

special section near for the *jagran* or *chho* dances. In Bikuadag, two of us were accorded such seats for the masked dancers. We were even asked to take off our shoes to enter the indicated area nearest the dancers.

There is no variety in the *jagran* as danced by the *bhakta*. Their aim is not so much to give pleasure as to fulfill a rite that is all part of their vow, and for which they have practised during their period of preparation. What is effective, is the number of dancers of various sizes and age, dressed in divers colours moving in unison, swishing yak tails, and singing the glories of *Shiva*.

## 2. The *chho* dances

It is otherwise with the *chho*, or masked dances which have their origin in the court of Saraikela on the southern border of the State of Bihar where it touches Orissa, in the district of Singhbhum. The masks were originally used to hide the features of the nobles who took part in the dance. It did not become them to dance in front of their ryots or tenants. This appears the plausible reason. There is another, in as far as masks allow a dancer to portray his assumed character more vividly.

The *chho* dances recall the life of *Shiva*, and his consort *Sita*, known also as *Parvati*. Some are therefore inclined to link the fire-walking with the test of fidelity which was imposed on *Sita* after her stay in Lanka or Ceylon, a captive of the demon king *Ravan*. This appears to be far fetched, if we consider the primary purpose of the *bhakta*, which is that of thanksgiving for favours received. The fire-walking is not an ordeal. It is a gesture of gratitude.

The representation of the life of *Shiva* by the *chho* dancers is to stress the greatness of *Shiva*, his power of saving his *bhakta* even from the harmful effects of fire; an attempt to draw the tribals to adopt his cult and become his devotees.

The *chho* dances follow a regular pattern and cover the main incidents in *Shiva* life. The dances are known by the various *tal*, a Hindi word indicating a definite musical score, adapted to a distinct dance pattern. In Tupudana the following were the *tal*: *Ganesh tal*, *salami tal*, *Krishna tal*, *sahib tal*, *Parsuram tal*, *Sita tal*, *Shiv tal*<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ganesh*, *Ganesa*, son of *Shiva* and *Parvati* is represented with the head of an elephant which has one tusk missing. – *salami* is the term for salutation or welcome. – The modern deity *Krishna* is the most celebrated hero of Indian mythology and the most popular of all the deities. In the *chho* dances he is represented with a blue or dark mask as his name signifies "black". – The word *sahib* is generally taken to indicate a foreigner. This *tal* is an interpolation. The *sahib* mask I saw in Tupudana showed a distinctively white face with a cap. – *Parsuram*, *Parasu-Rama* "Rama with the axe". In the *Ramayana* we read how *Parasurama*, a follower of *Shiva*, challenged *Rama* for breaking the bow of *Shiva*. He was defeated and excluded from a seat in the celestial world. It is *Shiva* who taught *Parasurama* the use of arms and gave him the axe with which he is associated. – *Sita* is the wife of *Rama* who proved her honour by the ordeal of fire. *Rama* won her by bending the great bow of *Shiva*. *Sita* is worshipped as a deity presiding over agriculture and fruits. She is the furrow as her name signifies. She is husbandry personified. – *Siv* or *Shiva*, the third deity of the Hindu triad regarded as *Iswara*, the Supreme Lord, and *Mahadeva* the Great God. Under the name of *Mahakala*, he is the great destroying and