

The following gentlemen were selected at this meeting as Joint Honorary Treasurers :—

(1) Mr. Satyaranjan Sen Gupta, 4th Year Sec. B.

(2) Mr. Purnachandra Bhattacharyya, 3rd Year.

The meeting then dissolved after a vote of thanks to the Chair.

### A Correction :—

We notice that the balance of Rs. 5 of 1915-16 which was with Prof. Devendranath Mukherjee M. A. B. L., the President was not entered in the Annual Report published in the last month's magazine; so, the Balance on 31st March 1917 will be Rs. 13-11-6 and not Rs. 8-11-6 as shewn there.

HARISADHAN GONGOPADHYA.

*Hony. Secretary.*

## THE ORIGIN OF FAMILY.\*

(BY PROFESSOR BIRAJASANKAR GUHA, M. A.)

In the present paper my purpose is not to study the question of the origin of human family either from the speculative or from the historical point of view. My aim is rather to approach the problem from the stand point of biological evolution. For as Westermarck declares that "if we want to find out the origin of family, we have to strike into another path, the only one which can lead to the truth, but a path which is open to him alone who regards organic nature as one continued chain, the last and the most perfect link of which is man. For we can no more stop within the limits of our own species, when trying to find the root of our psychical and social life, than we can understand the physical condition of the human race, without taking into consideration that of the lower animals."†

Family thus conceived appears as a fundamental institution whose beginnings are anterior to the dawn of human history.—And it is, this fact—namely, the great antiquity of the question and the

\* Being part of a longer paper read at the Professors' Literary Union, Cotton College, Gauhati.

† Westermarck's History of Human Marriage p. 9.

failure to realise the bearings of Biology and Psychology on it that have led historians and sociologists into sweeping generalisations and unscientific theories. And before we advance further it is necessary that the most important of these theories—those that exerted a great influence on the thoughts of the last century, should first be criticised. It is not possible however to go into the details of these theories—a few words only as to their broad issues must be deemed sufficient for the present purpose. Now the most prominent among the doctrines which sought to explain the origin and growth of family are—the Patriarchal theory, the theory of Mother-right and the Hypothesis of Promiscuity.

Of these the Patriarchal theory—chiefly associated with the name of Sir Henry Maine—though very much earlier in origin, is to be discarded at once after the criticisms of Spencer, Mc. Lennan, Leist, Robertson Smith and a host of other writers. This theory conceives the primitive human family to be substantially the same as the Roman family, not in all respects as it actually appears in the historical period, but as it is thought that it must have been before the process of transformation and decay began. It is a much more extended group than the modern family, embracing under the headship of the eldest valid male parent all agnatic descendants and all persons united to it by adoption, as well as slaves, clients and other descendants. The authority of the house-father is most despotic, having the power of life and death over his children. He may sell them into slavery, and the sons, even those who hold the highest offices of state, can originally own no property. A characteristic feature of the Patriarchal family is agnation—or the system of tracing kinship through males only. This type of family, Maine considers, was the universal form of primitive human family.

The Patriarchal family was not however the universal form of primitive family as alleged by Maine. As Spencer has justly remarked :—“it practically disregards the great mass of the uncivilised peoples and ignores the vast array of facts they present at variance with it.” Among many savage and barbarous tribes the parents exercise little or no control over the children, and instances of personal monopoly of property among low race are not wanting.

Besides it is hard to conceive how so advanced a conception of Government as is implied in the *Patria Potestas* could exist in the infancy of society. But the theory not only fails to explain these barbarous rites and customs, it is not the original form of Aryan family—the Romans alone excepted. In an able discussion of the question Mc' Lennan has shown that the strict rule of agnation is absent in almost all the Aryan sects, while among them all abundant evidence of the maternal system of kinship is disclosed. The ancient Hebrews and the entire Semitic race also bear witness to the "Beena" marriage and the recognition of kinship in the female line. Recent investigators have arrived at the same conclusion and Leist by a careful study of the ancient Indic family has shown that the *Patria Potestas* was entirely absent in the latter, where the women were not merely the drudges of the household but shared with their husbands equal rights in their highest sacred functions.

The second theory—namely, the theory of Mother-right was first brought forward by Bachofen, a Swiss scholar of the nineteenth century.

According to Bachofen there are three general phases in the evolution of human social relations. The first is the period of Aphroditic Hetairism. The second is the period of Gynocracy, in which kinship and succession are in the maternal line and woman gains religious and political supremacy; and the third, the period of the Patriarchate, in which the more spiritual principle of paternity is seen. Each of these periods is regarded as an universal culture-stage.

In the first phase, or that of the unregulated communism, motherhood is the essential fact. There is no conception of kinship between father and child, woman being exposed to the tyranny of man and it is through her successful revolt against the bondage of unbridled hetairism that she attains the second stage of progress. With it also the rudiments of marriage appear.

Now, leaving aside the question of original promiscuity which it assumes (and which will be dealt with later on) it is difficult to understand what Bachofen means by Gynocracy. He evidently confuses Mother-right with Mother-power. It is true that Mother-

right or kinship in the female line was universal or very nearly so in the primitive human societies, but this does not imply that Mother-power or Matriarchate went along with it. For an age of Amazonism or Gynocracy involving the social leadership of women and eventually the political and even the military subordination of man, as an universal stage of human society, has no historical foundation. The theory of Mother-right as understood by Bachofen has no modern supporter. But a number of writers—Peschel, Tylor, Letournau, Hellwald and Kautsky—though rejecting the idea of a political or military Gynocracy maintain that the inheritance of name and family-rights through the mother gives woman a decided precedence in the sphere of social life and private law. The weight of evidence however shows that even this modified view exaggerates the advantages gained by woman under mother-right. It may be admitted that here and there, as for instance among the Sioux and the Wyndotts of the American Indians and the Khasis of Assam, the determination of the child's social and legal rights through the mother has given a pre-eminent social position to women; yet as Dr. Starcke, referring to the important place taken by the wife among various African races, declares that "all which has been said only shows that women in some instances enjoy privileges which are always enjoyed by men."\*

The theory of Promiscuity or original communism has been accepted by many writers, though examples of absolute promiscuity have not been produced. Its former existence is inferred from certain customs and institutions which are believed to be its survivals. Even the promiscuity which is thus assumed is not "perfectly indiscriminate" but restricted to the members of the unorganised horde or tribe occupying a particular locality or roaming about together. Hence, it has sometimes been described as communal or 'group marriage'. Accordingly the horde or band becomes the starting-point of social development. The principal argument in favour of Communism is the existence of Polyandry and the wide prevalence of kinship reckoned through the mother's line. For it is generally assumed that this system can only arise when paternity is uncertain.

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\* Howard's History of Matrimonial Institutions Vol. I.

Legalised Hetairism practised under various forms and restrictions among many peoples, savage, barbarous and civilised is thought to be a proof of original communism. The same is true of "proof marriages" existing among the Wotzoken, the Burmese, the Germans, of "temporary marriages" among the Parthians and American Indians and of "wife-lending" examples of which are afforded by the Spartans, Romans, Hindus, Arabs, Eskimos and many other peoples.

The argument for original promiscuity based on these evidences however is not conclusive. For many of them are capable of simpler explanations—for example, the custom of wife-lending, as Westermarck shows, was due to the savage idea of hospitality. Though the Ires primæ noctis—the general name which is given to these customs—is naturally explainable as due to various other causes, yet the researches of Spencer and Gillen have produced many evidences in favour of an original state of promiscuity upon which Hildebrand Kautsky and specially Morgan have tried to re-establish the theory of Promiscuity.

(To be concluded in the next issue).

### পূর্ববঙ্গে বাণপর্বন ।

এবার পরীক্ষা দিয়া যখন বুঝিতে পারিলাম বি, এ, পড়া আমার অদৃষ্টে নাই, ভাবিলাম একবার বেড়াইতে যাইব। অনেক "কর্মখালি"তে উমেদারী করিতে ময়মনসিংহ জেলার টাঙ্গাইল সবডিভিসনে এক মাইনর স্কুলে ১৫ টাকা বেতন এবং প্রাইভেট পড়াইলে আঃ বাঃ ফ্রী ( অর্থাৎ আহাৰ এবং বাসস্থান পাওয়া যাইবে ) এইরূপ এক মাষ্টারী জুটিয়া গেল। নিযুক্তিপত্র পাইবামাত্র কর্মস্থলে রওনা হইলাম। ট্রেনে ও ষ্টীমারে দেড়দিন কাটিয়া গেল। পরদিন দুইপ্রহরের সময় এক মদীর বালুকাময় চরভূমিতে ষ্টীমার লাগিল। আমাকে তথায় নামিতে হইল। চৈত্রমাসের মাথাফাটা রৌদ্রে সেই বালুচরে নামিয়াই আমার চাকুরি করিবার উৎসাহ অর্ধেক কমিয়া গেল। মনে হইল, এখনই যদি ষ্টীমার পাইতাম তবে চাকুরির আশা পরিত্যাগ করিয়া ঘরের ছেলে ঘরে কিরিতাম। শুনিলাম পরদিন সকালবেলা আবার ষ্টীমার ছাড়িবে, কাজেই