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MAN IN INDIA.

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I. TOTEMISM AMONG THE GONDS.

BY

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Section I.—*Introduction.*

Totemism in its pure¹ and primitive form no longer exists among the Gonds. As an organized system it disappeared in the distant past, leaving a few traces of its existence here and there. To the Gonds in general, totems are now nothing but clan-names. Some of the clans have adopted either eponymous, territorial or titular names giving up their original totemic ones. The majority of the totemic clans are ignorant of totem taboos, and of the rest very few observe them with as scrupulous care as they are observed by other tribes retaining totemism in its more or less primitive form. Totemism among the Gonds has decayed to such an extent that many of them do not realise the significance of their totems. In its social aspect, however, Totemism still predominates among them, and their social system based on exogamous totemism still survives.

¹ Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy* Vol. IV., P. 9. "The totemic system of tribes which do not practise exogamy may be called *pure totemism* and the totemic system of tribes which practise exogamy may be called *exogamous totemism*".

We find two kinds of totems recognised by them.

They are:—(i) the clan totem, and

Kinds of totems. (ii) the phratric or class totem.

The clan totem is common to the whole clan and passes by inheritance from generation to generation and binds the whole clan into a kind of blood relationship. The phratric totem is common to all the clans included in a particular phratry or class and is an object of reverence and adoration to the members of those clans.

The Gond tribe is divided into various sub-tribes which are more or less endogamous in nature. These tribes and sub-tribes in their turn are divided into exogamous phratries or classes distinguished by the number of gods each worships. Each such exogamous phratry or class comprises within itself a certain number of clans which cannot intermarry amongst themselves. The clans included in the same exogamous phratry form a kind of brotherhood known among them as 'Bhaiband'.

Section II.—*Clan Totems.*

In many cases, the clan totem is now practically nothing but a clan name. It determines the relations of the clansmen to each other and to men of other clans. Members of the clan believe themselves to be of one blood, descended of a common ancestor and consequently bound together by certain social ties and institutions. But as for those who retain their faith in¹⁸⁷ their totem, the clan-totem is not merely a clan-name. They reverence it and regard

it as one of their kinsfolk. There are still some among these people who mourn for the death of their totem.

The fauna and flora of the habitat of the Gonds supply the bulk of their totems. But with the advance in civilization—acquisition of the knowledge of agriculture, the use of metals, *etc.*—some subsequent additions were made to the original totems. The existing Gond clan-totems may be classified as follows;—

(The list is not exhaustive.)

I. Beast Totems.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. { 'Bagh' (Tiger) | 7. 'Gadha' (Ass) |
| { 'Pulli' (") | |
| { 'Sodi' (") | |
| 2. 'Netam' (Dog) | 8. 'Paiya' (Heifer) |
| 3. { 'Ghoda' (Horse) | 9. 'Poia' (Cow) |
| { 'Taram' (") | |
| 4. { 'Jagaha' (Buffalo) | 10. { 'Bakra' (Goat) |
| { 'Bhaiisa' (") | { 'Eti' (") |
| 5. 'Sui' (Porcupine) | 11. 'Koda' (Colt) |
| 6. { 'Barora' (Wild cat) | 12. 'Kunjam' (She-rat) |
| { 'Wadkada' (") | |

II. Birds Totems.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. 'Hansa' (Geese) | 5. Chincham (a kind of Hawk) |
| 2. 'Kawre' (Crow) | 6. 'Mal' (Peacock) |
| 3. 'Baisia' (a kind of Hawk) | 7. 'Saras' (a kind of Crane) |
| 4. 'Besra' (" ") | |

III. Fish and other Aquatic Totems.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. 'Marpachi' | } (Tortoise) | 3. 'Kana' (a kind of fish) |
| 'Kachhua' | | 4. 'Bod' (Big river fish) |
| 'Kashyap' | | 5. 'Gaek' (a kind of fish) |
| 2. 'Magra' | } (Crocodile) | 6. 'Honti' (a kind of fish) |
| 'Magral' | | |

IV. Reptile Totems.

- | | | | |
|------------|------------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. 'Urrum' | (iguana) | 3. 'Marai' | } (Cobra) |
| | | 'Nag' | |
| 2. 'Goha' | } (Large Lizard) | | |
| 'Jagat' | | | |

V. Vegetable Totems.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. 'Tekam' (Teak tree) | 9. 'Kumra' (Kumbhi tree) |
| 2. 'Markam' (Mango tree) | 10. 'Admachi' (the Dhaura tree) |
| 3. 'Irpachi' (Mahua tree) | 11. 'Ghopi' (wild Jamun) |
| 4. 'Siras' (a kind of tree) | 12. 'Palas' (Butea frondosa) |
| 5. 'Sindram' } (Palm tree) | 13. 'Purkam' (Pumpkin) |
| 'Sindi' } | |
| 6. 'Karma' (a kind of tree) | 14. 'Tumdam' (Bottle gourd) |
| 7. 'Tumri' (Tendu tree) | 15. 'Bad' (Banyan tree) |
| 8. 'Kosa' (from Kosa = }
Silk cocoon) } | 16. 'Nabalia' (Dwarf date-
palm) } |

VI. Other Totems.

Natural objects.

Artificial objects.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. 'Loha' (iron) | 1. 'Marskola' (axe) |
| 2. 'Moti' (pearl) | 2. 'Portai' (basket) |
| 3. 'Watka' (stone) | 3. 'Arka' (earthen pot) |
| 4. 'Lon' (salt) | 4. 'Gaj' (arrow) |
| 5. 'Tirgam' (fire) | 5. 'Sarati' (whip) |
| 6. 'Ganga' (sea) | |

VII. Cross Totems.

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Kohka-path. | 5. Ivna-Jaghya. |
| 2. Eti-Madavi. | 6. Ivna-Inde. |
| 3. Padi-Madavi. | 7. Markam-Suri. |
| 4. Eti-Kumra. | 8. Markam-Kusru. |

VIII. Split Totems and Cross split Totems.

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. 'Mandni' (female organ
of generation)} | 4. 'Pathmukh' (Head of a
kid)} |
| 2. 'Panja' (paw of an
animal)} | 5. 'Sarsun' (Blade of corn) |
| 3. 'Puroti' or 'Pudoli' (Bowels) | |

The Gonds recount a few legends as to the origin of their totems. Some of them reveal their belief in the descent of a man from his totem.

Myth explanatory of totems. A few of them are given below.

The legend² regarding the origin of the Gond tribe, current among the Gonds of the Betul district, states that the human ancestress Sukhmadevi, from whom the Gond tribe is descended was born along with her brother. In the midst of the water in the ocean, it is said, there lived the Singmali birds, male and female. They laid two eggs which were brooded upon for nine months and nine days and then were a boy and a girl born. The girl was Sukhmadevi-Velar from whom the Gonds descended and the boy, her brother, was Adi-Ravan-Parial who was commanded by the Great God through his companion angel to lead the Gonds to His worship.

² C. Trench, *Grammar of Gondi*, Vol. II PP 1 sq.

Adi-Ravan-Parial, as commanded by the Great God, assembled the Gonds of whom some were wandering in the forest and some had settled in the jungle. He started with all these Gonds for the seat of the Great God. They came across the river which in the meantime rose in flood as a result of which all of them were detained. But being anxious to reach the other side of the river, they plunged into it in haste, and one caught hold of a *Tenḍu* log (*tumḍi maḍa*), another a *Sirras* (*Sirras maḍa*), another a mango (*Marka Maḍa*), another a palm tree (*Sindi-Maḍa*), another a teak tree (*Teka Maḍa*), another a tiger (*Pulli*);— and thus each seizing something or other, they all forded the river.

Having come across the river safely, they assembled underneath a *Saj* tree (*Mard Maḍa*) and ate the new rice. They then began to enquire of one another what each of them had caught hold of when they crossed the river. (*Immat bārāṅ-bārāṅ baisi wārti?*—‘What did you catch hold of when you crossed’?) On knowing from each of them what

they caught hold of, Adi-Ravan-Parial declared the animal or tree they respectively caught hold of while crossing the river to be their respective totems (*Paḍis*). A delicate and super-polite way of asking a man his *paḍi* (totem) prevalent among the Gonds of the Betul District, is to say ‘*Immā bārāṅ baisikun dhodā wārsi?*’ i. e. ‘What did you catch hold of when you crossed the river?’ The reply will be the name of his *paḍi* (clan totem).

The Gonds of the Jashpur State, who are immigrants from the Phuljhar Zamindari of the

Raipur district, narrate a similar tradition to explain the origin of their totems. They say that when they were migrating from Phuljhar into the Jashpur State, they found the river Gaṇḍaki in flood. Each group selected a different animal to take it across the river and these were adopted as the totems of their *gotras*³ (clans).

In this legend of the birth of the Gonds is crystalised the Gond totemic belief that their tribal ancestors descended from the birds. It is also indicative of the belief that their respective totem animal or plant helped or protected the human ancestor of each clan or had been otherwise of some service to him.

There is another legend⁴ which tells us of the birth of the totem animal from

**Totem animal
born of human
ancestress.**

the human ancestress. According to the legend of Bageshwar current among certain Gond clans in the Chhattisgarh and Chhoṭā Nāgpur country there lived a family of five brothers named Kusru, Suri Markam, Netia and Sarsum. To the wife of the eldest was born a tiger cub. As it grew up, the young tiger made itself very useful in keeping off predatory animals from its father's crops, which resulted in the greatest affection between the father and the cub, his child. The tiger after serving his father for some years died and Kusru was much grieved at heart. After some years, in the marriage ceremony of Kusru's daughter, one of the company was possessed of the spirit which was recognised to be that of the lost tiger-son of Kusru. The

³ C. P. Census Report 1931. P. 408.

⁴ J. A. S. Bengal, 1872, Part I PP 115—20.