SALYA, THE WAVERER.

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SALYA, THE WAVERER.

By Mrs. M. V. MOENS-ZORAB.

With drawings by Courtesy of the Author.

AMONG the highly creditable, even noble figures of wayang legend, javanese piety ranks King Salya, the Korawa chief. Rather than substantiate this high opinion of him, fact renders the interested outsider doubtful as to the royal man's merit. Then Salya is known to have caused the ruin of his party by his duplicity and double-dealing and to have taken his father-in-law's life in cool blood. Yet he dies a glorified martyr, blissfully followed into death by his virtuous and beautiful wife. Robbed by him of an affectionate father, no tenderhearted wife loved her mate better than Satyawati loved Salya; no devoted husband and father appears to have cherished his family less.

Uterine consanguinity, the original "saudara" (of-the-same-womb)-conception does not seem to stir the Javanese of to-day in any particular way; in Salya's days, matriliny a vital relic of ancient origin — played a far more important rôle. As a social structure, matriarchy is based upon the principle of cognate kinship. Ascendancy is traced through the mother and the maternal relatives; and the father has no kinship, no relationship by blood, with his offspring.

Such tendencies were favoured by a curious predisposition of the primitive mind. The mother's share in procreation is a fact open to observation, whereas the father contributes to the process only in a magical way. Hence the adherence to one's own brothers, sisters and sister's children is a closer one by far, than that to one's wife and her progeny. Every man thus belongs to his mother's clan and he consequently shares with it all social interests; it explains the inviolable tie, that in the case of Salya exists between himself and the Pandawa-twins, his own sister Madri's children. The avuncular relationship that is responsible for Salya's mysterious line of conduct, is consistent with many another detail of the Salya-epic.

Although to present-day javanese society matriliny is a threadbare notion, its ways, customs and traditions are strongly imbued with it; Dr. Hazeu, the dutch specialist on wayang-lore, did not hesitate to infer from certain shadow-dramas, that matriarchal customs must at one time have been indigenous with the Javanese.

The evidence, that uterine consanguinity must needs have been an important factor of javanese tribal life, is corroborated by what we find with various malayo-polynesian populations of the East-Indian Archipelago; it is a prominent feature of social life with many of the other peoples, sharing the so called Mon-Khmer culture of Farther-India, with which the former pre-Malayans, according to recent scientific research, are linked with respect to law, custom, language and tradition.

Matriarchate still holds its own with the Menangkabo-Malays on the westcoast of Sumatra; with



Balinese painting on cloth dating from a hundred years back. Salya and Aswatama in their Tiwikrama-forms, many-headed and many-armed demons, symbolic of their terrific state of ire. The fury that animates them, is represented in the atmosphere by their respective fiery souls in the shape of fighting dogs-heads (lightning symbols). Compared to their tremendous height all the other personages are small. Duryodana, with to the right and left of him Sengkuni (his maternal uncle) and Chitradarma and in front of these the faithful acolytes: Sangut and Dailem. To the right of Aswatama are the Korawas Wingsati and Upachitra and to the left of Salya the other Korawas: Dusaha, Aswikarna and Krepa. On top to the right of Aswatama: Salya and his acolytes: Sangut and Dailem and three army-leaders of the Korawas. To the left of Salya on top are: Sengkuni talking to Krepa and two other Korawa-generals.

KON. BAT. GENOOTSCHAP VAN K. EN W.



PUJAWATI AND HER TWO MAID-SERVANTS LOOKING AT NARASOMA WHO KILLS HIS FATHER-IN-LAW W[illegible]E CHANDI

the Bataks a marriage with a "boru ni ambo"—a daughter of one's aunt — is considered an offence against the "adat" (tribal custom). Among the primitive races of Ancient Cambodia matriarchy seems to have been prevalent and with the Khasis, hill-folks of the Assam-District, bordering on Burma, Lt. Col. Gurdon states, matriarchy to be a cornerstone of tribal organisation.

In his matrilineal sphere Salya had to consider himself socially the „father" of his sister's children, and felt it his moral obligation to live up to this standard of tribal law. But even in those days an equally close, if not closer tie was recognised between the wife's husband and his children, on account of the conception of a magical fathership. It is here, that Salya's waverings come in.

Salya, king of Mandraka, is father-in-law to the Korawa king Duryodana, "He-who-wages-a-ruinous-war". He stands in a similar relationship to Baladewa, Madura's formidable king, who is Duryodana's ally in the ill-fated struggle between the descendants of "saudara's". The famous Korawa leader Karna, who also has married one of Salya's daughters, is a third in the pact. As moreover all Salya's own sons — among them wild-eyed Burisrawa — are staunch adherents of the Korawa cause, there is no denying the fact, that Salya's interests cannot easily be severed from those of Duryodana's party.

Yet, he cannot help sympathizing with the opponent, because he is the maternal uncle of the Pandawa-twins Nakula and Sahadewa. Since this sentiment has the better of Salya at the outbreak of the war, he decides to range himself on the Pandawa-side. The shrewd Korawa king, pretending to sympathize with this line of conduct — could not he himself always fall back on cunning Sengkuni, his own maternal uncle and fatherly adviser? —



FATHER-IN-LAW W[illegible]HE CHANDRABIRAWA IN THE SHAPE OF A KBIS. BEHIND BAGASPATI SITS A CHANTRIK (DISCIPLE).

refrains from interfering with the intentions of his headstrong father=in=law; he has Salya and his army treated with the honours due to his rank and orders, nothing to be left undone for their safety while marching through his domain. What with his satisfaction at Duryodana's consideration; what with his reluctance to be estranged from all his own people, Salya changed his mind and forsook the avuncular duty. Duryodana, however, soon found, that Salya, in taking the Korawa part, had overtaxed sentiments, that were so much more inherent to his matrilineal mentality.

In his youth, Salya went by the name of Narasoma. He was banished from his father's court, because he obstinately refused to marry the princess of his sire's choice. On having to pass a dense forest, he was kidnapped by a Buta, Ganggaspati or Bagaspati by name, for his fair daughter Pujawati; a dream had revealed to the damsel that the handsome prince of Mandraka was near.

Bagaspati had at one time been a well-favoured prince, but when the curse of the all=powerful Batara Guru had changed him into a despicable demon, he had withdrawn to the forest to found a hermitage, taking the little Pujawati, "Her=of=the=devoted=Spirit", with him.

Narasoma was struck with Pujawati's innocence and fairness, but the youth — the javanese diction of to=day has it — strongly resented the idea of having a Buta for a father=in=law. Nevertheless he was so anxious to marry her, that he solemnly declared she should be his sole wife for life, if only the old man was no longer in their way. This amazing, almost bizarre concession on the part of a javanese prince, whom the customs of his people since time out of mind do not forbid

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to throw in his lot with more than one wife at a time did not miss its effect on the lovely wench. At her plaint, her father could not find it in his heart to blame his child for obeying a call, that proved too strong for her filial love and he duly planned his own death. He instructed Narasoma why and how he had to do away with him, an instruction that the youth promptly carried out.

This naive javanese version of the story must have a more convincing foundation; a marriage between a man and his father's brother's daughter — as with the Khasis — is either taboo or allowed on special conditions only, because she is his "birth-sister". It must have come home to Salya that Bagaspati was his paternal uncle, younger brother to his father and that a magical tie thus bound them. This spell had to be broken, before Salya could think of marrying his birth-sister Pujawati. In order that by the despatch of his father-in-law-to-be he should not be guilty of homicide, he had to make use of a magical weapon that his uncle had to put at his disposal of his own free will. Bagaspati was the more willing to do so, because in this way he might get rid of the magical ban that had cursed him into a Buta. To escape any evil consequences, he gave his daughter and his son-in-law the fatherly advise to change their names i.e. to put on a magical disguise. To give evidence that he bore Narasoma no ill will, he conferred on him the Chandrabirawa, his mystic charm of immortality. By yielding his defensive charm to Salya, it became — as is the characteristic property of a charm — an offensive weapon that could be turned against him. It may be easily understood, that the Javanese who are no longer familiar with these matrilineal considerations, can but afford such representation as shows Narasoma stabbing his father-in-law-to-be with an ordinary weapon instead of killing him by sorcery. (See plate).

After they had returned to Mandraka, whither the young couple duly betook themselves, it transpired that Salya had killed the King's younger brother. Furious with his son for the unscrupulous doing away with his agnate kin Salya's father once more ordered his son out of his sight.

He made the scared Satyawati stay behind and leave her husband to his own devices.

Salya reluctantly started on his wanderings anew; this time he was accompanied by his sister Madri. With regard to this going of his blood-sister with Salya, legend is not explicit. According to one version he took her with him hidden in a magic ring he wore on his finger.

Is not this an exquisite way of avoiding any malicious thought of, or allusions to illicit intercourse between a man and his blood-sister, according to matrilineal conception, a capital sin. For how could he otherwise have taken his sister with him in order to procure for her a husband, belonging to another tribe: exogamous marriages being either the more desirable or required by tribal law.

One day learning that in Madura a swayambara was to be held for the obtaining in marriage of the beautiful Dewi Kunti, King Kuntiboja's daughter, he jumped at the opportunity, to regain his self-reliance, may be to expiate his sin against matrilineal custom, by propitiating its angry spirits. He actually won the prize with the aid of the Chandrabirawa-charm. The joy however, did not last long, for his right to the princess was contested by Pandu, Abiasa's son, who was sent abroad with a view to gain princesses for himself and his two disabled brothers Destarata and Yamawidura. Pandu had arrived too late for the swayambara. In a fight that ensued accordingly between himself and victorious Salya, the supernatural weapon Kalimosada, that Pandu possessed, proved more efficacious than Salya's and the latter had to give up both his newly-won bride and his sister Madri.

Pandu duly married the two princesses; Kunti bore him the Pandawas: Yudistira, Bima and Arjuna, whereas Madri gave him the twins Nakula and Sahadewa.

Although Salya's intention to obtain another wife for himself, had been frustrated, he had been successful in finding a suitable husband for his sister Madri. Realizing the fitness of things, — after all, he was bound by his pledge to Satyawati, — he directed his steps home, where he arrived in the nick of time, to succeed his father to the throne of Mandraka.

As has been told before, one of King Salya's daughters was spouse to Karna, Prince of Ngawangga. Now Karna was a foundling and for his throne he had to thank King Duryodana — ever on the lookout for allies to help him in the forthcoming war of his scheming.

Karna was Dewi Kunti's son born to her before her marriage to Pandu. Legend will have this birth to be a miraculous one, not because of its connection with the sun-god Surya, but in that Karna had no legal father. That he should have been born from his mother's ear (karna) was only a euphemistic way of putting it.

He had been laid a foundling at his mother's urgent wish, instead of being killed without further discussion. As it was, his birth-right was never recognised by the three elder Pandawas: Yudistira, Bima and Arjuna whose elder "saudara" Karna was. Although the birth of each of these legitimate sons was likewise influenced by a God (respectively the Deathgod Darma, God of tribal Law, the Windgod Bayu, God of Energy and the Raingod Indra, Giver of Prosperity and Abundance) Pandu was known to be their legal father.

Haughty Karna from this and other reasons had come to hate his step-brothers bitterly and did not hesitate to join the party of his benefactor Duryodana at the ultimate outbreak of the war. When after about two weeks — the ruinous war lasted not quite three weeks in all — the illustrious priest and army-leader Drona was killed, Duryodana's eye fell on Karna, the brilliant warrior, whom he elected commander-in-chief in Drona's stead.

Salya hated Karna for his tactless bragging and plotting against the Pandawas. Although he was father-in-law to Karna, the idea was unbearable to him, that a bastard (as he also was in the eyes of Pandu's sons), who owed his very life to a violation of traditional custom, should be a menace to the Pandawa cause. Then Salya was well aware of the fact that Karna was Arjuna's

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most dangerous rival in handling the bow and that the latter's death meant a mortal blow to his nephew's cause. Salya as driver of Karna's warchariot — a post of honour and confidence he owed to his relation to Karna — ruthlessly sacrificed his son-in-law, to spare Arjuna's life. Once again his matrilineal instinct had been too strong for Salya.

After Karna's death, Duryodana begs Salya to take the command in the former's stead. This Salya deliberately declines, as might be expected of him, since as commander-in-chief he could not possibly avoid a hand-to-hand fight with the Pandawa-brothers. But he had reckoned without Aswatama — Drona's son by a celestial nymph — whose one desire in life was to be avenged on the Pandawas for taking the life of a father, to whom he owed his tribal caste. In full assembly he accused Salya of vile treason and of having caused Karna's death. Salya, by no means taken aback by this assault of Aswatama — whose irregular birth by no means offended sticklers for regular tribal relations like Salya himself, as did Karna's miraculous birth — rose in terrible wrath. He flew at the undaunted youth, who awaited his irreconcilable foe in a white heat of passion. Neither Salya nor Aswatama thought of giving in; each rose a terrific demon. A more vivid representation of this scene, than is given by the balinese picture of about a hundred years back, could hardly be imagined (see plate on page 535).

Between these towering opponents, unfortunate Duryodana, whose lucky star was on the wane, felt "as small as a dwarf compared to the moon." He did his utmost to separate the monstrous adversaries, imploring them not to fall out among themselves, as this would be desastrous to the Korawa cause, that had already suffered irreparable loss. Duryodana's patience with Salya once more wins the day. Salya, spent in the tremendous effort of defending his moral position, gives in and resignedly accepts the command at Duryodana's hands.

The Pandawas' spirit sank low, when the news spread, since Salya was known as a formidable adversary, famous for his military skill and for his intrepidity. Arjuna's friend Krishna, the diplomat king of Dwarawati, who ever preferred craft to force, commissioned Nakula to steal into his maternal uncle's camp after dark and put his life in Salya's hands. He left it to the young man's discretion, to make the best of his chance.

On the eve of the great battle, Salya sat all alone after dark, lost in melancholy thought. The orphaned twins Nakula and Sahadewa — then Madri had followed Pandu into death — his only "sons", since he had lost all his own sons in the fruitless war, were dearer to his heart than ever before. Of a sudden Nakula broke in upon his broodings and impulsively threw himself at Salya's feet. Excitedly he drew forth his kris, beseeching his startled uncle to kill him with it, as he and his brothers were at a loss what to do, now that Salya had taken the command. "I await my death at thine hands, come what may", he cried out ecstatically. Salya was horror-struck; he trembled for the boy's life, then, what would happen, if people found him here!

How could he suffer to see him slaughtered before his eyes. But yet Salya could not possibly think of breaking his oath with the King, after all that had happened, by giving way to Nakula's eager appeal.

He can only back out of this terrible plight by sacrificing his own life. Realizing that his time is up, he gives his instructions to Nakula with a cool head: "Tell thine eldest brother Yudistira, that he can kill me with his mighty weapon, the Kalimosada, that was left him by his father. It must be he, the head of you all and no one else who handles it, for in the hands of a man less authorized, its spell will have no deadly effect on me. When I am gone, the Bratayuda will practically be at an end; only Duryodana will be left and he is no good. The Kingdom will then fall to thy brother Yudistira; there's a noble man".

Salya had to pay the penalty for having suffered Kunti's illegitimate son to be sacrificed, although his deed had saved the life of Arjuna, her legitimate child. As he admitted that Kunti had to be avenged, he singled out Darmaputra, her eldest son to be the tool; Salya feels gratified that he is inferior to none but to him, who excels all mortal men in moral, if not in physical strength.

That the Javanese, who can have but a faint notion of the emotions that wrung Salya's heart, in spite of his apparent iniquity, trust in Salya's character, may be inferred from the fact that Salya is amongst the noblest to look at of the wayang-figures, belonging to the counterparty. Although his face, from the faint red colour it wears, hints at brusqueness and irritability, although the rounded eye — seat of passion and ambition — reveals too much energy — as odious a quality in javanese eyes as vulgarity in those of the refined! — although the little tufts of hair at chin and throat, mark him, who is getting on in years, as moody and unaccountable, yet his aristocratic nose and his nobly poised head are all in favour of a noble mind and an excellent lineage. He is the Ksatrya in a grand style, faithful to old institutions and averse to change. Unfortunately he is not equal to the task as offered by circumstance. Wayang-legend however, though refraining from comment, suggests an excuse in the pathetic and infinitely touching love-tale, unique in its kind, that is woven round Salya and Satyawati.

Satyawati is Salya's one real passion in life, in spite of the many children she bears him. It is not an empty phrase, that asserts, that each child a javanese wife adds to the household, is but a draft drawn on her womanly charms and on her husband's passion for her.

Satyawati is every inch Salya's virtuous counterpart. She can justly pride herself on the supplementary virtues that are essential to the making of a perfect match; nor are lasting beauty and radiant youth missing among her matrimonial requisites.

Conjugal love and faith are nowhere in javanese wayang-epic more exquisitely sung than in the strophes of Salya's farewell speech to his wife. Having overheard her husband's fatal words to Nakula, the inevitableness of which struck her, she reveals, after the youth is gone, her firm intent to stab herself, so as not to survive her love. Salya dissuades her from this inopportune intention by taking away her dagger

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AT THE BATTLE FIELD, KURUKSETRA, SATYAWATI ACCOMPANIED BY HER HANDMAI

and assuring her, that he only meant to comfort the weeping lad. True, he feels old and weary of life, but it is his dearest wish to be soon united with her in a better world, to enjoy, if possible, an even more perfect love. Passing years have not left their mark on her, he assures her; even now she is more beautiful than any of her daughters, aye, than the lovely widadaris from heaven! He grows as enthusiastic, as effusive as a passionate, young lover; then gradually composing himself, he heaps on her the gentle, wistful tenderness of a life-long love, soothing and consoling her, until she closes her tired eyes and drops into peaceful slumber. Before daybreak, Salya softly steals from the room, to place himself at the head of his army; bravely he marches to his premeditated death.

On learning the baleful news, Satyawati never stops to wail. She starts for the battlefield at once, determined to die by the side of him, who had been her chosen partner for life, who by right must be hers in death. Only her faithful handmaid accompanies her on her sad journey.

Near the battlefield Satyawati's car breaks down and the two women have to pursue their way on foot. They stumble over the heaped up dead and keenly hurt their feet on jutting remnants of cars and weapons. Through streams of blood they have to wade, scared to death by the uncanny howlings of preying dogs and savage beasts, by the pitious moanings of the untended wounded.

Taking her courage in both her hands, Satyawati goes on, undismayed, carefully scanning the dead princes that lie prostrate on their cars or beside them. Surely, not one is a match for her gallant lord and if he were the Prince of Day!

At last the heavy strain begins to tell, her courage flags. Light is rapidly failing and this further unnerves



ACCOMPANIED BY HANDMAID, FINDS SALYA'S CORPSE LYING BEHIND HIS BROKEN WAR-CHARRIOT.

her. Bereft of all hope of ever finding her lost mate, the distracted wife is on the point of stabbing herself there and then, when it pleases the Supreme one to give her a sign. A ray of light reveals to her eye yet another car. A wonderful glamour is about the body, that is rigidly stretched behind it. (see plate). She never doubts but that here is her Lord at last. His shadow manifests itself against the setting sun and is the nearest semblance to the solar King gone to rest, now that the task of day is over.

Swept by a mighty emotion, she figures herself one with the fleeting evening glow, that nimbly runs after her speeding lover, anxious to be united with him in the shades of night.

She bids her maid go home and tell her beloved ones of her glorious death, that they may shed a tear for her passing soul. But the humble one, submissive Loyalty incarnate, insists on staying with her fair mistress to follow her on the way beyond. For who is to tend her sweet lady, who is to hold for the precious one the basin of water, to wash her dainty face in, in the world hereafter?

With Satyawati pulling at the heartstrings of his soul and holding him at Duryodana's side, assisted therein by Circumstance as her most powerful ally, Salya to a certain extent fails to make himself the apostle of an agonizing Matriarchate. Yet he has largely contributed to the glory of his sister's clan and he has done his share in the securing of an ultimate victory of Pandawas over Korawas. Is it by the latter achievement, that King Salya has gained merit in the memory of his people or is it that the Javanese, in spite of patrilineal social organisation, in the subconsciousness of his "rasa" still feels matriarchal?

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