom do they sing. On the other hand, the professional fishermen of Madhya Pradesh called *kewats* have given a good number of typical fishing-songs. These songs are not about fish as such. They seek to give a glimpse into the inner life of the fish also. Their destiny is not certain; the fishermen's hook and net create disaster for them. What an earthquake is to human life, hook and net are to fish. The fish called *padina* is supposed to be the "Raja of all fish" in Madhya Pradesh.

As it goes, it lays its eggs,
Like a goat it cries **bo bo, bo bo,**
The *kotwar* crab comes out of its hole:
"All is well now; but wait for me,
You have come leaping and playing in the water,
I have come slowly on my eight feet;
What will you do? You have no hands or feet,
How will you build your house?
Leaping and playing in the water,
You have climbed Binjh Pahar,
But your son and daughter will be eaten by a stork."
Raja Padina weeps remembering *Sarwa Tal*.

In the following *Jhorphi Dadaria* fish-imagery is used.

You cannot catch fish without a fine net,
You cannot win a girl without a go-between.

The following fishing-song is a song of joy. The women engaged in fishing bale out water from a pond so that the fish is easy to catch.

Queen Fish, Queen Fish,
Your marriage day has come,
Pour all the water into the pots.

Queen Fish, Queen Fish,
Come out for your marriage,
All the water is in the pots.

Queen Fish, Queen Fish,
The wedding party's come,
They are camping on the bank,
Queen Fish, Queen Fish,
Hide yourself quickly,
Pour all the waters into the pots.

The Gond and the Pardhan have some fine songs of craft and labour, particularly around the husking of rice and millet. The rice-husker, the winnowing-fan, broom and the rice-pounder,—these implements claim their special devotion and affection. There is always something of magic in the winnowing-fan, according to folk-belief. The Gunias, of the Maikal Hills, use it for divination. Brooms are used to scare away spirits. They are used for purification also.

Likewise, the rice-husker is supposed to possess magic power. In most cases, it is used as a sex-symbol. The bride's fingers at marriage are slightly pressed under it amongst certain social groups. In certain others, it is turned round over the heads of the bride and bridegroom. It has the same symbolism as the previous one. The following are the rice-pounding songs of the Adivasis of the central Indian regions.

(i)

Are you going to husk the rice?
Or are you going to stay all day,
Stuck by the pillar?
Golden is the flower in the river-bed,
Pick it and go to your house,
You must husk the rice so well,
That there is no rubbish left,
And the rice is not broken.
Or are you going to stay idle,
Standing by the pillar?

(ii)

In the middle of our garden,
There is a grove of mangoes,
My uncle and my brother
Have come to visit me there;

Go, my husband, with a bundle of tobacco,
I stand to watch them in my door;
How often I come to the door,
To watch them on any excuse,
In my garden is an elephant,
How proud they will be to see it!

Songs throw a flood of light on the social life of the village. In some language-groups, they contain religious ideas. In others, they are a simple enactment of folk-joy. Here is a song from Andhra Pradesh which the girls generally sing in the evening when the cattle come home.

It is time now when the *muggu*[1] is made,
With a lotus design:
It is time now when jasmine,
And the *jaji* flowers bloom.
Time now, when water is brought in brass vessels,
Time when the flowers of the *karala*[2] creepers bloom,
Time now when water is fetched in earthen vessels,
Time now when the lamp is lit.
Time now when the washerman brings clothes,
Time now when the cow and calves return home,
Time now when the brothers, younger and elder, say their prayers;
Time now when the daughters-in-law put *kum-kum*[3] on their foreheads.
Time now when the daughters-in-law besmear turmeric on their legs;
Time now when the younger brothers' wives cut jokes,
Time when brothers give beds to each other,
Time when brothers' wives throw saffron water on each other.
The virgin face looks like a mirror,
My own face looks like the lotus *muggu*,
Whosoever recite this song will have married bliss,
For years sixty and three hundred.

This is an idyllic atmosphere. This is the atmosphere in which a peasant works and shares his joys and sorrows with others. The village is a "mirror" and looks like a "vir-

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[1] art-designs on floor made of coloured powders.
[2] a bitter fruit.
[3] powder marks.

gin face". In the midst of the heavy routine of life, these are the tiny joys that enliven life. Songs and dances are a precious possession of the folk-people, a palliative against exhaustion caused by work and struggles of life.

The *Garba* is a popular dance of Gujarat and Kathiawar. Songs weave round them. The lyricism of the voice adds to the lyricism of the limbs. The *Garba* is usually danced during *navaratra* festivals.

(i)

One to twenty one, **Garba** has come,
Two to twenty two, **Garba** has come,
Three to twenty three, **Garba** has come,
Four to twenty four, **Garba** has come,
Five to twenty five, **Garba** has come,
Six to twenty six, **Garba** has come,
Seven to twenty seven, **Garba** has come.

(ii)

Make the **garabo** ready,
Make holes in the **garabo**,
How will I, the fair one, come?
Night is dark.
The thorn pricked me,
The anklets make sound in my feet,
Yes, the anklets make sound in my feet,
I put them off in the corn-bin.

The *Gidha* dance-songs are mostly love-songs. They are often naked and vulgar and show signs of physical exhuberance. On the other hand, the songs connected with the Holi festival are of a religious import. Mythological allusions intersperse these songs.

On the day Krishna played the flute,
The three worlds were connected;
What was the flute made of?
And how was it tied?
On the day, Krishna charmed the world,
With bones and flesh the flute was made,
With love it was tied.

With respect to the Holi festival, the emphasis of the Adivasis is neither spiritual nor religious. It is to them a po-

pular festival of riotous joy and gay abandon. It is celebrated with a bonfire and it is believed that Ravana's corpse is burnt in it. Some of their Holi or Phag Songs are rather crude, with little of poetry in them.

Gently, slowly tattoo her body,
Mad man, you have made her red,
Take my husband's sister first
Then, gently, slowly tattoo me,
My husband's sister's skin is fair,
And it hurts her body:
Mad man, you have made her red,
Treat her body gently, slowly,
On her body Krishna's beauty,
Rama's grandeur be on mine;
Mad man, what will you take for her?
Mad man, what will you take for me?

The Durga Puja is a popular festival of Bengal. Its symbolism is deep and intense. In the words of Shri Aurobindo:

> "It is ourselves to decide whether we should give up the kingdom of the mind to the rule of the Mahisasura or enthrone Mother Durga in our breast. She can only be brought down to our heart by concentrating all the Divine graces that are innate in our being."

This aspect of Durga is confined to the priest and his Sanskrit *slokas*[1]. It is the other aspect *i.e.* the home-coming of a daughter to her mother, after a year in her husband's home, that captures the folk-mind. Durga is fondly called Uma. She is the consort of Lord Siva and their habitation is in the Himalayas. She is allowed to visit her mother once a year and that too for a brief stay. This has given rise to a corpus of songs known as *Agamani* songs *i.e.* songs of welcome. The following is the song of Menaka, mother of Uma. Giriraj is her father.

When will you bring my Uma to me, Giriraj?
Tell me at once,
I am dying without Uma,

---

[1] verses;

She is my only daughter,
There is none to call me mother,
It is my ill luck,
My son-in-law is a mendicant.

After a brief stay, Uma bids farewell to her mother. The day of Uma's departure is known as Vijaya. The songs connected with this occasion are known as *Vijaya* or farewell songs.

Uma will have to go away today,
Why did the ninth day pass away?
The seventh and eighth night is the time
for Uma's stay;
Siva has come prior to the day.

These songs reflect the social life of the people. There are songs that reflect socio-economic life also. The fisher-boy of the following song is a tragic instance of oppression:

Me, a fisher-boy, O babu,
Beat me not, abuse me not, O babu,
A small fishing boat I row, O babu,
A net to be hurled I throw, O babu.
At Poolapilla Punta was I born,
In the fair at Pedapoori was I brought up,
My father's name is Jalla Konku,
My mother's name is Mattagirsa.
My sister's name is Chedupariya,
My brother's name is Royyipecchu,
My wife's name is Yisukadondu,
My own name is Bommirayyi.
Me, a fisher-boy, O babu,
Beat me not, abuse me not, O babu,
A small fishing boat I row, O babu,
A net to be hurled I throw, O babu.

There are songs that speak of the conditions of Adivasi life under British rule. The Adivasis wanted the freedom of the forests which was denied to them. The forests were taxed. There were taxes on cattle too. The peasant paused and wondered: why should his cattle be taxed! He did not get an answer. The Santal, Maria and Munda tribes rose in revolt; the tribes of the Maikal Hills did not. They sang their sorrow in songs. Besides the State-taxes, there were the landlords and money-lenders to reap economic

advantage of the people's simplicity and ignorance. To add to existing distress, there were the occasional famine and floods, and droughts too.

There is a halo round the moon,
The sun is in eclipse,
My debts surround my life,
And nothing can save me,
No one will give us *badhi*[1],
No one will give us *dedhi*[2],
No one will lend us anything;
There is a halo round the moon,
The sun is in eclipse.

The *badhi* and *dedhi* are the core of village economy. According to the *badhi* system, one-and-a-half times the amount is returned to the money-lender by the peasant after harvest. According to the *dedhi* system, "repayment with interest" is agreed upon between the cultivator and the landlord. The songs of the Baiga, Gond, Agaria and Pardhan are rich in this field. Their challenge to British rule was explicit.

(i)

Be careful where you go,
For the English are kings,
Who has ever seen the boundary of their kingdom?
They have taken all the best hills,
In the sweet forest they have built their bungalows;
They have big guns,
When the tiger and tigress see them,
They run away for fear.

(ii)

O the deep sorrow,
In this Raja's kingdom,
There is hard pain here;
I made a horse of a tiger,
I put a scorpion for its bridle,
I used a snake for my whip;
What hard suffering
Is in this Raja's kingdom!

1, 2 explained in the text—terms of rural economy.

The following two *Karam* songs reveal the extent to which taxes were levied.

(i)

Land and trees,
All are taxed,
What shall we do?
No joy from morning to noon,
Noon to evening.

(ii)

Huts and door, pitcher and wooden spoons,
All are taxed,
What shall we do?
No joy from morning to noon,
Noon to evening.

The following two Gond songs evidence the hatred of foreign rule and misery due to exploitation.

(i)

I sold my cow and paid the forest tax,
I sold my bullock and paid the land revenue,
That is not enough;
My mind is disturbed, my love,
It is difficult to live in Mandla district.

(ii)

The leaves of the Pipal tree are ever moving,
In the Englishman's Raj, we are ever hungry,
In the Englishman's Raj, O friend.

The following Bhojpuri song relates the inadequacy of pasture-land to the peasant's limited income.

All will turn grazers of buffaloes and cows,
If there were enough pastures,
All will like to have wives and children,
If they had enough money to spend.

Here is a song from Bihar. The Ahirs of U.P. sing it too. It is a testament of hunger.

I have lost my *Biraha* song due to killing hunger,
I have lost my *Kajri* songs, my *Kabir* songs;
As I look at the fair one's rising breast,
No more desire rises in my heart.

A similar note is evident in the following song from the southern regions of Madhya Pradesh.

In hunger we have forgotten the *Dadaria* and *Karma,*
In poverty did we lose our dances,
Such a burden has life become to us,—
Even in youth, we don't have craving of love.

Thus the dark conditions of life seek to mute the nightingale-throats of the people.

The railway train has improved communications no doubt. But then, it has made an inroad into the forest.

Since the railway train shot out,
Forests and hills are cut down,
Money I had, I gave to my legs,
The bones of my back, I gave to my stomach.

Distress is brought out by contrast with city life where even the "she-rat feasts".

Looking at big big bins,
Don't be mistaken, Nirahua,
Even the she-rat feasts here;
Our children lick up the *lapsi*,[1]
We sell the *mahua*[2] to make a living.

In the Punjabi folksong below, a woman sings of her "sorrows". She works, yet she is hungry.

Listen, O sun,
Listen, O moon,
Tears roll down my eyes,
The world enjoys,
I spin my sorrows.

The following Malayalam song is a peasant's lament at the injustice of the landlord.

Says the landlord, eat the coconut, drink the toddy,
I say I will die and you won't mourn for me;
Grow, O paddy, full and sweet,
The landlord wears silk,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.
Says the landlord, birds are happy, but you are sad,
I say, I will die to be born a bird on earth;
Cry, O drums and bells,
Our sweat the landlord fails to see,

---

[1] rice pudding;
[2] a kind of flower from which wine is made.

I see no justice, O earth, O sun.
Says the landlord, trees are green, but you are withered,
I say, I will die to be born a tree on earth;
Blow, O sea-breeze, tell your tale,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.
Says the landlord, don't we pray to the same gods?
I say, no home have I, nor temple for the gods;
Go deep, O plough,
The landlord does whatever he likes,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.
Says the landlord, I will give you a piece of land,
I say, don't tell a lie;
Come milk, come honey,
The landlord carries bags of silver:
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.

The following Kannada song presents a picture of poverty. Yet, the girl is grateful for life and to her mother for nourishing it.

Born of a poor woman, I never saw the *arati* lamp,
Never could I put on a silken *sari*,
Woven with gold thread, mother;
Yet, how much I owe to you for the milk
I suckled.

The same setting of poverty is evident in this woman's song, given below. It is not unusual for a husband, poor as he is, not to be able to buy a *sari* for his wife even once in a year.

Buy me a cloth to wear,
Worth one rupee at least;
It was that you should care for me,
That I made you my yoke-fellow.

Poverty and exploitation drive the peasant away from his homeland. The Ahir of rural U.P. wants to migrate to the city in search of work and food. But his wife does not want him to do so. She wants him to live the ancestral life of his village.

I fall at your feet, darling,
Do not go to the town;
Eat the wheat-bread with the cooked mustard leaves,
Pass your days in the village.

But then, even in the remotest corners of the Indian village, Gandhiji's clarion-call for freedom echoed. In his rural

landscape, the peasant paused and listened. His imagination was fired. He became vibrant with hope.

You will not win, O Englishman,
In Gandhi's fight,
You may do your best;
Good, good luxuries you had in this land,
The bungalows will be sold now.

How prophetic his song was!

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part II, Vol. 21, April 1892. 113-116p.
part III, Vol. 22, April 1893. 102-107 p.

Notes

TRIBES AND THEIR STATES

Kachari, Khasi, Garo, Naga, Lakher, Mikir, Lushai	:	Assam
Munda, Uraon, Mage (Munda folk-songs), Santal, Gond, Pardhan, Lujki (Gond Folk Dance)	:	Bihar.
Savara, Kondh, Juang, Bhuiya, Gadsba	:	Orissa.
Uraon, Ho	:	Chota Nagpur.
Kamar, Baiga, Maria Gond, Bhil	:	Madhya Pradesh.

SOME SONGS AND THEIR STATES

Song from Braj Mandal	:	Mathura and Agra Districts.
Songs from Garhwal	:	Uttar Pradesh.
Song from Jaunsar	:	Uttar Pradesh.

Awadi Song	:	Uttar Pradesh.
Song from Mandi	:	Himachal Pradesh.
Song from Chamba	:	Himachal Pradesh.
Nepali Song	:	Darjeeling District.
Laddakhi Song	:	Jammu & Kashmir.
Dogra Song	:	Jammu & Kashmir.
Kamar Songs	:	Madhya Pradesh.
Bundelkhandi Songs	:	Madhya Pradesh.
Konkani Song	:	Maharashtra State:
Bihu Songs	:	Assam.
Bhatiali Songs	:	Bengal.
Maithili Songs	:	Bihar.