

EXORCISM OF SPIRIT IN INDIA ¹

AND

EXORCISM OF PHYSICAL IMPURITY IN PERSIA.

A PARALLEL WITH RESPECT TO THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE
BODY TREATED IN THE EXORCISM.

I.

Introduction.—This brief paper is suggested by an interesting paper entitled "Exorcism in Chota Nagpur" by Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy in the March 1923 number of the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society. Our author says: "Nothing gives a clear view of the conception of a spirit formed by the man of lower culture than the various processes followed and spells or *mantrams* used by him in exorcising spells in cases of supposed spirit-possession." He then describes "the method of exorcism followed and the mantrams used by the Chota Nagpur spirit-doctor known as a *deonra*, *sokha* or *mali*. In his description, Mr. Sarat Chandra Roy gives a few specimens of songs of invocation to local and other deities recited during the course of Exorcism, which songs seem to serve the purpose of a *mantra*. In one of the songs of the *mantra*, various parts of the body from head downwards upto the toe of the foot are mentioned in succession, in the order of which the spirit, possessed by the patient passes from the head down to the ground. The object of this brief paper is to describe, on the authority of the Avesta, a part of the process of removing or exorcising the Daruj-i Nasush, *i.e.* the Demon of Impurity from a person infected by coming into contact with a dead body, wherein

¹ This paper was read before the Anthropological Section of the eleventh Indian Science Congress held at Bangalore in January 1924. (Jour. Anthropol. Soc. of Bombay, Vol XIII. No. 5. pp. 403-9)

the various parts of the body are similarly spoken of, as those down which the Nasu passes from the head downward.

II.

Among the successive processes of exorcism referred to by Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Roy, it is the sixth process with which we have to deal to draw our parallel. It is spoken of as "Rasni Utârnâ." In this Hindi phrase, the word *rasni* is said to mean "Exhilaration." It seems to correspond, to a certain extent, to Sanskrit रसः (*rasa*) meaning, 'emotion, sentiment', to Gujarati rac, (રસ), meaning "a passion or sentiment, an affection or emotion of the mind."¹ The word *utârnâ* is Gujarati *utârvûn* (ઉતારવું) to bring down. The Gujarati word ઉતાર (*utâr*) means "exorcism." It is generally used for "a medicine that counterworks another, a charm to overcome."²

Our author gives a song which is sung in chorus by the spirit doctor and his disciples to force the spirit of the body of the patient, generally a woman, and thus sums up its contents : "Thus is the spirit conducted from the hair of the patient to the head, from the head to the forehead, from the forehead to the eyes, from the eyes to the nose, from the nose to the mouth, from the mouth to the teeth, from the teeth to the tongue, from the tongue to the lips, from the lips to the neck, from the neck to the shoulders, from the shoulders to the chest, from the chest to the waist, from the waist to the thigh, from the thigh to the leg, from the leg to the ankles, from the ankles to the heels, from the heels to the soles of the feet, from the soles to the toes, and finally from the toes through the toenails into the earth. Similarly, as if to make sure that no portion of the spirit substance may be left behind in any part of the body, the same process is repeated in another direction, namely, from the head and face to the neck and shoulders,

¹ Mr. Shapurji Edalji's Gujarati and English Dictionary (1863).

² *ibid.*

from the shoulders to the armpits, from the armpits along the elbows and wrist down to the palms of the hand and thence out through the nails into the earth below. Thus is the spirit sent down into the earth underneath which is its proper habitation."

The above-described order, in which the spirit-doctor of Chota Nagpur conducts the spirit, that had entered into the body of the patient, from one part of the body to another, runs as follows :—

1. Hair of the head (kesha).
2. Head (munḍa).
3. Forehead (kapâl).
4. Eyes (ankhi).
5. Nose (nâka).
6. Mouth (muha).
7. Teeth (danta).
8. Tongue (jihâ).
9. Lips (lâtoa).
10. Neck (ghetu).
11. Shoulders (gheehâ).
12. Chest (chhâti).
13. Waist (dândâ).
14. Thigh (jangâ).
15. Leg (theonâ).
16. Ankles (ghâtu).
17. Heels (neri).
18. Souls of the feet (târôâ Guj. तैय).
19. Toes (angri).
20. Toe-nails (nao), and thence down into the earth (dharti).

21. Armpits¹.
22. Elbows.
23. Wrist.
24. Palms of the hand.
25. Nails, and thence to the earth below.

III.

Now, we come to the old Iranian process of the exorcism or removal of the Druj-i Nasush from a person. The Druj-i Nasush of the Avesta of the Iranians is "the evil influence of Decomposition or Destruction (of a dead body). It is considered that to touch the (dead) body then is dangerous for the living, lest they should catch contagion and spread disease.....If somebody.....touches the (dead) body, he has to go through a process of purification or a sacred bath taken under the direction of a priest."² Now, if the flesh of the body of the dead person has been eaten off by a flesh-devouring bird or animal, then there is less chance of any infection from the flesh-less corpse. So, the purification requires no special treatment. It is simple. The person may purify his body with cow's urine and water (*gêush maêsmana apâcha*). But, if the flesh of the body is not eaten off by birds or animals, then it would decompose and likely to spread some disease. So, the person coming into contact with such a dead body has run the risk of contamination and of being in a position to spread that contamination among others. So, he has to pass through a higher kind of purification, a purification with some necessary religious ritual. The purifier is spoken of as *yaozdâthrya*. He is to ask the person to sit in a less frequented place and give him a bath there. He is to pour water for purification on the head of the contaminated

¹ As Mr. Sarat Chandra Roy has not given the text of the song referring to arms &c., I am not in a position to give the hindi equivalents.

² Vide my "Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees" p.45.

person and the water is represented as passing down from the head in a particular way purifying his body in the process. The order of process is as follows : (Vendidad, VIII, 41-72).

1. Vaghdhana	Head.
2. Antarât naemât brvat-byâm ¹	The portion between the two eyebrows, i. e., the forehead.
3. Pascha hê vaghdhanem	Behind the forehead.
4. Paitish-kharéna	Cheeks or the face.
5. Dashinem gaosha	Right ear.
6. Hôim gaosha	Left ear.
7. Dashinem suptîm ²	Right shoulder.
8. Hôyâm suptîm	Left shoulder.
9. Dashinem kashem ³	Right armpit
10. Hôim kashem	Left armpit.
11. Paiti-varem ⁴	Upper breast or chest.
12. Parshti ⁵	Back.
13. Dashina-fshtâna	Right breast or nipple.
14. Hôim-fshtâna ⁶	Left breast.
15. Dashinem peresâum	Right rib.
16. Hôim peresâum ⁷	Left rib.
17. Dashina sraonîm ⁸	Right buttock.
18. Hôyâm sraonîm	Left buttock.

1 Brvat, Sans. bhru, Pers. abru, Eng. Brow, Lat. frons, Fr. front.

2 Supti, Sans. shupti, Pers. suft, Eng. Shoulder.

3 Kash, Sans. कष, Pers. کش, Guj. કષ

4 Vara, Sans. उरस, Per. بر

5 Parshti, Sans, पृष्ट, Pers. پشت, Guj. પૃષ્ઠ

6 Fshtana, Sans. स्तन, Guj. થાન, Pers. پستان

7 Peresu, Sans. पद्व, Pers. پهلو

8 Sraoni, Sans. श्राणि, Pers. سرین, Lat. Clunis.

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| 19. Hakhti ¹ | Abdomen. |
| 20. Dashinem râna | Right thigh. |
| 21. Hôim râna | Left thigh. |
| 22. Dashinem znûm ² | Right knee. |
| 23. Hôim znûm | Left knee. |
| 24. Dashinem aschûm | Right calf of the leg. |
| 25. Hôim aschûm | Left calf of the leg. |
| 26. Dashinem zangem ³ | Right ankle. |
| 27. Hôim zangem | Left ankle. |
| 28. Dashinem frabdem ⁴ | Right instep. |
| 29. Hôim frabdem | Left instep. |
| 30. Dashinem hakhem | (Below) the sole of the right foot [The Nasush or the impurity of the dead matter is represented as hiding (nivôiryêiti) itself in the form of the wing of a fly (makhshyâo parênem) under the sole of the feet]. |
| 31. Hôim hakhem | The sole of the left foot. |
| 32. Dashina angushta | Toe of the right foot. |
| 33. Hôyâ angushta | Toe of the left foot. |

Then, we read, that in the end, when washed away with water from its last resort, the sole of the feet, the impurity runs away to the northern regions (apâkhedhraêibyô naêmaêibyô)

¹ Hakhti, Sans. साक्षि. Darmesteter translates this word as "sexual parts." From the fact, that a different kind of washing, for men and women, is enjoined, this meaning seems to have been meant.

² Znu, Sans. जानु, Pers. زانو, Lat. Genu; Fr. genou. Ger. knie, English knee.

³ Zanga, Sans. जङ्घा ankle-bone, bone of the leg.

⁴ Frabda (fra-pâdha), Sans. प्रपद्, the instep of the foot.

the North being the seat of all impurities and evil things. We see that most of the parts of the body in both the above lists are common. The Vendidad purifier, the *yaozdathrya*, leaves aside the arms and makes the physical impurity pass, as it were, in one line down below. But the Indian spirit-doctor attends to these side-portions also. Again, in the Vendidad the right and the left parts of the body are mostly treated separately. The Vendidad lets the impurity pass to the North which was according to the Iranians the seat of all evils. The Chota Nagpuris let the spirit pass in the end to the Earth "which is its (spirit's) proper habitation." Just as after the *rasni*, the Indian patient comes to "her normal state of *mind*," after the purification of the Bareshnûm,—so called from the fact of the purification beginning from the head (bareshnu)—the Iranian patient comes to his normal state of health. In India, the process was accompanied by the singing of a song. In ancient Persia, the process was followed by the recital of the mâtira (S. mantra) of Yathâ &c. (Vend. VIII, 72).