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WITCHCRAFT IN ANCIENT INDIA.[1]

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THERE is more than one reason why the uncanny and often repulsive practices of witchcraft deserve to be studied. First of all, these practices form an important phase in the

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history of religion, and have their roots in the primitive history of mankind; and whenever we feel inclined to smile at or to be disgusted with some of these customs and beliefs, we ought to remember what M. Lazarus (one of the pioneers of the scientific study of ethnology) said, that, in all our investigations as to the origin of customs, we are standing "on holy ground — we are standing at the gate of the Primitive History of Mankind — at the psychological source of all that is highest and noblest in man."

A study of these customs, too, allows us an insight into the working of the human mind in its early stages of evolution, and is therefore an important contribution to the study of psychology. For these customs are merely the outward expression of what we are pleased to call superstitions, but what are really beliefs as justifiable on psychological grounds as those of any creed or science — for even in science there is much that is belief to-day, and may be superstition to-morrow. **It is the aim of ethno-psychological research (Völkerpsychologie) to find out the reasons of these so-called superstitions,** and hence the psychological basis of the practices and ceremonies which go by the name of witchcraft.

Moreover, in many of these rites we may discover the rudiments of science, the first gropings of man for an understanding of Nature, and especially (as witchcraft is greatly concerned with the human body) the rudiments of medical science. In studying the very ignorance of primitive people with regard to Nature, we are able to discern glimpses of real knowledge — we are, though not yet in the precincts, at any rate at the threshold of Science.

In India, witchcraft practices have always formed an essential element in the religious life of the people. Witchcraft formed an important factor in the popular religion of ancient Vedic times, it survives (as it does in Europe) during centuries of advanced civilization, and it crops up again as a kind of atavism in the magic rituals and formulas of Tantric sects and Mahâyâna Buddhists, as in the hocus-pocus of modern spiritualists in Europe and America. In ancient India witchcraft practices enter largely into the sacred ritual, and many of the ceremonies performed by the priests at the great sacrifices are in no way distinguished from the practices of magicians. The sacrificial ceremonies are mixed up with numerous rites which are intended to secure a special boon for the worshipper or to injure his enemy — rites which have nothing to do with the worship of the gods, but are witchcraft practices pure and simple. Especially in all the rites connected with childbirth, marriage and the funeral service it is almost impossible to distinguish between witchcraft and religion. To secure the welfare of a child or of a bride, solemn sacrifices and prayers to the gods are prescribed side by side with amulets and talismans and imprecations against the evil demons.

In a highly interesting essay on "Witchcraft and Non-Christian Religions"[2] Sir Alfred Lyall has most ingeniously tried to define witchcraft and to prove that it is not a low phase of religion, but that from the very outset there was a radical separation between the two. "Witchcraft," he says, "appears to have been, from the beginning, the aboriginal and inveterate antagonist of religion or theology, and hardly less so in the most primeval age of barbarous superstition than it was in the days of our King James I." The witch is, according to Sir Alfred Lyall, in one sense the *savant* of his time, in another sense "a crazy charlatan" who professes to work miracles, either through some trifling knowledge which he actually possesses, or by certain faculties and devices which he pretends to possess. He relies upon his own powers, while the priest tries to influence Nature by worship and expects all help from supernatural beings.

But fascinating as this theory is, since it would help us to bring light and order into what seems inextricably involved, I do not believe that the facts, as we find them among primitive people, justify us in drawing such a distinct line of demarcation between witchcraft and religion. First of all, witchcraft is essentially connected with the belief in demons or evil spirits. And this belief is certainly as much a religious belief, as beliefs in the great gods to

[2] *Asiatic Studies*, 2d ed. 1884, pp. 75-98.

whom the higher forms of worship are directed. We shall see below that even the great gods of the Hindu pantheon, *e. g.*, Varuṇa and Rudra, are connected with diseases and hence with medical witchcraft. Besides, witchcraft practices are invariably accompanied by charms and imprecations addressed to supernatural beings, and in no way distinguished from the prayers addressed to the higher gods. The witch, too, relies on worship. As we shall see, in the ancient Hindu charms the demons who cause diseases or other evils are constantly invoked, worshipped and propitiated.

It is true, there are traces, even in ancient India, of an antagonism between priest and witch. At an early period, the Atharva-Vêda, whose essential teaching is sorcery, was looked upon as of doubtful orthodoxy. For there are naturally two aspects of sorcery. It is useful to one's self, and harmful to others. The sufferer would always look upon magic as contemptible and abominable. But the same law-book of Manu, which mentions sorcery and "magic by means of roots" among the minor offences causing loss of caste, and which prescribes fines and penances for hostile sorcery, tells us that *speech* (*i. e.*, charms and incantations), is the weapon of the Brâhmaṇa, the priest — with that he may slay his enemies.

I gladly admit that witchcraft is more independent of the belief in the supernatural, that it is more materialistic, and that it "pretends to be in some sort an exact science" — but at the same time, I believe that witchcraft is one of the numerous phases of primitive religious thought, and inseparable from other low forms of religion.

In studying the witchcraft folk-lore of ancient India, we shall have to abandon the idea of a strict separation between witchcraft and religion. All we can say is that **witchcraft is more concerned with the extraordinary phenomena of Nature and unusual events in human life, and with the abnormal conditions of the human body, while the higher worship of the gods is inspired more by the regular course of events in Nature and human life.** Moreover, the great gods are supposed to have a claim to certain sacrifices, the regular performance of which, with the recital of prayers, forms one of the principal duties of every respectable Hindu; while the ceremonies which we comprise under the general name of witchcraft are performed at odd times with some worldly object in view, either **to secure health, prosperity, for one's self (holy and auspicious rites), or to cause injury to others (hostile sorcery).**

Among the auspicious rites, the medical charms and the witchcraft practices intended to cure diseases or to counteract the evil influence of the demons of disease are most prominent, and there is much truth in what Sir Alfred Lyall says, that "the most primitive witchcraft looks very like medicine in the embryonic state."

In India, as elsewhere, the general doctrine of disease prevails that all abnormal and morbid states of body and mind are caused by demons, who are conceived either as attacking the body from without or as temporarily entering the body of man. The consequence is that primitive medicine consists chiefly in chasing away or exorcising these hostile spirits. This is done, in the first instance, by charms. The spirit of disease is addressed with coaxing words and implored to leave the body of the patient, or fierce imprecations are pronounced against him, to frighten him away. But these **charms**, powerful as they are (in fact, there is nothing more powerful to the primitive mind than **the human word, the solemn blessing or curse**), are yet not the only resource of the ancient physicians or magicians.

From the earliest times men had become aware of the curative power of certain substances in Nature, especially of herbs. This knowledge was first gained by experience, and after it had once been obtained, men began to ascribe similar curative power to plants, as well as to animal and mineral substances, for various other reasons. Analogy or association of ideas not only serves to explain many of the practices of primitive medicine or magic (which is the same), but also accounts in many cases for the belief in the curative power of certain substances. The principle that *similia similibus curantur* prevails throughout the whole range of folk-medicine. Thus dropsy is cured by water. A spear-amulet is used to cure colic, which

is supposed to be caused by the spear of the god Rudra. The colour of a substance is of no small importance in determining its use as a medicine. Thus turmeric is used to cure jaundice. Red, the colour of life-blood and health, is the natural colour of many amulets used to secure long life and health. A black plant is recommended for the cure of white leprosy. But even the name of a substance was frequently a reason for ascribing to it healing power. One of the most powerful medicinal or magic plants is called in Sanskrit *apâmârga* (*achyranthes aspera*), and it owes its supposed power essentially to its etymological connection with the verb "apamarj," meaning "to wipe away," and in Hindu charms the plant is constantly implored to wipe away disease, to wipe out the demons and wizards, to wipe off sins and evils of all kinds To wipe a disease away is a very common and a very natural means of getting rid of it.

This seems to be the meaning also of that ancient method of curing disease by **the laying on of hands,** which is already mentioned in the Rig-Vêda, though it is also possible that it was intended to press the disease down by means of the hands. For we read in one charm of the Rig-Vêda: —

"Down bloweth the wind, down burneth the sun, the cloud (or cow) is milked downwards — down shall go thy ailment.

"Beneficent is this one hand, more beneficent is this other hand — this one contains all medicines; the other one is wholesome by its touch."

From another charm, however, it would seem as if the laying on of hands had only been intended as a means of establishing a connection between the patient and the magician, whose imprecations could have effect only on the person with whom he was actually in touch. In the same way the priest had to touch the person for whom he was offering prayers and sacrifices to the gods. The following charm of the Rig-Vêda seems to suggest such an interpretation: —

"With these two hands, which have ten branches (the fingers), and which cure from disease, — **the tongue being at the same time the leader of speech,** — do I touch thee."

There is a striking similarity between this ancient Hindu custom and the modern practices of **faith-healing** in which, after all, prayer has merely been substituted for the ancient charms.

The two chief resources of medical witchcraft, then, are charms (spells, imprecations) and magic rites, the chief object of which is to bring the body into contact with some supposed curative substance. These substances are frequently applied in the shape of amulets or talismans. There is, in India, no trace of a belief in spirits dwelling in the amulets. Their power is merely based on the power to destroy evil influences and demons, possessed by the herb or tree or mineral from which the amulet is derived.

The most ancient collection of charms in India is that found in the Atharva-Vêda, and we possess very ancient ritual books which contain detailed accounts of magic rites used in connection with the charms of the Atharva-Vêda.[1] These charms have very much in common with those of other nations. More especially, numerous coincidences have been pointed out between Teutonic charms and those of the Atharva-Vêda. In the medical charms of the Hindus, the diseases are always personified. It is only our way of speaking when we say that diseases are supposed to be caused by demons. As a matter of fact, the diseases themselves are addressed as personal and demoniacal beings. Thus Fever — "the king of diseases," as it is called in the Suśruta, the great work on Hindu medicine — is addressed with such words as: "Thou that makest all men sallow, inflaming them like a searing fire, even now, O Fever, thou shalt become void of strength: do thou now go away down, aye, into the depths! The Fever that is spotted, covered with spots, like reddish sediment, him thou, O plant of unremitting potency, drive away down below!" Here the plant Kushṭha (*costus speciosus*) is addressed, which was

[1] See *Hymns of the Atharva-Vêda, together with Extracts from the Ritual Books and the Commentaries*, translated by M. Bloomfield. (*Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 42, 1897.) I am indebted to Professor Bloomfield's translation for many of the extracts given below.

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always considered by the Hindus as one of the most powerful remedies against fever, leprosy and other diseases. That a demon of disease is at the same time worshipped and threatened with destruction, is a very common feature of these charms. This is not at all surprising. A Red Indian will in the same way worship a rattlesnake and offer it some tobacco before he proceeds to kill it. Thus our charm continues: "Having made obeisance to the Fever, I cast him down below."

The symptoms of malarial fever — the change between heat and chill, and the intermittency — are most vividly expressed in these charms. Thus we read: "When thou, being cold, and then again deliriously hot, accompanied by cough, didst cause the sufferer to shake, then, O Fever, thy missiles were terrible: from these surely exempt us! . . . O Fever, along with thy brother Swelling, along with thy sister Cough, along with thy cousin Eruption, go to yonder foreign folk!" Diseases are frequently thus told to depart and go to foreigners or enemies. Headache, cough, eruptions and abdominal swellings are frequently associated with malarial fever. Summer, autumn, and especially the rainy season, are most favourable to the spread of this dangerous disease. Hence the Kushṭha plant is addressed with the words: "Destroy the Fever that returns on each third day, the one that intermits each third day, the one that continues without intermission, and the autumnal one; destroy the cold Fever, the hot, him that comes in summer, and him that arrives in the rainy season!"

The frequency of fever during the rainy season probably accounts for the belief that lightning is the cause of fever as well as of headache and cough. A very symbolical cure of fever consists in making the patient drink gruel made of roasted grain, the dregs of gruel being afterwards poured from a copper vessel over the head of the patient into fire which must be taken from a forest-fire. A forest-fire is supposed to have originated from lightning, and that the cure of a disease is effected by that which causes it, is one of the most general ideas among primitive people. Both the roasted grain and the copper vessel are symbolical of the heat of fever. Here we have the rudiments of homœopathy. A similar homœopathic remedy against hot fever consists in heating an axe, quenching the axe in water, and pouring the water thus heated upon the patient.

Another magic rite is intended as a remedy against cold fever. By means of a blue and a red thread — blue and red are magic colours both in German and in Hindu sorcery — a frog is tied to the couch on which the patient reclines, and a charm is recited in which the Fever is invoked to enter into the frog. The frog represents the cold element, and the cold fever is expected to pass into the cold frog. It is highly interesting that we meet with a very similar frog-charm in Bohemia, where people, in order to cure chills of fever, catch a green frog, sew it into a bag, and hang it around the neck of the patient, who is not allowed to know of the contents of the bag. Then the patient must pronounce the Lord's prayer nine times on nine successive days before sunrise, and on the ninth day he must go to the river, throw the bag into the water, and return home without looking backward. This, too, is a kind of homœopathy.

The cure of disease by making it enter into some animal, is one of the most general devices of medical witchcraft both in India and elsewhere. According to Jewish law a living bird is "let loose into the open field" with the contagion of leprosy (Lev. xiv. 7, 53). To cure headache, people in Germany wind a thread round the patient's head, and then hang the thread as a noose on a tree; any bird flying through the noose takes the headache away with it. Jaundice is cured, in parts of Germany, by making it pass into a lizard. In ancient India jaundice was cured by seating the patient on a couch beneath which yellow birds were tied. The yellow disease was supposed to settle on the yellow birds.

The same principle of curing a disease by something similar to its cause or symptoms is also apparent in the cure of excessive discharges by means of water, although there must have been many other reasons which pointed to water as a great healing power. To the present

day the Hindus look upon rivers as divine beings or as the abode of spirits. And we may credit even the ancient Hindus with a certain knowledge of medicinal springs. Nor is it surprising that in a tropical climate the rain waters were hailed as "divine physicians." Hence we read in a charm of the Atharva-Vêda: "The waters verily are healing, the waters chase away disease, the waters cure all disease: may they prepare a remedy for thee!" But spring-water is considered as a particularly effective remedy against diarrhœa or other excessive discharges. It is a curious belief that the ants — which are also mentioned as instrumental in the cure of poison — bring healing-water from the sea. Thus it is said: "The ants bring the remedy from the sea: that is the cure for discharges, and that hath quieted disease."

Dropsy or "water-disease" (*Wassersucht* in German) — the disease sent by Varuṇa, the god of the sea and water — is naturally cured best by the use of water. A very simple cure of dropsy consists in sprinkling water over the patient's head by means of twenty-one (three times seven) tufts of Darbha or sacred grass (*Poa cynosuroides*), together with reeds taken from the thatch of a house. The water sprinkled on the body is supposed to cure the water in the body. It is against dropsy, with which disease of the heart is frequently associated, that the following charm is pronounced: "From the Himalaya mountains they flow forth, in the Indus, forsooth, is their assembling-place: may the waters, indeed, grant me that cure for heart-ache! The pain that hurts me in the eyes, and that which hurts in the heels and the fore-feet, the waters, the most skilled of physicians, shall put all that to rights! Ye rivers all, whose mistress is the Indus, whose queen is the Indus, grant us the remedy for that: through this remedy may we derive benefit from you!"

Varuṇa is not only the god of water, but also the god of justice and truth. Hence dropsy is more particularly considered as a punishment of falsehood and sin. Varuṇa ensnares with his fetters, *i. e.*, his disease, every liar and traitor. Thus we read in a charm against treacherous designs: "With a hundred snares, O Varuṇa, surround him, let the liar not go free from thee, O thou that observest men! The rogue shall sit, his belly hanging loose, like a cask without hoops, bursting all about!"

Another great god of the ancient Hindu pantheon who is frequently connected with disease and witchcraft is Rudra, the father of the storm-gods. He is at the same time worshipped as a divine physician and feared as a causer of disease. He is the lord of cattle, but his missiles cause danger to cattle as well as to men. Especially all sharp internal pain, such as colic, is caused by the arrow of the god Rudra. It may be that lightning was conceived as a weapon of Rudra, and we have seen above that diseases were supposed to be caused by lightning.

As a rule, however, diseases are supposed to be caused by godlings rather than by gods. More especially, all such diseases as mania, fits, epilepsy and convulsions are ascribed to possession by Rakshas (devils) and Piśâchas (goblins). There is a special class of charms, the so-called "driving-out charms," which are considered as most effective remedies against possession. But the most powerful enemy and destroyer of all devils is Agni, the Fire. "Slayer of fiends" is one of the most common epithets of this god. In a delightful story by "Frank Pope Humphrey" (Pseudonym Library), a young lady who is frightened by a ghost is made to say: "I sprang out of bed and piled the branches of pine upon the coals until they roared in a vast flame up the chimney and lighted every corner of the room like noonday. *For I have ever found that light scatters quickly the phantoms that people the darkness.*" This is exactly the same sentiment which made the South American Indians carry brands or torches for fear of evil demons when they ventured into the dark. And for the very same reason the ancient Norse colonists in Iceland used to carry fire round the lands they intended to occupy to expel the evil spirits. (Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Vol. II. p. 194.) At the great animal sacrifices in ancient India, the priest had to carry a firebrand round the victim. "Why he carries the fire round," says an ancient treatise on sacrifices, "is that he encircles the victim by means of the fire with an unbroken fence, lest the evil spirits should seize upon it; for Agni is the repeller of the Rakshas (devils)." No wonder, therefore, that Agni or Fire is invoked in a charm

against mania to free from madness him who has "been robbed of sense by the Rakshas:" "Release for me, O Agni, this person here, who, bound and well-secured, loudly jabbers! Then shall he have due regard for thy share of the offering, when he shall be freed from madness! Agni shall quiet down thy mind, if it has been disturbed! Cunningly do I prepare a remedy, that thou shalt be freed from madness."

Sacrifices to the god of fire, burning of fragrant substances and fumigation are among the principal rites against possession by demons. The following is a very complicated ceremony against mania: "Pulverized fragrant substances, mixed with *ghí*, are sacrificed, and the patient is anointed with what remains. The patient is next placed upon a cross-roads, a wicker-work of *darbha* grass, containing a coal-pan, upon his head; and upon the coal the previously mentioned fragrant substances are again offered. The patient going into a river against the current throws the same substances into a sieve, while another person from behind washes him off. Pouring more of the fragrant substances into an unburned vessel, moistening the substances with ghee, placing the vessel in a three-footed wicker basket made of munja-grass (*Sacharum munja*), he ties it to a tree in which there are birds' nests" (Bloomfield, p. 519). Here we have the idea of driving out demons with the help of fire, combined with the well-known devices of making a disease run away with flowing water, and of transmitting it to trees and animals. The ceremony is performed on a cross-roads, this being the favourite haunt of all demons, and therefore the most fitting place for all kinds of witchcraft practices.

As fire was considered to be the best of demon-scarers, it was naturally supposed to be most powerful in driving away the demons of disease also; that is, in curing all kinds of diseases. Hence the custom of passing a sick child through fire, which was witnessed in Scotland only a few years ago. The ancient Teutonic custom of kindling a need-fire for the cure of cattle diseases was still practiced in Scotland in 1788. A fire was "kindled from this need-fire . . . and *the cattle brought to feel the smoke* of this new and sacred fire, which preserved them from the murrain." In ancient Rome a sacrifice was offered on the twenty-first of April, and the flocks were driven through the burning fire.[4] In ancient India, also, there was an annual festival when a bull was sacrificed to Rudra (the god of cattle) and *the flocks were placed around the fire so that the smoke should reach them.* At other times also, when cows and horses were attacked by a disease, the ancient Hindus sacrificed gruel with ghee to Rudra, and the animals were expected to be cured by smelling the smoke. Professor Max Müller suggests that these customs had "a purely utilitarian foundation," that purification by fire is in fact "the forerunner of our modern quarantine, which many medical authorities now look upon as equally superstitious." But I doubt whether it can be proved that the ancient Hindus or other ancient nations had any actual knowledge of, or belief in, fumigation as a means for removing infection. What we know is that they believed that diseases both of men and cattle were caused by demons or gods, — such as Rudra, — and that they also believed that fire was a repeller of all demons. These two ideas seem to account sufficiently for the origin of such customs as those mentioned above. Customs and beliefs must be founded on reason, but what is perfectly reasonable from the point of view of ancient people, need not be "utilitarian" according to modern ideas.

Besides the Rakshas and Pisâchas, the devils and goblins, whose special province it is to cause all kinds of mischief, we find in ancient India also the world-wide belief in *incubi* and *succubi* who pay nocturnal visits to mortal men and women. These are the Apsaras and Gandharvas of Hindu mythology, who correspond in every respect to the elves and nightmares of Teutonic belief. They are really godlings of Nature. Rivers and trees are their natural abodes, which they only leave in order to allure mortals and injure them by unnatural intercourse. To drive these spirits away the fragrant plant ajaśriṅgî, "goat's horn" (*odina pinnata*), is used, and the following charm pronounced: "With thee do we scatter the Apsaras

[4] See F. Max Müller, *Physical Religion*, pp. 284 f., 288 f., 389 f.

and Gandharvas. O goat's horn (*ajaśṛiṅgî*), goad (*aja*) the Rakshas, drive them all away with thy smell! The Apsaras (nymphs) . . . shall go to the river, to the ford of the waters, as if blown away! Thither do ye, O Apsaras, pass away, since ye have been recognized! Where grow the aśvattha (*ficus religiosa*) and the banyan-trees, the great trees with crowns, thither do ye, O Apsaras, pass away, since ye have been recognized! Where your gold and silver swings are, where cymbals and lutes chime together, thither do ye, O Apsaras, pass away, since ye have been recognized. The Apsaras, you know, are your wives; ye, the Gandharvas, are their husbands. Speed away, ye immortals, do not go after mortals!"

According to Teutonic belief, also, fragrant herbs (*e. g., origanum, antirrhinum, hypericum perforatum*, and especially thyme) are excellent means for frightening away devils and witches as well as nymphs and elves. In Teutonic charms, also, the "maer," *i. e.*, the nightmare, is told to leave the houses of mortals, and to repair to the waters and trees, which proves the character of these spirits to be the same as that of the ancient Hindu Apsaras and Gandharvas. Like the latter, the nymphs and elves of Teutonic mythology are particularly fond of music and dancing, by means of which they allure mortal men and women.

That the godlings of Nature, especially the spirits of trees and waters, are occasionally identified with the spirits of disease, may to some extent account for the healing power ascribed to water and trees. In fact, the far-spread custom of transferring diseases to trees seems to have originated from a desire of infecting the spirit of a tree with a disease which may have been caused by the same or an allied spirit. Amulets as a protection against diseases, hostile sorcery, evil eye and other calamities are frequently taken from trees. Thus, an amulet consisting of splinters from ten kinds of holy trees is considered as a potent remedy against hereditary disease, and also against possession by demons. Nine kinds of wood are used for a similar purpose in German witchcraft. A very powerful amulet is derived from the *Varaṇa* tree, *i. e.*, *crataeva roxburghii*. But its great power seems to rest solely on the supposed etymology of *Varaṇa* from a root *var*, meaning to ward off. The following powerful charm is recited on the occasion of tying this Varaṇa-amulet: "Here is my Varaṇa-amulet, a bull that destroys the rivals: with it do thou close in upon thy enemies, crush them that desire to injure thee! Break them, crush them, close in upon them: the amulet shall be thy van guard in front! With the Varaṇa did the gods ward off the onslaught of the demons day after day. This thousand-eyed, yellow, golden Varaṇa-amulet is a universal cure; it shall lay low thy enemies: be thou the first to injure those that hate thee! This Varaṇa will ward off the spell that has been spread against thee; this will protect thee from human danger, this will protect thee from all evil. This divine tree, the Varaṇa shall ward off! The gods, too, did ward off the disease that has entered into this man. If, when asleep, thou shalt behold an evil dream; as often as a wild beast shall run an inauspicious course; ominous sneezing, and the evil shriek of a bird — all this shall the Varaṇa-amulet ward off! The Varaṇa will ward off the demons Grudge and Misfortune, sorcery, and danger, death, and over-strong weapons. This divine tree shall ward off the sin that my mother, that my father, that my brothers and my sister have committed; the sin that we ourselves have committed. . . . This Varaṇa upon my breast, the kingly, divine tree, shall smite asunder my enemies, as Indra the demons! Long-lived, a hundred autumns old, do I wear this Varaṇa: kingdom and rule, cattle and strength, this amulet shall bestow upon me!"

I have quoted this lengthy charm because it shows unmistakably how the ancient Hindus looked upon disease, danger from mortal enemies and from the gods, evil omens and hostile sorcery, as well as upon hereditary and other sin as caused by the same agency, and therefore to be removed by the same remedy. One and the same amulet is to be used as a protection against all evils, and even as a means for securing long life and happiness. The underlying idea can only be that all evils which beset mankind are caused by malevolent superhuman beings who have to be propitiated or warded off, to secure health and happiness.

As these demons are the sworn enemies of mankind, it is only natural that they should be most anxious to injure the new-born infant, and even the embryo. Numerous, therefore, are

the charms and rites concerned with the protection of mother and child against the attacks of evil spirits. Fire, as already mentioned, is the most powerful weapon against the demons. Hence it is that tribes of the Malay Peninsula light fires near a mother at childbirth, to scare away the evil spirits; and the people of the Hebrides, to protect the mother and child from evil spirits, carry fire round them. The law of the Parsis ("Sad Dar," ch. 16) requires "that, when a woman becomes pregnant in a house, it is necessary to make an endeavour so that there may be a continual fire in that house, and to maintain a good watch over it. And, when the child becomes separate from the mother, it is necessary to burn a lamp for three nights and days — if they burn a fire it would be better — so that the demons and fiends may not be able to do any damage and harm. . . . During forty days it is not proper that they should leave the child alone; and it is also not proper that the mother of the infant should put her foot over a threshold in the dwelling, or cast her eyes upon a hill." The threshold is, like the cross-roads, a favourite haunt of the evil spirits. Hence a bride, also, is forbidden — in India as well as in ancient Rome — to tread upon a threshold. The demons are naturally as opposed to marriage as they are to childbirth, and at all marriage ceremonies great care has to be taken to protect the bridal pair, especially the bride, from attacks of the demons. Hence the burning of lamps at Chinese weddings, and perhaps the carrying of fire behind the bridal procession in ancient India. The law of the Parsis has its exact counterpart in Scandinavia, where, until a child is baptized, the fire must never be let out, lest the trolls should be able to steal the infant, and a live coal must be cast after the mother as she goes to be churched (Tylor, Vol. II. p. 195). The custom of keeping a light burning in the lying-in room is still practiced in Germany, as it was in ancient Rome. In ancient India the rule was to keep a fire burning near the door of the lying-in room in which mustard seeds and rice-chaff were sacrificed every morning and evening for ten days. Visitors, too, were requested to throw mustard seeds and rice-chaff into the fire, before entering the room.

Among the rites performed for the welfare of the new-born infant is the first feeding. The child is made to taste honey and milk from a golden spoon. Gold was frequently used at auspicious rites by the ancient Hindus, and was also worn as an amulet for long life. "The gold which is born from fire, the immortal, they bestowed upon the mortals. He who knows this deserves it; of old age dies he who wears it." It seems to me highly probable that the auspiciousness of gold is due to its supposed origin from fire. "The seed of Agni" (Fire) is a frequent designation of gold. As fire could not be worn as an amulet, gold was used instead.

The first *name* given to a child is to be kept secret. Only the parents may know it. For according to Hindu notions, demons and wizards have no power over a person unless they know his name. This custom of concealing the baptismal name is also found among other peoples, *e. g.*, the Abyssinians.

The chapter of children's diseases is as large in medical witchcraft as in modern medical science, and in the Hindu charms we find numerous names of demons to whom the various diseases of children are ascribed. One of these demons is called the "Dog-demon," and is said to represent epilepsy (though the barking dog would remind us rather of whooping cough). When a boy was attacked by the dog-demon, he was first covered with a net, and a gong was beaten or a bell rung. Then the boy was brought into a gambling-hall, — not, however, by the door, but by an opening made in the roof, — the hall was sprinkled with water, the dice cast, the boy laid on his back on the dice, and a mixture of curds and salt poured over him, while again a gong was beaten. The curds and salt were poured on the boy, while a charm was recited which is only partly intelligible: "Kûrkura, Sukûrkura, Kûrkura who binds the boys. . . . O fine-haired doggy, let him loose, let him loose, chat! . . . go away, dog . . . let the dog eat a dog, not a human being, chat! . . . " To drive evil demons away by means of loud noises, such as the beating of a gong, was a device frequently resorted to in ancient Hindu rites; and as Mr. Crooke ("Folklore of Northern India," i. 168) tells us, bells and drums are still used in India as scarers of demons. "So, the Patâri priest in Mirzapur and many classes

of ascetics throughout the country carry bells and rattles made of iron, which they move as they walk to scare demons. . . . This also accounts for the music played at weddings, when the young pair are in special danger from the attacks of evil spirits. At many rites it is the rule to clap the hands at a special part of the ritual with the same purpose." Why the ceremony should take place in the gambling-hall is not quite clear, unless it be that the dice were considered as demons. In the epic literature we meet with two of the dice, who are represented as evil demons. But the casting of dice occurs also as a kind of oracle in the ancient sacrificial ritual of the Hindus, and this may account for the demoniacal or religious character of the dice. Interesting is the practice of bringing the child into the hall through an opening in the roof, that is, *not by the door*. To enter a house by any other opening but the door seems to be a means of escaping the demons who are haunting the threshold. Thus, according to a German superstition, it is conducive to the health of a child to lift it out of the window when it is taken to church to be baptized.

Demons are not only expelled by fire, strong smells and loud noises, but also by the use of more material weapons. Thus, at an ancient Hindu wedding pointed chips of wood or arrow-heads were shot into the air with the following imprecation against the demons: "I pierce the eyes of the Rakshas (devils) who roam about the bride as she approaches the wedding fire; may the Lord of the Demons bestow welfare on the bride!" A staff also is frequently used for driving away the evil spirits. It has been shown by Professor H. Oldenberg (*Religion des Veda*, pp. 492 ff.) that the staff which ascetics and other holy persons are required to carry was originally intended as a weapon against the demons. In order to insure good luck everywhere, an ancient Hindu manual of sorcery advises a man always to carry an oleander staff which has been consecrated by sacrifices and sacred hymns. If he wishes that a certain town or village or house or stable should not be entered by hostile persons, he should draw a circle with his staff, thinking of the place he wishes to protect, and no such person will be able to enter the place.

Of course, the ancient Hindus knew that some maladies and derangements of the human body were not caused by any mysterious power; they knew that wounds were inflicted by weapons, they knew something about the effects of poison, and had an idea that certain diseases were caused by animals, such as worms. But in ancient India, as well as in German popular superstition, the term "worms" includes all kinds of reptiles, and snakes and worms are not kept very distinct. Moreover, all kinds of diseases were ascribed to worms. And both worms and snakes are actually considered as a kind of demoniacal beings. The imprecations against worms are therefore not very different from the charms against the demons. Thus we read in a charm against worms: "The worm which is in the entrails, and he that is in the head, likewise the one that is in the ribs: . . . the worms do we crush with this charm. The worms that are within the mountains, forests, plants, cattle, and the waters, those that have settled in our bodies, all that brood of the worms do I smite."

In a charm against worms in children it is said: "Slay the worms in this boy, O Indra, lord of treasures! Slain are all the evil powers by my fierce imprecation! Him that moves about in the eyes, that moves about in the nose, that gets to the middle of the teeth, that worm do we crush. Slain is the king of the worms, and their viceroy also is slain. Slain is the worm, with him his mother is slain, his brother slain, his sister slain. . . . Of all the male worms, and of all the female worms do I split the heads with the stone, I burn their faces with fire."

This fierce imprecation is accompanied by a rite symbolical of the destruction of worms in the patient. An oblation of black lentils, mixed with roasted worms and with ghee, is offered in the fire. Then the sick child is placed upon the lap of its mother, and with the bottom of a pestle heated in the fire and greased with butter, the palate of the child is warmed by thrice pressing upon it. Then a mixture of the leaves of a horse-raddish tree and butter is applied, and *three times seven* dried roots of *andropogon muricatus* are given to the child, upon whom

water is poured. The words of the charm leave no doubt that not only intestinal diseases but also pains of the head and the eyes, etc., are ascribed to worms. Thus, German popular medicine knows of a "finger-worm" as the causer of whitlow (*panaricium*), and even spasm in the stomach is ascribed to a worm, the so-called "heart-worm" (*Herzwurm*). As the Hindu charm mentions a worm "that gets to the middle of the teeth," so worms are believed to be the cause of toothache in almost every part of the world. "If a worm eat the teeth," says one of the prescriptions in an English *Leech Book*, "take holly rind over a year old and root of carline thistle, boil in hot water, hold in the mouth as hot as thou hottest may." In Madagascar the sufferer from toothache is said to be "poorly through the worm" (W. G. Black, *Folk-Medicine*, pp. 32 f.). In a French charm against toothache it is said: "*Si c'est une goutte de sang, elle tombera; si c'est un ver, il mourra.*" In Germany a sufferer from toothache will go to a pear-tree, walk three times round it, and say: "Pear tree, I complain to thee, three worms sting me, the one is gray, the other is blue, the third is red — I wish they were all three dead." The circumambulation of the tree here alluded to has its parallel in the circumambulation of the fire and other sacred objects, which forms an essential part in the magic rites and religious ceremonies of the ancient Hindus.

An important chapter in ancient Hindu witchcraft is that of the so-called "women's rites," or the charms and rites connected with sexual love. This chapter may well be treated as an appendix to medical witchcraft. "*Liebeswahnsinn — Pleonasmus, Liebe ist ja selbst ein Wahnsinn*," says Heine, and to the primitive mind sexual love is indeed only a kind of mania, or mental derangement. Hence the love charms are only one class of medical charms. As herbs are used to allay disease, so are various kinds of plants used to arouse love in men or women. Thus a man who wishes to secure the love of a woman is told to tie to his little finger an amulet of licorice-wood and recite the charm: "This plant is born of honey, with honey do we dig for thee. Of honey thou art begotten, do thou make us full of honey! At the tip of my tongue may I have honey, at my tongue's root the sweetness of honey! In my power alone shalt thou then be, thou shalt come up to my wish! . . . I am sweeter than honey, fuller of sweetness than licorice. Mayest thou, without fail, long for me alone, as a bee for a branch full of honey! I have surrounded thee with a clinging sugar-cane, to remove aversion, so that thou shalt not be averse to me!"

Most of the love charms, however, are not so "sweet," but have more in common with the fierce imprecations used for hostile sorcery. The following words are addressed to a plant (*andropogon aciculatus*, according to one authority), to arouse the passionate love of a woman: "Clinging to the ground thou didst grow, O plant, that producest bliss for me; a hundred branches extend from thee, three and thirty grow down from thee: with this plant of a thousand leaves thy heart do I parch. Thy heart shall parch with love for me, and thy mouth shall parch with love for me! Languish, moreover, with love for me, with parched mouth pass thy days! Thou that causest affection, kindlest love, brown, lovely plant, draw us together; draw together yonder woman and myself, our hearts make the same!"

To secure the love of her husband, and to become victorious over a rival or co-wife, a woman had to perform the following rite. In the morning of an auspicious day, she goes to a spot where a *Clypea hernandifolia* grows, scatters three times seven barley corns around it, and says, "If thou belongest to Varuṇa, I redeem thee from Varuṇa; if thou belongest to Soma, I redeem thee from Soma." Next morning she digs the plant up, saying the following charm: "I dig up this plant, the most potent of herbs, by which a rival woman may be overcome, by which a husband may be entirely won. O thou plant with erect leaves, who art auspicious, victorious, and powerful! Blow away my rival, make my husband mine alone! Superior am I, O superior plant, superior to the highest. Now shall my rival be inferior to the lowest! I do not even mention her name, nor does she care for me. To the very farthest distance let us banish the rival!" Then she cuts the root of the plant in two, and ties the two pieces to

her hands, saying: "I am overpowering, and thou, O plant, art overpowering. Having both grown full of power, let us overpower my rival!" With the parts of the root tied to her hands, she embraces her husband, pronouncing the charm: "About thee I have placed the overpowering plant, upon thee placed the very overpowering one. May thy mind run after me as a calf after the cow, as water along its course!"

Not only to secure love, but generally to obtain mastery over a man or a woman, the ancient Hindus also availed themselves of a device to which we find interesting parallels among many other nations. He who wanted to get a person into his power had only to make an image of the person (either of clay or of metal), place his foot on the breast of the image, and mutter certain charms. Or he might make such an image of dough (using flour of black rice), rub it with mustard oil, cut off the limbs, and sacrifice the image in fire. But the heart he must eat himself, else the person would die. A woman who wishes to arouse the love of a man performs the following rite: She throws beans upon the head of the person whose love is desired. Then the points of arrows are kindled and cast in every direction about the effigy of the desired person, its face fronting towards the performer. At the same time she recites the charm: "This yearning love comes from the Apsaras, the victorious, imbued with victory. Ye gods, send forth the yearning love; may yonder man burn after me!" etc. A man also, who wishes to secure the affections of a woman, uses for this purpose an effigy of the desired person. And by means of a bow which has a bowstring of hemp, with an arrow whose barb is a thorn, whose plume is derived from an owl, whose shaft is made of black wood, he pierces the heart of the effigy, reciting a fierce imprecation.

Similar magic rites are performed by a king in order to get rid of an enemy, when not only the image of the enemy, but even images of elephants, horses, carriages and soldiers are made of dough and sacrificed in the fire. In Bengal "a person sometimes takes a bamboo which has been used to keep down a corpse during cremation, and, making a bow and arrow with it, repeats incantations over them. He then makes an image of his enemy in clay, and lets fly an arrow into this image. The person whose image is thus pierced is said to be immediately seized with a pain in his breast" (W. Crooke, *Popular Religion of Northern India*, ii. 279). In the Pitt-Rivers collection in the University Museum at Oxford, there is an interesting specimen of a wax image which has been used for witchcraft purposes in Singapore, and a clay image which was used with no friendly purpose only a few years ago — in England. To injure persons by making images of wax, melting them over a slow fire, or piercing them with needles, was a common practice both in ancient Rome and in Germany. In England, too, as Sir George Mackenzie wrote in 1678, "Witches do likewise torment mankind, by making images of clay or wax, and when the witches prick or punce these images, the persons whom these images represent do find extreme torment, which doth not proceed from any influence these images have upon the body tormented, but the devil doth by natural means raise these torments in the person tormented, at the same very time that the witches do prick or punce, or hold to the fire these images of clay or wax" (Black, *Folk-Medicine*, pp. 19 f.).

Another kind of hostile sorcery which the ancient Hindus share with other peoples is that by means of nail-parings, hair, or even the dust taken from the footprint of the person one wishes to injure. Nail-parings are described in the sacred books of the Parsis as the weapons of sorcerers. Among the Southern Slavs (according to Dr. Krauss) nail-parings are sometimes used to drive a person mad, while girls use nail-parings to gain the love of a youth. To prevent mischief done by demons and sorcerers, Hindus are very careful about the disposal of hair-cuttings and nail-pairings. That a person may be injured by meddling with his footprints, is a belief found in Germany, in Australia, and is met with in Northern India at the present day (Crooke, ii. 280). In ancient India, a man who wished to secure the love of a woman was recommended to take some dust from her footprints and sacrifice it in the fire, chanting a certain charm.

In all these customs, where persons are believed to be influenced by some act performed either with the image of the person, or with some part of his body, we see the working of the association of ideas. However unreasonable it may seem to us that a person should feel the effect of an injury done to his effigy or to his nail-parings, it is perfectly in accordance with the reasoning of primitive people. If a savage were told to swallow a pill to be cured of a headache, he would probably consider it as exactly parallel to wearing an amulet on one part of the body against an ailment in another part. Even the belief in demons as the cause of disease has nothing surprising even in our days — only we have to think not of those diseases the causes of which have been cleared up by medical science, but of nervous diseases which are almost as mysterious to the modern physician as they were to the ancient medicine-man. As the sphere of knowledge extends, that of superstition becomes more and more limited. But "superstition" is only a relative term. What we call superstition to-day was actual belief — based on reasoning as much as our own beliefs — in the days of our forefathers.

The psychological process by which people arrived at these so-called superstitions is much the same everywhere. Our investigation has proved that all the features of witchcraft folk-lore which we find in other parts of the world recur again in ancient India. This is one more proof of what all ethnological and ethno-psychological studies tend to teach, — that mankind is the same all over the globe and that one law rules the human mind, just as, despite all differences of colour and skulls, the human body shows the same characteristics, and is subject to the same trials and dangers in all parts of the world. I began by saying that we may find the beginnings of religion and rudiments of science in the crude notions of primitive people about man and Nature; I conclude by saying that the religious beliefs and superstitious customs of primitive people are, after all, the foundation on which our own morality, our laws and social institutions are based. In fact, there is no safer foundation, no grander hope for the future development of morality and the higher civilization which is to come, than the knowledge and the consciousness of the unity of mankind — the precious lesson taught by anthropology and ethnology.

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