

methods employed, but very similar to those of modern Aymara.

The cure was practiced on the royal family or some person became seriously ill. The curer purified a small room by sprinkling black maize and walls and burning, repeating the ceremony four times. The sick person was put to sleep, apparatus and the curers cut metal knives and took other foreign bodies. The objects removed were burned. The curers used clothing, gold and similar gifts.

Probably still being in the neighborhood of Cuzco at present, but it is not mentioned in the chronicles. Two series of trepanations are known in the Cuzco region: one, from the collection of S. A. Quevedo of Late Inca date; the other, from the collection of the trepanned skull at Yucay, is probably of the trepanned skull in the Cuzco Museum at Cuzco of Late Inca date. The collection of skulls with trepanations in the oval row of slightly raised holes, each hole about 1/2 inch in diameter. Another series of trepanations, showing two pairs of holes crossing the other, probably in a drunken state, was performed. Trepanations are numerous in the skulls show very large holes. The successive operations were successful.

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magic were hated. They practiced in which of his neighbors spells against him usually poison

neighbors, their neighbor's fears were sometimes well grounded. Murder by magic or poison was one of the most heinous crimes under Inca law, and conviction meant death for the sorcerer and all his family. Sorcerers were called *kawchu* in Inca; in modern times, the Aymara word *layqa* is more generally used.

Sorcerers used the principles of sympathetic and contagious magic, and worked with human exuviae (teeth, hair, nails, etc.), shells, animal figurines and amulets, toads, animal heads, small dried animals, large hairy spiders kept in closed jars, roots, herbs, and ointments. A sorcerer who wished to bring sickness or death to an enemy might make an image of him, dress it in his clothes, hang it up, and spit on it, or he might burn a figurine of clay or wax representing the enemy, or otherwise mistreat it. Another method was to take a toad, sew up its eyes and mouth with thorns, tie its feet, and bury it in a place where the enemy would be likely to sit

down. Suffering of the toad was supposed to pass into the enemy.

Another method was to spin a thread of black and white wool, twisting it to the left (the reverse of the customary direction), and then place a noose of it on a path where the enemy might pass so that it would catch his foot. A sorcerer could spoil a man's harvest by burning a bundle of maize ears, fat, thorns, and some of the enemy's hair in his field with the proper ceremonies. The power of the "devil" was so real to the Spanish writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this sort of black magic was so similar to that practiced in their own country towns, that they were as reluctant to write about it as the Incas were to explain it.

Some sorcerers furnished love charms for a price. The charms, of many different kinds, were made of feathers, thorns, stones, or herbs, and had to be secreted in the garments or bed of the person whose affections were desired.

SPIRIT POSSESSION IN A RURAL AREA OF NORTHERN INDIA *

Morris E. Opler

Hinduism is often described mainly in terms of the philosophical concepts that have grown out of the interpretation of the Vedas and other important sacred texts. It then presents an impression of a very abstract and intellectualized religious system. On the level of action and participation it is usually defined in terms of adherence to the cults of such important deities as Vishnu and Siva, and worship at temples and shrines dedicated to them. There may also be references to important calendrical rites, such as Diwali and Holi, and to major life-cycle ceremonies such as the sacred thread ritual, marriage, and the death ceremonies.

Yet, without denying the place and significance of all this, it should be pointed out that a great deal, perhaps most, of the religious activity of the ordinary Hindu, and especially of the Indian village, is concerned with the propitiation and control of protective godlings, of deities that control disease, and of malignant ghosts that haunt the localities where they have died or the individuals and

* This article was written especially for this volume and has never before been published.

families that have made difficulties for them in life. This article attempts to introduce and describe this less well-known but very prevalent aspect of popular Hinduism, and to relate it to the typical anxieties of certain groups and to the most common stresses and psychological needs of society.

The material on which this article is based was gathered from 1947 to 1957 in a rural area of eastern Uttar Pradesh by a Cornell University research team directed by the author.

It is widely believed in India, especially among the rural folk and the less educated, that misfortune and epidemic or persistent sickness are in actuality punishment and persecution visited upon the locality, the family, or the individual by a displeased god or goddess or a malevolent ghost. Consequently, in order to right matters, it is necessary to determine what deity or ghost is involved, why the supernatural attack has been launched, and what is required to pacify the deity or banish the ghost. Often the identity of the troublesome supernatural power can be established rather readily. A specific goddess is identified with smallpox, and if an epidemic of smallpox rages it is quite certain that the smallpox goddess is displeased and has grievances or unfulfilled demands. It is, however, less easy to learn the cause of the goddess' ire and what must be done to hasten her departure. Often, too, it is rather easy to guess that a certain malevolent ghost is at the root of a personal misfortune, for the difficulty may have arisen soon after a weird or unpleasant experience at a place where some person met a violent and untimely death and where his restless spirit is reputed to hover. But why the shade should pick the particular victim and what must be done to force it to release its baneful hold is, again, much harder to settle.

Obviously the surest guide to all these questions, and especially to the more subtle ones, will be the words of the deity or ghost itself. And pronouncements from these sources are precisely what are sought. In order to obtain the explanations and directions of the supernaturals involved, a state of trance and possession develops or is induced in which the deities enter and speak

through their devotees or those they have possessed, or during which the malevolent spirit speaks through the victim it has "caught" and from whose body it must be ousted. In instances where a malevolent ghost has entered the body of the sufferer and speaks through him, the shaman or religious practitioner acts to hasten the trance state, questions the possessing spirit and argues with it, pits his tutelary gods against the invading spirit, and either persuades it to leave or sets a trap for it which will force departure, capture, or transfer.

It is not the intention here to describe the phenomenon of possession in detail and at length. For the purposes of this article it is not necessary to dwell upon the recruitment of devotees and shamans or to discuss their procedures. The emphasis will be, rather, on the areas of anxiety that are suggested by the nature of the illnesses and misfortunes and by the identity of the spirits or individuals who are held responsible for the onslaught. For it must be remembered that in these cases of possession it is the victim through whom the invading or troublesome spirit speaks. Consequently the victim has an unusual opportunity to identify anyone whom he believes has sent the ghost to persecute him, and to air any opinion he has concerning why this was done. Such cases, considered in their general social and psychological setting, may point to the conditions that stimulate possession and to the functions that spirit possession serve, at least in the region from which the data come.

The widow of a man who had recently been beaten to death as a result of a political and intercaste feud suddenly began to curse and snap at those around her, shouting that she would bite and eat them. Her

diatribes were directed particularly at a woman of her own caste with whom she had quarreled and at members of another, higher caste who had been involved in the assault on her husband. Normally she would have been expected to show respect and deference to members of the latter caste. The woman, who was now recognized as being possessed, started to run away, but was caught and held down. A shaman who was working in a nearby field was summoned and began to carry out his ritual for her. When he demanded to know who the spirit possessing the woman was, the spirit, using the voice of the woman, identified itself as a *churain* or malevolent female ghost. It was the usual voice of the woman that was heard, except that the words were uttered somewhat more slowly and deliberately. After further ministrations of the shaman the ghost announced: "I am going; I am going." The shaman acidly expressed his disbelief that the ghost was really departing and demanded that the ghost lick its own spittle as an earnest of its intention. At this the woman spat in her hand and licked up the saliva. The ghost then announced: "I am leaving." The woman now seemed to recover and spoke in a normal and calm manner to those around her. She professed to have no recollection of what happened during the period of active possession. This woman, who is short-tempered and moody at best, had more than enough cause for smoldering anger. It is possible to interpret this attack as a case of hysteria associated with attempts to master an overwhelming urge toward overt aggression, something unseemly in a woman and socially unacceptable when directed toward those of higher status, but understandable and forgivable as the activity of a malevolent and reckless ghost.

A villager met a violent death and therefore it was expected that he would become a vengeful ghost. Another villager who had quarreled with the dead man about the ownership of a piece of land was visited one night by the ghost of the deceased, which demanded that he surrender the

land. This he refused to do. Soon after, he became ill and it was only a few weeks before he, too, was dead. It was accepted that the ghost had entered his body and laid him low. That this man had a guilty conscience in regard to the land transaction is very clear, and it is also certain that the circumstances of his rival's death aggravated this feeling. To what extent the fear and despondency arising from this contributed to his sickness and death is not known, for he had no adequate medical examination and treatment. But whatever the origin of his sickness, the despair and the terror induced by the attentions of his rival's ghost did him no good.

A young man of untouchable caste, a Hindu, left the village and found employment in a mill in a city. He was told that a path he took from his place of residence to the mill was infested with ghosts of Muslims, but he laughed at such tales and continued to take this route. Then he had a severe and persistent case of boils and had to leave his job and return to the village. In the village he became violent and abusive and was constantly in trouble. He would speak out against the high-caste landlords and tell them he was a Muslim spirit and couldn't be harmed by them. He narrowly escaped a beating at the hands of these indignant prominent villagers. It was apparent to his kinfolk that he was in the clutches of a ghost, and a shaman was brought to treat him. At first the spirit or spirits which had entered him would not reply to the shaman's questions, though they caused his body to move convulsively and with great violence. It turned out that there were four Muslim spirits within him, who identified themselves and made their wishes known after three days of ceremony. When the ceremony had been concluded and the offerings for which the spirits asked had been given, the patient began to recover.

Villagers who go to urban industrial establishments to work ordinarily live in cramped, unhygienic quarters and have a very inadequate diet. Often, as in this case, they fall sick and have to return to their

homes. But often, too, the greater social freedom and anonymity enjoyed in the city make it more difficult for them upon their return to accept the more rigid caste and status restrictions of the rural environment. In this case the young man apparently scoffed at the tales of evil spirits of Muslims (in the city to which he went there was a large Muslim population and considerable tension between Hindus and Muslims) until he himself became sick. Then he became thoroughly frightened and was convinced that evil influences were working against him. Possession allowed him to objectify these causes of fear and make them available for treatment. Possession and the attribution of what he said and did to the invading Muslim spirits also allowed him to vent his feelings with a minimum of danger on the proud high-caste group for whom his own caste have been traditional servants.

A woman who was sure she was being persecuted by a ghost was told by a shaman whom she consulted that her tormentor was the spirit of her husband's first wife. The first wife had been attacked by ghosts while in Calcutta and had come back to the village to die. Having been killed by ghosts, she herself became one and now made difficulties for her successor. There are two interesting facets to this situation. It will be noted that the first wife was attacked by ghosts and sickened when she joined her husband who was working in a city far from their home. Villagers, and especially village women, are often lonely and unhappy in such circumstances and live under conditions that invite sickness. Such an illness, contracted in a strange place and in frightening circumstances, is then frequently attributed to ghosts unless another origin is very obvious or the malady yields readily to ordinary treatment. The other matter which deserves attention is that the dead woman caused difficulty for the second wife of the man to whom she had been married. A woman who marries a widower is expected to honor and worship the deceased wife. Any laxity or reluctance in this, or anything that gives cause for belief

that the dead woman has become a ghost, is likely to result in psychological uneasiness.

A young man attributed violent attacks from which he suffered and during which he spoke abusively to those around him and sought to strike them, to the activities of a number of ghosts of Muslims who had "caught" him when he was working in an industrial center some distance away from the village. It took several people to hold him down when he had such seizures and not even close relatives, such as his mother and sister, were immune from his invective. The attacks had continued for about a year when he gave his account, and he had suffered an attack about twenty days before he was interviewed. Shamans had identified three of the ghosts while he was possessed; but a fourth one had not yet spoken through him, and this elusive and resistant spirit presumably was the cause of his continued trouble. This case presents some familiar features. The affliction begins when the youth is employed in the city. Muslim ghosts cause him to be rancorous toward his Hindu relatives and neighbors. He is abusive toward persons to whom he normally shows respect. It might be mentioned that these events occurred during a period when there was quite a bit of tension between India and Pakistan and between Hindus and Muslims in India. The young man was undoubtedly impressed by the difference in the attitudes toward such matters in the village, which is almost entirely Hindu and in which the Muslims are submissive and unimportant, and the city, where the Muslims were a sizable group and where strained relations existed for a time. Some unconscious scapegoating on the part of this young man, in which Muslim ghosts conveniently serve to mask his own aggressions and inadequacies, can be inferred.

Eight of ten children born to a village woman died in infancy. Finally a shaman was called. He traced the cause of the deaths to a ghost and named a family which he said had sent the unfriendly spirit. Since the sufferer was of the same caste as those

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who had sent the ghost, a caste assembly was called. The evidence concerning the ghost and its provenience was reviewed, and the accused family was ordered to take back its ghost. This they agreed to do. In this instance the early death of so many children gave rise to the suspicion that ghosts and some kind of sustained attack were involved. One of the most common fears among women is that ghosts will impair their childbearing capacities or destroy their infants, and a good many precautions are taken to prevent such occurrences. Also, it is generally believed that ghosts are seldom destroyed or reformed; they are most often merely transferred. Usually a shaman can persuade a ghost to leave its host only if he provides or promises to provide another "vehicle." Often the transferral is accomplished without malice. The ghost is secured by the shaman in some ritual objects which are then buried at a crossroad. The first vulnerable person who passes this place becomes the new host for the spirit. Or the ghost may be imprisoned by the shaman in a clove or a flower which he touches to the garment of almost any person at some large gathering. In such a case he may not even know the person to whom the ghost is being transferred. But whether the ghost is specifically intended for them or not, the family to which it becomes transferred will be indignant and will be aggressive in their demands that the ghost be recalled by its former owners.

An epidemic of smallpox was raging in a hamlet of the village. Two outsiders were invited to the hamlet to use ritual means to arrest the sickness. During their stay they were being provided for and paid by contributions from the inhabitants of the hamlet. One of these visitors was a devotee of the smallpox goddess, a person who had directed so much ritual attention and propitiation to the goddess that he had a special relation to her, received messages from her, and was believed to have influence over her. The second person was a gardener and flower seller, a member of a caste which traditionally is involved in the curing of smallpox. One family head re-

fused to contribute to the cause, on the grounds that the sickness was continuing unabated and the visitors were accomplishing no good. Then thirteen members of this man's extended family caught the disease. The villager still refused to contribute, for he suspected that it was the devotee, angered by his attitude, who had sent the smallpox goddess (the disease) to his house. Instead he himself made ritual offerings to the goddess, who is the personification of the disease. Early one morning, when he was carrying out a fire ritual or sacrifice to the goddess, his youngest son, who was one of those ill with smallpox, spoke to him disrespectfully, an evidence that the boy was possessed and that in reality it was the smallpox goddess who was speaking. The goddess continued to speak to him through his son. She praised him for his ceremonial offerings, advised him about future offerings to her, and informed him that she would respond if he would carry out such ceremonies whenever smallpox or cholera spread. Following this all of his family members recovered and this man himself became a devotee of the smallpox goddess. It is interesting that the onset of possession and the appearance of the goddess was signaled in this case by the breakdown of inhibition and social convention, by the disrespect shown by the son for his father. The deities so often display attitudes forbidden by convention to man!

In May, 1953, during a cholera epidemic, this new devotee played a prominent part in attempting to pacify the sickness goddess. He and others arranged and purified an outdoor site for a ceremony and kindled a fire of mango leaves there. While a drum was beaten and the names of various gods and goddesses were uttered, he and another man ladled clarified butter into the fire. One of the group of men present lit a stick of incense in the fire and stared at it fixedly as prayer and the mention of the names of the deities continued. Finally he leaped up, jumped forward and backward, extended his arms and then fell to the ground. When he arose his forearms and

hands were shaking violently. It was evident that he was possessed by a spirit. In a restrained and respectful voice the devotee asked him who he was. He answered that he was Sitala, one of the personified aspects of the disease goddess, in fact the aspect usually associated with smallpox. The devotee drew out the information that the goddess was visiting the village in the terrible guise of disease because she was dissatisfied with the offerings made to her. She wanted certain songs to be sung in her honor and a band provided for the music. Hastily women were summoned to sing the required songs. At that the possessed man recovered, stopped shaking, and sat down and looked into the fire. During the singing of the songs still another man became possessed, leaped into the air, and fell writhing to the ground. Soon he rose to his knees, shook his hands back and forth, and invited the devotee to ask him who he was. It was learned that he was possessed by a different aspect of the disease goddess who demanded still more singing and a brighter ceremonial fire. At this the women sang with increased vigor. The fire was fed again and the possessed person stopped shaking and resumed his place. No sooner was he relaxed than the man who had first been possessed showed evidence of agitation. The devotee requested that he identify himself and the disease goddess spoke through him, issuing some general and vague warnings. She said that the people were overproud of their hamlet and of its increase in size and had become too self-satisfied. When asked what specific things they should do to regain her favor, she would say no more than that they should be careful and should remember that she lives everywhere and goes anywhere she likes. She admitted that she was pleased with the ceremony but warned them again to be careful unless they wished to be obliged to spend a great deal of money in corrective ceremonies. Now drumming and singing were resumed and a procession which circled the hamlet counterclockwise was begun. During the march ritual objects were left at the four cardinal directions, beginning with the north. The dev-

otee was one of the leaders of the procession and a director of the ritual acts which punctuate it. Two days later a very similar rite of possession and divination was held in another hamlet of the village.

About ten days after these appearances of the disease goddess in public rituals, she possessed and spoke through the body of a woman of the grain-parcher caste. The hands of the woman began moving back and forth, her face became expressionless, she fell to the ground and rolled back and forth rhythmically as her hair fell around her in disorder. Frequently she would scream in a high-pitched voice and announce that she was the disease goddess. Her husband and a caste-fellow sought to induce the goddess to leave her body by offering a sacrificial fire and repeating prayers. The unhappy husband, who was not at all pleased with the visit of the goddess to his home, kept repeating, "You are not the disease goddess, you are my wife." A brahman priest had been sent for, and his first act upon arrival was to offer still another fire sacrifice to the goddess. The possessed woman tried several times to brush glowing coals from the fire into the folds of her garment, and her husband was kept busy brushing them away and restraining her. The ability to handle fire and hot objects is often considered a sign of the presence of a deity or of a grant of supernatural power. A group of men and women had gathered by this time, and some of them began to ask the "goddess" questions. One high-caste woman repeatedly inquired about the nature of the sickness of her daughter-in-law. This apparently annoyed the goddess, for the possessed low-caste woman slapped the questioner, something that a woman of her caste could never do with impunity in normal circumstances. Yet in this setting the rebuff was taken calmly. Another woman asked whether her son, who was reported to be sick in Bombay, would recover. The answer was in the affirmative. Whenever the goddess spoke through the possessed woman, those who were present would bow reverently and touch the earth. Finally the brahman's prayers and sacred fire ceremony

leaders of the process of the ritual acts which days later a very similar divination was held of the village.

After these appearances in public rituals, she through the body of a grain-parcher caste. The man began moving back and became expressionless, and rolled back and her hair fell around her head. Frequently she would utter a wretched voice and another woman, the disease goddess, of the same caste-fellow sought to leave her body by repeating prayers and her husband, who was not at the house, visited the goddess to see if she were my wife." A brahmin priest present for, and his first offering to offer still another goddess. The possessed woman came to brush glowing coals into the folds of her sari and her husband was kept busy tending and restraining her. She threw fire and hot objects and the sign of the presence of supernatural power. The women had gathered around and one of them began to utter incantations. One high-caste woman inquired about the name of her daughter-in-law. She invoked the goddess, for the possessed woman slapped the ground and that a woman of her caste with impunity in normal life in this setting the goddess. Another woman, who was reported to be cured, would recover. The goddess is a firmative. Whenever the possessed woman is present would bow to the earth. Finally the sacred fire ceremony

achieved their purpose, for the possessed woman collapsed on the ground and slowly returned to her normal state. It was mentioned by someone present that the possessed woman's father had been a well-known devotee of the disease goddess and that she herself had had a similar experience of possession only a year before.

When a certain woman of the village married, she and her husband took up residence in her parents' home. The usual custom is for the woman to accompany her husband to his father's village and home at marriage. Since the young man was more or less cut off from his patrilineal kin by this move, he made no efforts to worship the family gods of his paternal line regularly. Matters continued like this until the oldest son of this couple was about fifteen years old. This boy then began to act strangely. He would disobey his parents, curse them, and remain away from home for long periods. A diviner was hired who told the parents that the boy was possessed by a displeased goddess who expected homage from members of the father's line. A shaman of a nearby village was next consulted and, during the ritual which he conducted, the goddess spoke through the son and complained of neglect. When the mother pointed out that the father's family worshiped not one but three family deities and that the two others would be angry if this goddess alone were honored, the goddess spoke through the son to say that she would prevent the other godlings from causing difficulty to the family. This greatly relieved the mother, for ceremonies of this kind are expensive, involving as they do the sacrifice of animals and much else. And so the goddess was formally installed as a family deity of this branch of the line. Once every three years the family arranges an impressive ceremony in her honor, during which the son becomes possessed, makes known the will and prophecies of the goddess, and, while still possessed, puts the sacrificial fire out with his bare hands without suffering any burns.

A village boy of about thirteen years of age was staying in Bombay with his father

and father's brothers who were working in the city as grain parchers and venders. The father went back to the village to visit, leaving the boy in the custody of the uncles. Soon after the departure of the father the boy's "brain became hot." He talked wildly and incessantly, saying that all people around him were evil and crazy. He repeatedly ran away. The unhappy uncles took the boy to shamans in Bombay, who told them the boy was possessed by three types of ghosts of deceased Muslims. They were not successful in inducing all three to leave the boy at once and so the boy did not fully recover. He was therefore brought back to the village and to his parents, where other ceremonies conducted by a religious practitioner of another village proved effective.

When the news of the ceremonies to be conducted for this boy spread, a young man with broadly similar but even more acute complaints was brought for treatment at the hands of the same imported religious practitioner. This young man, who was also of the grain-parcher caste, had been living in Bombay too. His father was dead and his mother asked the boy's married sister who lived in the city to make room for him in her household. The young man found employment in a Bombay mill. But the boy and his brother-in-law disliked one another, and the situation was soon very unpleasant. One day the boy began to act strangely. He made obeisance to donkeys on the street. He began to sprinkle the urine of cattle and his own urine on his head and body. He showed symptoms of great fear and declared that a ghost in a nearby tree was trying to devour him. His delusions had a political note, for, though he is a Hindu, he shouted that Pakistan is going to beat India, that Muslims are fine people, and declared that he would shoot Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi, incidentally, had been assassinated six years before. It did not take his brother-in-law long to decide to send him back to his mother. At the ceremony arranged by his mother the shaman cuffed the boy around rather harshly. This was intended as punishment of the

possessing spirits and a means of making them uncomfortable and willing to leave. Such forthright methods are not uncommon in shamanistic practice when possession is certain. The shaman determined that the boy was possessed by two malignant spirits, both of Muslim origin. One, a result of black magic which his brother-in-law had had worked on him, had attacked him while he was at the latrine and this accounted for his unsavory behavior with urine. The other was able to enter his body because he stole and ate sweetmeats which a woman was carrying to a temple. It was because of this spirit that he extolled Pakistan and voiced threats against India's leaders. Once these troublesome spirits were ousted, the youth became quiet and respectful and was able to leave for his home village with his mother and younger brother.

It is to be noted that in both these cases the young men were far from home and unhappy when the evil spirits entered their bodies. Partition of India between Pakistan and India and resulting difficulties and riots between Hindus and Muslims were part of the childhood memories of the youths. Continued tension between the two countries and between Hindus and Muslims in India was a theme of which they heard a great deal in the new urban surroundings. It is little wonder that the ghosts which bothered these Hindus, by a process of projection and scapegoating, took on a Muslim coloring.

In early April, 1954, during a nine-day period especially devoted to the worship and propitiation of the goddess of disease, the house of a shaman, as was usual during this period, was filled with women seeking aid from troublesome spirits who had "caught" or possessed them. The shaman sang a type of song associated with the goddess and beat a monotonous rhythm on his drum until a woman who was seated in the back showed signs of the activity of the ghost within her. He had her come forward to the sacrificial fire and squatted before her. Her hands, palms pressed together, were before her, and her head was shaking back and forth.

The shaman addressed the ghost and demanded to know where it had seized the woman. The ghost, speaking through the voice of the afflicted woman, replied that it had "caught" her when she was returning to her husband's house and village from her father's home. The shaman then asked who had sent the ghost to the woman. The ghost refused to reveal this. Next the shaman wanted to know the caste of the person responsible for the assault. This, too, the ghost refused to reveal. To the question, "How many other ghosts are with you?" the ghost who was conversing with the shaman answered, "Four or five." The shaman then asked the ghost, "Has any other shaman looked at you?" and the ghost replied, "Several, but they didn't make her speak." The shaman next asked bluntly, "Will you leave her?" The response was, "Only if I get another vehicle like her." The shaman then sought to persuade the ghost to leave. He told it that the woman was very poor and hardly a fit vehicle for it. He promised the ghost that at a certain religious fair garlands of flowers, ornaments, coconut, and other offerings would be made to it. He also promised the ghost that at the same time he would provide it with another vehicle; that is, that he would make it possible for the ghost to enter some other victim. During the dialogue, when the ghost was refusing to answer some of the questions, other women sitting around urged that the ghost be induced to become more "active" so that the woman could be more violently possessed and tell everything. The shaman agreed to ask the ghost to become more active. The ghost explained that it could possess her more violently but that, if it did, the patient would die. In the end the shaman took a flower, placed it on the ground, and asked the ghost to descend from the woman's body and enter the blossom. He said that the ghost would have to live with his tutelary godling, the deity spirit of a brahman, until he could transfer him to another person. It should be mentioned that the woman who was treated like most of the other women who came for help, was comparatively young.

addressed the ghost and de- where it had seized the t, speaking through the d woman, replied that it when she was returning house and village from her shaman then asked who to the woman. The ghost this. Next the shaman e caste of the person re- assault. This, too, the eveal. To the question, ghosts are with you?" conversing with the sha- our or five." The sha- e ghost, "Has any other you?" and the ghost re- t they didn't make her an next asked bluntly, er?" The response was, other vehicle like her." ough to persuade the old it that the woman ardly a fit vehicle for it. host that at a certain nds of flowers, orna- other offerings would. Also promised the ghost e he would provide it ; that is, that he would the ghost to enter some g the dialogue, when ng to answer some of women sitting around e induced to become t the woman could be essed and tell every- greeed to ask the ghost e. The ghost explained er more violently but ient would die. In the a flower, placed it on d the ghost to descend dy and enter the bloc e ghost would have to y godling, the deified until he could transfe n. It should be men an who was treated er women who came atively young.

The factor to which particular attention should be called in this case is that the ghost, speaking through the victim, established the onset of the trouble during the journey from the parents' home to the husband's home. In this connection it should be kept in mind that village exogamy is practiced in this part of India and that residence after marriage is patrilocal. Marriage also entails for the woman many restrictions on movement and behavior in her husband's village and many special forms of avoidance and polite usage to her husband's kinsmen, and, by extension, to his fellow villagers, particularly the males. This contrasts markedly with the comparative freedom a girl enjoys in her father's home and as a "daughter" of her father's village. Since marriage is ordinarily hypergamous, with the husband's family belonging to a superior section of the same caste, at marriage a woman enters a family which considers itself higher in status than the one from which she has come. As a new bride she comes as the most junior and subordinate member of the family and only with time, with the arrival of new brides, and with the birth to her of sons, is her comparative position likely to improve to any extent. In story, proverb, and song, the society has from her earliest years reminded her of the sharpness of the transition at marriage, and of the possible hostility of the mother-in-law and sisters-in-law.

If it is a joint or extended family with a number of sons to which she goes, she will find there other wives from different villages and family backgrounds with whom she must live at close quarters and with whom she may or may not get along well. She comes as a stranger, for it would be most unseemly for her to have known her husband or his family beforehand. If she has grievances, it would do her little good to complain to her husband, for he is expected dutifully to support his parents in their decisions, and would be most likely to command his wife sternly to obey his elders. Actually her main recourse is to get word to her own parents and brothers of

any great unhappiness or mistreatment and have them intervene on her behalf.

Because of the sharp break in the life of the newly wed woman, and because she is often so young at marriage, the society has provided for frequent and prolonged visits of the married woman to her parents' home, especially during the early period of matrimony. If the girl is fearful, uncertain of her ability to cope with the situation, or unhappy about her husband or his family, the return trip to the husband's house after the relaxed atmosphere during a visit to the parental home and village may be an anxious period. It is not unusual, therefore, for a girl, as in the case just described, to be "caught" by a ghost on the journey from her parents' home to that of her husband and to become ill after her arrival.

It may be well to mention here other acute anxieties which not infrequently are associated with the early years of the married state. A woman who does not conceive, who suffers miscarriage, or who does not bear a son after some years of wedded life may have reason to fear for her status and happiness in the family circle. It is almost certain that she, and her husband's family too, will wonder if a ghost or malignant spirit is not at the root of her trouble.

One other potential cause of anxiety and distress in the early phase of marital life might be added to the list. A girl who has been a "pet" of her father's household (and often the knowledge that a girl will be under strict surveillance and will have to work hard in her husband's household is the rationalization for leniency and permissiveness in the parental home) may find the restrictions and obscurity of her new role difficult to accept. Possession by ghosts and spirits calls attention to the young woman, fosters a more solicitous attitude toward her, and makes her the center of dramatic ritual activity.

It must be remembered, too, that the claim of possession by ghosts may be a punishment unconsciously meted out by a young woman to those about her for real or fancied grievances. A ghost or malignant

spirit has a habit of persecuting a whole family, once it enters the circle of a home through an individual, and consequently its presence is most unwelcome to the whole group. Also, its eradication or pacification is an expensive undertaking and often a lengthy one. It may cause still other marriage difficulties, because few families want to enter into marriage negotiations that will result in receiving a ghost in addition to a new member. A number of shamans have pointed out that a large percentage of their clients are young women who were "caught" soon after joining their husband's families. A knowledge of the social and marital practices and the points of tension they involve goes far to explain the concentration of hysteria, possession, and trance states in this group.

The importance of marital and child-bearing functions in situations of shamanism and possession can be gathered from the following observations. Six ailing women were present on an occasion when one of our observers visited a shaman. All of them were sure that they were possessed by ghosts, and this was verified in each case by the shaman. One woman was subject to fits and was probably an epileptic. Another suffered from acute menstrual pains and irregularity. Still another had not conceived, although she had been married for a number of years. The shaman told her that a family godling, who was not being worshiped by certain households since the separation of the large family, was angry, had possessed her, and was denying progeny to the women of her line. A fourth woman had twice been the victim of miscarriage in the fourth month of pregnancy. The particular difficulties of the fifth woman were not ascertained, but the sixth, too, had been unable to conceive. She was a woman in her thirties, who had been hopefully coming to the shaman for years. Thus four of the five cases about which we have information appear to show complaints which are associated with the physiological functions of the female.

The part played by domestic tragedy in notions of persecution by evil spirits and

ghosts can be gathered from a few examples, also. A girl of the potter caste had been married to a man who deserted her for another woman. Against the advice of her mother she went to the place where her former husband and the other woman were staying. A very unpleasant scene resulted, but she made no progress in regaining her mate. Soon she had acute feelings of persecution and sought relief in a shamanistic ceremony. During the ceremony she became actively possessed, beating her hands and even her head on the ground in front of her. So violent were her exertions that she collapsed twice and had to be placed in sitting position again. In an effort to identify the ghost which was bothering her, the shaman recited caste names, one after the other. The ghost responded through the woman when the correct caste was named. Before the end of the session both the unsympathetic mother and the woman who had stolen the husband were accused of sending evil spirits to distress the patient.

In another case, where neglect seems to have depressed the patient, the ghost, when it was asked why it had entered the woman, replied, "Before, I was given every comfort—nice meals, sweets. I was respected, admired, massaged with oil. But now I'm denied all this."

An association between the clash of wills and possession by ghosts is reflected in many other accounts. A woman brought an ailing daughter of about fourteen years of age to a shaman. When the shaman informed her that the girl's illness could be traced to possession by a ghost of an aborted fetus, the old woman cried out: "Oh, it's true. She went against my wishes one day with a Chamain [a woman of the untouchable caste from whom midwives are recruited] to help her carry mud from a tank to the house. She fell ill and told us many secrets of the family. We couldn't understand how she knew these things so suddenly. She broke out in boils and since then has not been well." Here the defiance of this high-caste girl in associating with the untouchable and her raking up of unsavory family secrets, suggest a situation of tension

and conflict. The mother may be fairly close to the truth, after all, in connecting these matters with the girl's physical symptoms.

Not infrequently ghosts and possession serve as a convenient explanation for extreme or violent behavior. A woman who is well-known for her moody nature and uncertain temper was found by another woman trying to hang herself. She was led to an adjoining house and there she showed signs of being possessed. She announced that she was a godling which was worshiped by her family. Shamans were called to learn the will of the godling and discovered that a ceremony and animal sacrifice were demanded. As soon as the ceremony was promised the woman became calm and seemed normal. Later, when she was asked why she had attempted suicide, she denied memory of such an act. She asked rhetorically why she would do a thing like that, when she has four children to look after. She took the position that whatever happened was due to the intrusion into her body of an irritated godling who had not been given sufficient ritual attention.

When a supernatural attack is assumed and the person responsible is being sought, the thinking often moves along traditional channels. It is proverbial that the daughters of the household and their sisters-in-law, who enter the household through marriage, do not always get along well together. The feelings of suspicion and resentment may persist even after the daughters themselves leave the home in marriage. Charges that were raised in the summer of 1956 will illustrate what can happen. The sister of a villager was married and went to live in her husband's village. No sooner had she arrived than she became sick. A shamanistic rite revealed that the ghost of a dead brahman had been sent to possess her. It also was alleged that her brother's wife was responsible for this. The basis for the fear was the knowledge on the part of the afflicted woman that the household from which she had come did have a ghost of a deceased brahman attached to it. However, this household asserted that it had kept the

brahm pacified and harmless by constant offerings, and stoutly denied that any woman of the household had directed the spirit toward the married kinswoman.

When a woman is both childless and quarrelsome, if her barren state is attributed to unfriendly ghosts, she is likely to be greatly feared. The possibility that a possessed person may persuade a ghost to enter another "vehicle" is always present, and it is believed that a self-centered and strong-minded woman will not hesitate to take this step. One such woman came to the village some years ago as a bride. For a long time she bore no children and it was whispered about that this was because she was possessed by a vengeful ghost of a deceased brahman. Actually it was this woman's mother who had first drawn the ire of the ghost. The mother had neglected to pay a debt to a brahman and after his death was persecuted by his shade. When the daughter came to the village, the *brahm* was transferred to her and came along. The daughter was accused more than once of trying to pass the ghost along to others. So bad did her reputation become that even after she bore a son it was said that she had managed to transfer the family ghost to a young girl who was leaving the village to marry. As a result all kinds of misfortunes plagued the husband and his family as soon as the bride arrived. For one thing, the husband went blind—seemingly a case of hysterical blindness. The bride was returned to her father's home without delay.

More than one ghostly attack has been traced to compunctions of conscience over unpaid debts. A Muslim cotton carder of the village died without leaving issue. One of the villagers had never repaid fifty rupees which he owed this man. When the debtor developed stomach pains and diarrhea, he wondered whether he were not being persecuted by the ghost of the Muslim. He consulted a shaman who verified this, and the matter was resolved by going to the spot where the Muslim was buried, placing a coin in the ground as a symbolic payment, and making other offerings there.

It is obvious that possession and the state

of being a channel for the voice of the gods can be an attention-getting device for men as well as women. A villager who was unmarried, asthmatic, and not particularly highly regarded became a devotee of the high god, Shiva. When he was not in a religious setting, he gave the impression of a person who lacked assertiveness and confidence, and yet who desired attention. In December, 1955, he arranged to have a brahman carry on a ceremony for him in honor of Shiva. As the rite progressed he became increasingly excitable and very impatient with the brahman. It was not long before he was moving his head to and fro. Then Shiva spoke through the possessed man chiding him for not serving him better but prophesying that he would do so in the future. Shiva also called upon him to protect the Hindu religion and to protect cows. During the ritual this man was possessed in addition by Hanuman, Vishnu, and Parvati, the divine wife of Shiva—all very important deities of the Hindu pantheon. When the possessed man became the spokesman of Hanuman, he called to his religious teacher in an argumentative tone, "Oh, you think I'm not as great as Shiva, don't you? I'll show you my power!" By the time the ritual was over a rather good-sized group had gathered, and most of the onlookers were ultimately quite impressed.

At a time of epidemic sickness, possession is encouraged by fear that the disease will spread and strike and by desire to know what acts of worship will mollify the disease goddess. During a smallpox epidemic in February, 1955, a gardener, belonging to a caste whose members act as ritualists at such a time, heard that a woman of the potter caste was sick and went to visit her. She told him that she had been possessed by the disease goddess and that the goddess had voiced her displeasure at having been given an offering of unclean curd and had threatened to take five lives in the village. The gardener began to sing and make offerings, and the woman became possessed again. Then the gardener conversed with the goddess through the person of the pos-

sessed woman. The goddess asked for songs and offerings of a certain type and advised that a full-scale ceremony should be carried out on behalf of the woman at a given time. When she was asked whether she were "going to manifest herself on the body of the woman" (that is, whether the woman were going to contract the disease), she answered in the affirmative, but added that it would be a mild case and that "everything will be all right." It is probable that at this time the possessed woman thought that she had caught or was getting the disease. Actually her fears were groundless; she was not stricken with it during this epidemic.

Evidences of fear and wishful thinking also characterize a case of possession of an eight-year-old girl during this same period. The mother of the girl had asked her to perform some task. The girl stretched out her hands saying, "Don't you see my hands. You are asking me to work?" There were pox marks on her hands. Soon the girl was possessed and the intruding spirit identified itself as the godling of a shrine in another village of the area. Through the little girl it scolded the audience, saying, "Because I'm at a distance you people of this village have forgotten me. You don't offer ceremonies to me. Unless you worship me, you'll all be in great trouble." She also assured her hearers, "There won't be any trouble in this house. There won't be any smallpox." Just then a woman of a caste much higher than that of the child appeared, and the godling, speaking through the little girl, upbraided the woman in these words, "Go away from here. You promised that you would offer me a ceremony and fried bread if a boy would be born to your nephew. But when a girl was born, you didn't do it. You completely forgot me at that time."

Despite the youth of the girl many women accepted the authenticity of the possession, were much concerned at the displeasure voiced by the godling, and forthwith planned a trip to his shrine. Yet, contrary to the promises of the godling, two cases of smallpox did develop in the fam-

The goddess asked for songs of a certain type and advised the ceremony should be carried out by the woman at a given time. She was asked whether she were to manifest herself on the body of the woman (that is, whether the woman contracted the disease), she answered affirmatively, but added that it was a mild case and that "everybody is right." It is probable that the possessed woman thought she had been caught or was getting the disease. Her fears were grounded in her being stricken with it during

her fear and wishful thinking. In a case of possession of a girl during this same period, the girl had asked her to perform a ceremony. The girl stretched out her hands, "Don't you see my hands?" There were marks on her hands. Soon the girl and the intruding spirit were identified as the godling of a shrine in the village of the area. Through the ceremony, she addressed the audience, saying, "I have come a distance you people of this village have forgotten me. You don't worship me. Unless you worship me, I am in great trouble." She also addressed the audience, "There won't be any more children. There won't be any more children. Then a woman of a caste higher than that of the child addressed the godling, speaking through the girl, "I have addressed the woman in this village from here. You promised to offer me a ceremony and a son would be born to you. When a girl was born, you completely forgot me."

The youth of the girl man questioned the authenticity of the ceremony. He was much concerned at the distance of the godling, and forthwith he went to his shrine. Yet, the ceremony of the godling, which did develop in the form

of the possessed girl, something that caused much puzzlement and comment among the villagers.

The fear of ghosts can lead to hysterical symptoms at even more tender ages than this. A woman recalls that a place in the village of her birth was haunted by a female ghost of a certain type, a type noted for its unclean habits. The very branch of the tree in which the ghost was reputed to live was pointed out to the child, and she was told that she was in imminent danger of being caught by this unwholesome spirit. She was three or four years old when she learned about this. She began to be incontinent at night and was at first punished for it. She protested to her mother that she never defecated at night. Her mother asked the child's grandfather about it. This man was a shaman and pronounced what was happening to be the work of a ghost. He conducted a ceremony over the child and ordered the ghost to leave. After that the child had no trouble of this kind. Apparently, either because of a feeling of hopelessness at being in the grip of a defiling force, or because of projection of unpleasant responsibilities upon the ghost, the child had regressed in its toilet-training habits.

Concern over the consequences of impiety or contact with forbidden or dangerous ritual objects may also lead to seizures, possession, and the need for ceremonial aid. After a ceremony to rid the village of epidemic disease, a shaman buried a covered pot filled with flowers in the waters of a tank at the edge of the village. A villager who was bathing in the tank and who had forgotten the event, felt the pot with his foot and retrieved it. When he realized that it was the symbol of the disease which had been captured and banished from the village which he had disturbed and recovered, he was terror-stricken and began to vomit. He made his way to his home with difficulty and took to his bed. It took at least two specialists and considerable ritual to restore him to health.

There is one other activity of the ghost that should be mentioned. Some ghosts

make a practice of appearing to persons of the opposite sex and possessing them by engaging in sexual intercourse with them when they are asleep or dreaming. Ghosts are said to appear to young widows at night in the form of their deceased husbands and to have connection with them. More disturbing still, ghosts sometimes appear in the guise of men other than the husband to "tease" and frighten a woman by such activities. The ghost of a young man who fell into a well and drowned has a reputation for this kind of knavery.

Female ghosts tantalize men in a comparable manner. One villager described how a ghost took the form of an attractive young woman, the wife of another man, who had just returned to the village from a visit. This apparition visited him at night and was having intercourse with him. Just as he was about to ejaculate, he woke up and rushed out to the side of the field. It is apparent from these and other accounts that illicit and socially unacceptable desires which cannot be repressed are rationalized as the work of shameless ghosts.

In summary we can say that cases of spirit possession do not occur in a random fashion throughout the society. Except when a shaman or devotee calls upon the gods he worships to enter him and speak through him, spirit possession is almost inevitably interpreted as an unhappy incursion into the human body in order to cause sickness or misfortune. Consequently those who believe that their sickness and misfortune are due to evil forces of the outer world for which they are the targets are prone to spirit possession. And it is those who are particularly vulnerable or in a precarious social position who tend to decide that any reverse is a sign of spirit possession. The young married woman, beset by homesickness, anxious for acceptance by her relatives-in-law, fearful that she may not be able to present sons to her husband and his family, may label her woes a form of ghost possession. If she has been ignored and subordinated, the spirit possession may take even more dramatic and strident form as a compensation for the obscurity

under which she has labored. Also there seems to be a large number of cases of possession among young men who leave the village for urban areas and who either fail to make an adequate adjustment to that environment or who encounter difficulties upon their return. Possession seems to be correlated also with repressed aggression among low-caste persons and younger people, for it allows the individual, through the haughty spirit within, verbally to castigate his superiors or seniors with impunity.

On the individual level possession often can be traced to unresolved interpersonal conflict. Unpaid debts and ungracious acts tend to reappear after the death of one of the principals as intrusive ghosts. In this sense ghosts can be said to represent the standards and conscience of the community and, derivatively, of that of its individuals.

There is a rather prominent amount of projection and scapegoating in spirit possession. Not only is there a reflection of the animosities that the victim believes are directed toward him, but he tends to reveal his suspicions and unfavorable attitudes toward other groups and individuals: ill-feeling toward minority groups and intercaste rancor are sometimes mirrored in his conception of his troubles. The ghosts of deceased Muslims were exceedingly active in persecuting Hindus in the troubled days

following partition. Persons of high caste tend to be persecuted by large, dark, low-caste spirits. And in speaking about scapegoating and projection, the tendency to attribute unmanageable and socially reprehensible sexual desires to the activities of the ghosts of others should not be forgotten.

Above all, a prevailing health anxiety is suggested by the data regarding ghost and spirit possession. I would venture to say that the material on this topic strongly challenges the notion that the Indian villager meets sickness and death with fatalism, resignation, and composure. There is, on the contrary, a determined effort through possession to anticipate and forestall disease, to deal with it when it is present, and to learn why it claimed its victims. And this is reasonable, for health and survival are the foundation upon which so much else rests. The mother is in terror of losing her child. It is often not only a life but her very status and future which are at stake. The family heads tremble lest the sons be stricken by epidemic disease and the line become extinct. Ghosts do not wander aimlessly through Indian village culture. They gather at points of stress and they attack the soft spots of the social order. To follow their movements is to learn a good deal about that social order.

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