

SHIVA LEGENDS IN THE SACRED TRADITIONS OF INDIAN TRIBES

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A view prevalent among a particular section of the scholars of anthropology, sociology, history, ethnology etc., is that several tribes of India have borrowed and accepted many Hindu traditions, gods and religious practices from their neighbouring Hindu population (Behura & Mishra: 1985, Fuchs: 1992, Presler: 1971, Banerjee: 1992, Thaper: 1977). This perspective is not baseless because we see such practices among some tribal communities. Adaptation is a universal human psyche and it cannot be denied in any case. But the channel is not unidirectional. In fact, The Hindu population living with the tribal communities has also incorporated countless number of rituals, and gods and goddesses in its folder. It appears that on many occasions these scholars have been romanticizing the influence of Hindu gods and rituals on the tribal without giving any stress to the influence of the tribal gods and rituals among the Hindus. Such attempts create several misunderstandings about the people who are not aware of such historic-mythical development. One seriously needs to conduct research on the grounding and foundations of these interpretations. During my 15 years contact with various tribal groups of India and available literature I have also come to one of the dominant interpretations that Lord Shiva as the God of the *Anadi*, tribals. Prevalent practices and available literature indicate that Lord Shiva has been worshipped by all the tribal groups everywhere in India. Hence this paper may be seen as paradigm shift where efforts are made to see the link from reverse direction with some living examples substantiated by the facts and references of the Classical Indian texts. Which came first – the egg or the hen? This question may appear very simple but it is indeed a tough task to answer it with scientific data and critical analysis. This, however, does not mean that one should not try to answer such questions. This paper is prepared with the spirit to know the wisdom of the indigenous and non-literate people in the context of Shiva worship who possess great knowledge system with them. How the memory of these people work without any technical failure with universal accuracy. It also gives a clue to the people and scholars to see the link between the bramhanic and the indigenous groups. The Indian tribes worship Shiva in their natural abode – jungles, hills, mountains, agricultural fields' etc. It is the Hindus who brought him into temples. Shiva is always worshiped among the tribals in His presence as *lingam*.

In the bramhanical Hindu fold Lord Shiva has several names. Prominent among them are as follows: Shankar, Ashutosh, Shiva, Neelkantha, Jatadhari, Pasupati, Bholanatha, Viswanatha, Baidyanath, Kailashpati, Tripurari, Rameshwar, Ravaneshwar, Somnatha, Mahakal, Omkar, Nagesh, Trayambakeshwar, Chidambaram, Kedranath, Shambhu, Gauripati, Girijapati, Mahadeo, Umapati, Maulishekhar, Shashank-Shekhar, Chandrashekhar, Lingraj, Devahideva, Hara, Bambhola. His every name makes him unique, peculiar, caring for his believers and followers but careless about himself. He does not run after the worldly affairs and luxuries. He is the divine guru. He is the sun that opens the lotuses of the hearts of great Yogis. He is most compassionate. He absorbs the devotees' afflictions. He is the manifestation of the three worlds. He abides in bliss. He is delighted with devotees. He is forever blissful. He absolves the sins of the faithful. He lights up his devotees. He is beyond thought. He is associated with right thoughts. He is boundless. He is birth-less. He is without beginning or end. He is associated with knowledge. He is supreme in bliss and knowledge. He is slave of the devotees. He responds to the devotees. He is attentive to the devotees. He is the light of the devotees. He is a killer of devotee's grief. He is the experience of devotees. He rescues devotes. He supports devotees. He is approachable through pure thoughts. He is the embodiment of consciousness. He has eliminated bodily

passions.

From the available narratives of many tribal communities (as described in the latter part of this paper) it appears that the Hindu ancestors adopted Him much later. Gods are fathers and Lord Shiva is a father like personality for the all other gods. He is the greatest god, Mahadeo. He helps his indigenous people in all walks of life and in all geographical, ecological and natural conditions. He is malevolent. He is benevolent. He is supreme Lord. He is Lord of lords. The *Taittiriya Samhita* therefore, in the form of Rudra, rightly describes Him:

“Hail to him of the drum, hail to him of the drum stick, hail to the courageous and to the creations, to him on the footpath, hail to him of the pond, and to rivulet, hail to him of the lake. Hail to him of the well. Hail to him of the rain, hail to him of the cloud, hail to him of the sunshine and to him of the storm. Hail to him of the dwelling and to the guardian of the dwelling (TS.4.5.7.)”.

Non-tribal and tribal interaction in ancient India started much earlier than the Vedic period. A minute survey of the *Rig Veda* reveals that these indigenous people were considered low, uncultured, mindless and substandard people and referred to as *Dasavarna* (black colour or Dasa colour), *Adavea* (the godless community), *Ayajyavah* (non-sacrificers), *Anindra* (non-believers in Indra), *Murudeva* (worshippers of dummy Gods), *Sishnadeva* (worshippers of phallic Gods), *Mridhravaaka* (those whose language was obscure and unintelligible), *Maleecha* (a non-Aryan) *anas* (flat nosed people) *Akratuh*, *Avratuh*, *Ayyajnya*, *Vratya*, *Pani*, and *dasa*. Here *anas* is a tribal and *sisnadeva* is the phallus god- Lord Shiva. Tribals with black skin were humiliated by the Vedic community as *dasavarna* where as other tribes were criticized on the basis of their flat nose. They were initially not permitted to mix up with the Hindu community but very soon it was realized that the existence of Vedic cult would not be possible without incorporating the existence of Shiva in the Vedas. And all of a sudden in the later part of *Rig-Veda* we see how Rudra has appeared with his all power and grace combining malevolent and benevolent characters.

The three Vedas – *Rig*, *Sam* and *Yajur* – were recognized as canonical and called *Trayi Vidya* (the threefold knowledge). The *Atharva Veda* (*atharvam* = charm), written later, was included in the canon only after a long struggle. Influenced by the religious and ritual practices of the tribes, which they used to practice in order to appease the gods (and many of them are still doing), it included spells and incantations for the practice of magic.

Slowly and gradually the Vedas developed six major limbs – *Vedanga*-s:

- a) *Siksha* (Phonetic Science which mainly deals with pronunciation)
- b) *Vyakarana* (Grammar)
- c) *Nirukti* (Context conclusive meaning; etymology)
- d) *Chandas* (Meter)
- e) *Jyotisha* (Time Science; astronomy & astrology)
- f) *Kalpa* (Rituals)

The seers and scholars who realized these aspects of knowledge from the Vedas, composed *Sutras* (simple potent phrases which convey a lot of meanings) on each *Vedanga*. *Kalpa-sutra*-s are of four categories, viz., *Shrouta* (collective sacrifices), *Grhya* (family rituals), *Dharma* (occupational duties) and *Sulba* (built sacrificial fireplaces, altars etc.).

According to the different levels of conditioned consciousness there are instructions in the Vedas for working with different controllers, with the aim of reaching different destinations and enjoying different standards of

enjoyment. *Agamas* (emanated scriptures) are books which are classified into five for this purpose:

Basic nature of the Deity	Deity who controls	Branch of Agama
Energy	Shakti	Shakta Agamas
Visible source (Sun)	Surya	Sourya Agamas
Controller	Ganapati	Ganapatya Agamas
Destroyer	Shiva	Saiva Agamas
Ultimate source	Vishnu	Vaikhanasa Agamas

Slowly and gradually the Vedic seers and scholars made the place for the tribal people and their rituals and *tantrik* practices in the Vedic fold. They said, for those who are below standard for Vedic purificatory process, Lord Shiva gave the *Tantra Shastra*-s. These have two general classifications, right and left. While the right aspect contains regulations for purification for those who are grossly engaged in meat eating, intoxication and illicit sex, the left aspect contains low class activities like black magic etc.

We find some legends of Lord Shiva Among the tribals of Chotanagpur, now in Jharkhand. I will begin with the case study of the Santhal – the largest Tribal community of Jharkhand. The supreme God of Santhal is called Marang Buru, Thakur Buru, or Mahadeo. His character is basically very similar to that of Shiva. Interestingly, the great and historical *Jyotirlinga* of Baidyanath, popularly known as Ravaneshwar Mahadeo, is located in the heartland of Santhal at Deoghar. Many Santhals claim that it is the entry point to the Santhal Territory. It is a place where all gods and goddesses reside with Lord Baidyanath. The prominent characteristic of the Santhal religious practices is belief in and worship of spirits or *bongas* and worship in the sacred grove.

Temporal bodies do not bind the *bongas* among the Santhals. The *bonga* world includes the benevolent ancestral *bongas* as well as the malevolent demons that are worshipped and appeased out of devotion and fear. The significant element of Santhal religion is the belief that they are totally surrounded by *bongas*. The *bongas* in their basic nature behave like the *ganas* – Servants, of Shiva. They reside in the village, forest, mountains and the hills. The supreme *bonga* is called the ‘Marang Buru’ – the oldest and the greatest *bonga*. He is also called the ‘Marang Thakur’. According to the Santhal cosmogony, he is the creator of humanity, animal worlds, plants, water, earth, sky and the entire universe. Literal meaning of *marang* is big or huge, and *buru* stands for mountain. He is therefore, the master living in the top most mountains. Does not Shiva live in the top most mountain of Kailash? As the myth goes, he is personified as Thakur or Mahadeo, Shiva. The Santhals in the form of Sarion –sal tree in ‘Jaherthan’ – sacred Grove, symbolize him. A few sal trees are left always and never cut, at the time of establishment of a village. These trees represent the primal grove. These trees, usually seven and sometimes nine, constitute the ‘Jaherthan’, usually situated at the end of the main street and within the village boundary. This is dedicated to Jaher Ayo, a female deity, counter part of Marang Buru. In the sacred grove a small stone placed at the foot of one of the sal trees symbolizes her. As a Hindu worships Mother Goddess Parvati, consort of Shiva, the Santhals worship Jaher Ayo for their general welfare of the village and the

their community.

According to Santhal cosmogony, before the earth was made, the entire universe was full of water and the Santhals did not have a place to sit. The only place they saw was the forehead of Marang Buru or Mahadeo. So the Santhals, to get protection, went and sat on Mahadeo's forehead. After that, Marang Buru created the earth. No images of Marang Buru are made, while worshipping him. At certain occasions they symbolize Marang Buru by making a small lump of jaggery or a small round stone is worshipped. The *pooja* is offered by the Santhals, in their courtyard the idol is not taken or kept in any of the rooms or the *bhitar* (abode of the ancestral *bongas*). During the festivals – *Baha* and *Sohrai*, plucking of *baha* flowers and cooking of new agricultural produce is strictly prohibited till the *pooja* is performed so also during Mahadeo *pooja* eating of seasonal fruits and plucking of new leaves is prohibited. In many Santhal villages I have noticed that the doors of their houses are very small. It is probably done so that a person is able to enter only after bowing his head and rendering respect because the upper portion of the wooden door symbolizes Mahadeo.

Now from Deoghar, I am moving to South Chotanagpur. In the present Gumla district there is a small river, called Ghaghar. It flows on the Ghaghra – Netarhat Road. This river flows at the distance of around 3.50 kilometers from Ghaghra, a block settlement. On the banks of the river Ghaghar, there are several *lingams*, which are worshipped by the Oraons (third largest tribal community in the state) and the Hindu households as well. This place, called Devaki, is a sacred place for both the communities. No day passes when hundreds of devotees do not pay their respect to the countless number of *lingams* here. Such is the significance of this place. Devaki is made of two words: *Dev* and *Aki*. According to the language spoken by the Oraons, the word *aki* refers to house, and *deva* for the gods. It is therefore truly treated as the house or abode of gods. In the river there is a deep cave of huge rock, where a countless number of *lingams* also reside. The place is treated as sacred as Deoghar and the main *lingam* is no less than the *lingam* of Deoghar. The local Hindu believers and the Oraons of Devaki, Bishanpur and nearby villages claim that Lord Ram, while going to Lanka came to this place with his wife Sita and brother Laxman. He offered His prayer to Lord Shiva and the river was purified by the presence of Rama. Now the river is as sacred as the river Ganga. Lord Shiva appeared in the dream of the chief of Oraon and instructed him to help Rama in all directions. The tribals followed the instruction of their Lord and helped Rama. Ram became very happy. Every tribal man and woman, it is said, used to address Rama as O-Ram, O-Ram, and ultimately they were recognized by everybody as the O-Ram community, which later got distorted to Oraon. Now they are proud of their distorted nomenclature.

Such legends do not end here. There are many versions. The second legend is equally interesting. Tanginath - a place located on the top of a small hill around 60 kilometers from Gumla Township, near the Chainpur region – is famous for a famous Shiva *lingam*. On the top of the hill, there are countless number of *lingams* of Lord Shiva called Tanginath. The place is treated as the most sacred place in the region for the local Oraons and the Hindus. The chief priest of this place is an Oraon, who performs *pooja* in a very distinctive style. A small spring flows from the top of the mountain. The falling of water from the spring creates a wonderful music. The birds – small and big – sing twittering sound and make it charming for a visitor. To irrigate around 150 acres of land the residents use this pure and non-polluted spring-water. Because of easily availability of spring-water, this 150-acre land is always wet. As a result, two paddy crops in a year are grown here. *Churva* – double pressed rice – is the only item offered to the *lingams* as *prasada* everyday by the priest. How the word Tanginath came to existence, is not known to the historian, but the local people know it. The local people shared an interesting anecdote with me during my visit to this place where I went as pilgrim, not as an anthropologist.

According to this anecdote an Oraon youth went to top of this mountain everyday with his *tangi*, hand – axe, and bow and arrows to prey on the birds, animals and collect firewood, fruits and roots. One day he failed to get anything for his livelihood. In order to get some roots for food, he began digging a soft surface on the top of the hill. He did not get anything and after reaching some depth, he could not manage to dig the surface any further. Ultimately he came back to his hamlet in helplessness and hunger. He had never experienced such a bad day in his life. He could not eat anything at night and slept. At night

Lord Shiva appeared in his dream and said:

“Dear Son, I am sitting in the place, where you have tried to dig to get roots for your livelihood, Your axe has hurt the top most layer of my *lingam*, as a result, I am bleeding profusely. You, better talk to your village folk and nearby and nearby people and start worshipping me regularly. As you are the first person who has discovered me, only you and your family members would be allowed to act as the chief priest of this place. There are thousands of gods, and goddess living here with me. They all must be worshipped regularly. You have dug me with your Tangi so this place will be named after your tangi – Tanginath”.

Next morning he shared his dream with his family members and fellow villagers. They all went to the top of the hill where they found a huge and thick *lingam* of Lord Shiva. The upper most layer of it was bleeding profusely. It was finally dug out and reinstated on the center of the hill. A huge iron-made *trishula* (trident) was already present there. No sign of rust can be traced here it is totally rust free. It is perhaps the heaviest *trishula* in India. From that very day it was decided that the man, who had hunted the *lingam* unknowingly, with his axe, would be the chief priest of the temple. And the place was named after the name of his *tangi* – *Tanginath*. The local king donated around 150 acres of the land for growing paddy for the *prashada* to Shiva. The land was donated to the priest.

In Hindu theology Shiva is identified with a family having wife, sons, and surrounded by small, big, species as ferocious creatures like Basaha bull (Nandi bull), snake with its dangerous hood, mice, peacock etc to name a few, but Hindu saints, seers and scholars do not give in to a situation in which Shiva has a mother, father, brother or sister. Such anecdotes or narratives are prevalent among the tribal and non-literate as well as untouchable communities in India where in Shiva has been projected as a loving son of his mother. During my recent visit to Karnataka I collected one such narratives from the low caste Veersaiva community. In South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka there is a large number of devotees of Lord Shiva known as Veersaivas. Most of them are from the lower communities. In the Veersaiva tradition we find a devotee-character Beejamma. She is surprised to see the Lord as parentless and inquires from him why it is so. She herself asked many questions and give answers to them as well. This narration goes like this:

“How was he even born without mother? Perhaps the mother of the three worlds is dead. Alas! What can be done about this? Wasn't I very sad when my mother died? Doesn't everyone experience such grief? But if he did have a mother, how could she have let him become an ascetic? If he had a mother, how could she allow him to drink poison? If he had a mother, how could she let him wear an animal skin? How could a mother let him wear snakes? Would a mother let her son wear ashes all over his body? Would a mother let her son wander about all over the world? Could a mother let her son live in cremation ground? The only explanation is that he does not have any mother. That is why he has become such a rascal and gotten into so much trouble.

If he did have a mother to nurse him, she would have served him butter and given him a lot of milk. She would have been fully aware of when he was hungry, and she would have given him enough milk to fill his stomach. She would have lovingly cared for him, and she would have raised him affectionately.

Even without a mother he is very big. If he had a mother, imagine how big he would have become. No matter how big a boy is, wouldn't he grieve without a mother to take care of him at the time of marriages, domestic festivals, feast days, and celebrations? It right to remain silent when a thing like this is going on? Let me become Haras's mother. A women who will take care of him without holding back anything

will be the right mother for him.” Bejjamma began to think of herself as the Lord’s mother and he became her son.

She poured oil on the *linga* and gave him shampoo. She wiped his nose. She scrubbed his cheeks. She curshed his third eye. She wiped his belly, and patted his back. She wanted the boy to grow big, so she pulled his arms and legs as she massaged them. She rubbed his body with cleaning paste. She held him affectionately. She poured water on his back. She massaged his spine so that he would not be afraid.

With both hands cupped, she poured water over his head. Afraid that some water might get into his mouth, she pressed his stomach and put her hand across his mouth to keep it out. She put turmeric on his body and bathed him. She blew into his eyes and ears to clear them. With her finger she pressed his palate. She immediately wiped off the water that dropped from his body. She took water in her hand and sprinkled it on the earth. And taking a pinch of soil, she applied it as a mark with her thumb. She took the softest ashes that clung to the edge of the pot, and she applied them to her son’s forehead. Afraid that she might retard his growth by carrying him around too much, she gave him a hug and let him down.

Wanting to make his eyes larger, she put lampblack around them. When she applied the lampblack, all of his eyes became one. She gave him milk for her breast, and she did not let birds fly over his head. She gave him a little butter. She slapped his cheeks with her fingers and made him open his mouth and cry. Then she put one finger in his mouth and gave a little mixture of castor oil and milk. After that she consoled him, pacified him, and caressed him. She kissed him to make him laugh and begged him for kisses in return. She asked him who he was. She made her belly into a bed for him and him gentle lullabies. When she did all this and raised him like her own son, Shiva praised her for her innocent, steadfast devotion. And he stayed there and accepted all the services she rendered to him as a son.

Sruti[1] says, “He has no other form” *Smrti*[2] says, “A devotee shall always think of (him),” and, further, it says, “He takes the form in which the devotee thinks of him.” Since these are the words of Hara, how can they be wrong? Isn’t it true that however a devotee conceives of Shiva, that is the form in which he appears?’ said the assembly of devotees, praising her.

After some days had passed, the god of gods wanted to bestow his grace on his mother, so he feigned a terrible sickness. He did not open his mouth to take butter. The mother was shocked. Unable to control

her grief she said my father! My boy! My infant! My little bachelor! My little man! Why don't you suck my breast? When I see your perspiration, my blood runs cold. Oh! How can I even look at you? Am I not your mother? Can I bear all of this? I have no one else but you! You say something and tell me what is wrong? Do you have a sore throat? Is your throat blistered? Do you have a sore palate? I have no idea what medicine will make it better.

She talked deliriously. She fell down and rolled on the floor. In anger she embraced the boy. She covered him up, uncovered him, and covered him up again. She kept watching him and became even more agitated. His belly became bloated. People told her that his condition was so because of a sore palate. Beside herself with fear, she fell into an ocean of grief.

When she saw the condition that her son was in, the women of the neighbourhood said, "You were still a little bit hungry and you went to Odaya Nambi's§. But there was nothing to get there and to eat. You went to Cherama Chakravarti[3] and danced to his music, and you became weak from hunger. Then you realized that those useless activities were not going to fill your stomach, and you quickly came back. So you went and did the king's unpaid labor for *pittavva*. Finally, you found yourself a little something to eat. In the Samavedulu's§ house a calf had died, and they cooked it and fed it to you. And you ate it! Then you went to Karikalavva's§ house and secretly ate mangoes. You went to Chennayya's§ house and gobbled up the leftover rice without even letting your hand rest. You asked Chirutanda Nambi§ for the flesh of his son, and you made a feast of that. Without even pausing, you went on to Nimmavva's§ house and ate there, too. As if that were not enough, Chodavva§ gave you something salty in a bowl, and you ate that, too. You also took morsels of food from the hands of Suriya Chaudiyy§a. I am afraid that you really did do all these things. I heard all of this from a lady yesterday. My boy! Is it good to put me to all this trouble? Why should you dissipate yourself by acting like that? And then why should you eat more than you can possibly hold? Can you survive if you go on eating everywhere but at home? How can you avoid getting bloated if you do that? I will give you my breast again. Furthermore, I will never fail to give you milk and butter. My son don't you know that I will feed you? Why should you behave like this? What you had was always enough before. But now you go out and ask for food without even being contented? Didn't you have enough to eat yesterday? I have not kept anything back from you. Day and night you

never leave my arms. Can there be any boy who is so impossible? She was vexed with him, and she talked intimately with him. Was she not his mother?"

And she finally declared herself to be the mother – say most affectionate mother of the world- of Shiva while saying, "None, are there any mothers in three worlds who are more affectionate than I am? You yourself are witness to the fact that I am treating you like my own life breath. If you had stayed where I put you and if you had eaten when I gave you, would you have suffered from any disease or felt any pain? Is fire attacked by white ants? You have become sick because of the things that you did for yourself. How else would you get such a disease? What shall we do now? Is talking going to cure your illness? Why should I keep asking about your folly? My son, I cannot bear to see your affliction any longer. Because of you I am going to give up my life breath."

As she was about to take it out on her own head, Shiva appeared before his mother, and said, 'Ask whatever you want, and I will give it to you.'

"Son! Do I have anything to ask from you? The only thing I could possibly want would be to have you comfortable, well, and live forever. The parent has more love for child whom she raises than for the child to whom she gives birth. I always want to be able to see you with my own eyes. Therefore, what I really want is to have stay here with me," she said.

"With a gentle smile on his lotus face, he embraced his mother and said, 'because you are my mother, you are my grand mother of the three worlds. Mother, how can a boy ever be sick with a mother like you? And he gave his mother eternal life.

The narrative concludes, "Because she had become the mother of a god who is superior and always blissful, she became known as Ammavva." Naturally She became the mother of the first seed – Lord Shiva – so she naturally is declared as the Beejamma.

During my recent visit to Khed Bramha and Barodara in Gujarat I have collected an interesting narrative about cosmogony dealing with the creation of this world according to the Bhil understanding from Dr. Bhagwan Das Patel, who has been working and collecting the tribal epics now from last 30-plus years. He has collected this narrative from the Dungri Bhils of Vedbramha in Sabarkantha. They have wonderful way of narrating the story of the origin of this earth, which they have passed on from one generation to

the next by the word of mouth. The seeds of these epics are hidden in the *mantras* they have still chanting on many ritual and social occasions. One of their cosmogonies are given below:

In the beginning, there was no pebble stone. There was no mountain. There was no earth. There was no sky. There was no moon. There was no sun. there were no stars. There was no sound. There was hardly any drop of water in the seven *yojanas*. The tremendous amount of water was however available at the top. If that situation had continued today, there would have been fish along with snake instead of human beings. Men would have perhaps learnt the technique to live with the Basuki *naga*. The God would have been compelled to come down to the *patal* to play with the human beings in the area filled with water and water alone. There was no light. There was darkness and darkness alone everywhere. Everything was dead. Such time continued for 20 *yugas*. All of a sudden air appeared in this *yuga* and there was a big fight between the air and the water. As a result the air came down and the water started rolling in the middle. This *yuga* is termed as *Bisa yuga* (poison era). Now Shiva was sent here to control the nature and to put everything in order. The animals, plants, human beings, sun, moon, etc were created. The god was not happy with the human beings particularly with their way of living and behaving. Finally, Manasa Devi was sent from the *patal* in the guise of a fish. She created a very small stick from her navel out of which a lotus was bloomed. Now Shiva started living on this fully bloomed lotus. All human beings now kept worshipping him. "Lord we just want to worship you by living under your lotus feet", urged a few men to the Lord. The Lord thought, "I, now have to create the *Dharatimata* (earth) for these people. But the seed of the earth was in the mouth of Basuki *naga* in the *patal*. "Who will go to bring this seed from the *patal*" After a great thought he himself left his lotus seat for *patal* so as to bring the seed from the mouth of dangerous and venomous Basuki *naga*. But the fear of the *patal* and Basuki *naga* did not allow him to complete the journey. As a result, he came back to his lotus seat leaving his journey incomplete. He got tired and slept on the lotus. Umia Devi appeared from the sweating flown from his body. She respectfully touched the feet of the God as a devotee. The God asked, "Who are you? From where you have come? What exactly do you want?"

Umia Devi replied, "Dear Lord, I am your daughter. Your forehead was sweating profusely while you were sleeping and from that very sweat of yours I am born just now."

God said, "Okay, it is nice that you are born from my sweat but tell me, what can you do for me?"

She replied, "My Lord, I just need your command for doing any assignment that you would like me to do. Believe me, I will perform my duty honestly. Tell me, what should I do for you?"

The God ordered, "My dear daughter you kindly bring the seed of the earth from the *patal*. This is the only assignment that I want you to perform immediately in order to create a congenial place in the form of earth where all men and women, plants and animals, small and big creatures, river and mountains can live in harmony".

Umia Devi took no time to follow his command. She disguised herself as a small creature and left for *patal*. There she found the Basuki *naga* sleeping on the seed of the earth. The seed was covered with his seven-fold body in a round shape. She thought, how to collect the seed from this venomous snake? The dangerous hood of the Basuki *naga* is facing the seed. It appears, he has already completed his sleep and now likely to get up very soon."

Umia Devi used her *tantrik* power and ordered “create a company of Satani warriors.” All of a sudden a company of Satani warriors appeared in front of her. This group could manage to bring the seed lying under of the Basuki *naga*. Now she came to the God happily from the *patal* with the seed of *dharti*. The God became very happy on her success.

Now, with the help of all the characters mentioned above, the God dug the soil beneath his feet and Umia Devi put the seed inside. Crushing the lotus flower and the soil she cooked thick circular bread. Shiva put the bread on the top. The Lord put his fingers on the bread and as a result, the earth appeared in its huge form. He saw this unique creation with his amazing divine eyes. Like a layer of cream in the milk a thick layer of mud was created which converted to the earth layer. This is how the earth came into existence. Satisfied with this development, the God now created Pavandeva (the air-god).

Pavandeva appeared before the God and said, “Let the earth remain green forever. He wanted to blow the wind but there was no greenery at all. He then hit the earth from his feet. The earth started shaking without any balance. This situation put Lord Shiva in a problem, meanwhile he observed that the forehead of Umia Devi was burning with radiant fire. The Lord once again requested her to do something. Few drops of burning radiant fire fell on the ground and Agnideva (fire-god) appeared. All the four corners of the earth caught fire. This fire baked the wet soil of the earth into stone-like solid. Some portions of the soil however, remain unbaked, which got support from the heavy mountains. This was a very balanced creation that gave real satisfaction to Lord Shiva. He saw them further with his divine eyes and created the Vaikunthapuri – paradise. He created creeper, trees, creatures, fruits, yams, roots such as *ketki* (local tree), banana tree, variety of scented plants and flowers and *tudinia* (local flower), etc. He also created mango orchards, Kailashpuri – his abode, Agankot, Manvaataar etc.

The narrative finally concludes that everything ultimately came into cohesive existence, as the God wanted.

The above mentioned narrative reminds us the following words:

To the fearful, hail to the slayer near and far, hail to trees with green tresses, hail to the liberator. Hail to him of the sacred site and him of the riverbank, hail to him on farthest shore, hail to him who crosses over and hail to him who crosses back. Hail to him of young grass and to him in the foam, hail to him in the sands and in the streams (TS.4.5.8).

One of the worshippers of Lord Shiva is the Gaddis – a semi-agriculturist and semi-pastoral community – of the Himalayan range in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The Gaddis have been living in the Dholadhar range of the Western Himalayas. The Gaddi shepherds and many agriculturists practice a seasonal migration, moving to the low valleys in the district of Kangra in winter, and return to their villages in Bharmour in summer. According to Molly Kaushal, “Outstanding features of the Gaddi identity are their land, *gad dhar* and the traditional dress of *chola* (coat), *dora* (girdle) and *chuhali topi* (pointed cap) bestowed upon them by Shiva. Another set of narratives are about emigrant kings who, after having performed great austerities, were granted permission by Shiva to settle in his land. These kings and their subjects came to be identified as Gaddis due to their association with the land through settlement” (Personal communication).

Gaddis believe that Shiva himself in the form of Anajguru (first seed or the seed as divine teacher) created everything. Shiva chose to live on the Mount of Main Mahesh, Kailash, after his marriage to Parvati. In fact he created the Mount himself, situating it right in the middle of this universe. He had dwelt

here ever since with his consort in eternal bliss, bestowing a constant benevolent gaze on mankind, especially towards his chosen devotees, the Gaddis. Seated on his royal seat (*gaddi*) at Gadderan, the homeland of the Gaddis, he created a human form from a very small portion of dirt taken from his body and gave it life by sprinkling water over it and blowing air into its nostrils.

The Koragas of Dakshin Kannada are quite unique and they live in hamlets called *kottas* and they can play as many as 18 music tones from their drums. A kind of unity and the truthful life they live is unique in the world civilization. They also worship Shiva in his many forms. For them Shiva is both unseen as well as seen. They treat the very existence of the Lord as the family member and share everything – pain and pleasure – with him. Every music and rhythm of musical tone connects them with the divine reality of Shiva.

In the course of an indepth study of Saurath, a Scholastician village of Mithila, Bihar, which I was assigned as part of a larger project on Village India undertaken at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the generous villagers narrated the history of their village with three references, (i) Shiva Legends; (ii) Ramayana Legends; and (iii) Genealogical Legends. The description of Shiva legends as explained by the villagers is given below:

The earlier name of the village was Bhagirathpatti-gangapatti, - after the names of two great ancestors: Bhagirathdutta and Gangdutt Sharma. The two brothers were great devotees of Lord Shiva and scholars of eminence. After achieving academic excellence, the Dutta brothers made a visit to the famous Shiva Temple of the coastal region of Saurashtra of present-day Gujarat and offered their prayer to the lord. Lord Somnath was extremely pleased with their devotion and appeared in the dream of the king giving him instructions to appoint them as the chief priests of the Somnath Temple. The Dutta brothers did not break away from their roots in their native village. They purchased land measuring 145 acres surrounding it and established a new village after their names – Bhagirathpatti-gangapatti.

In the 11th century (1025 AD), Mohammad Ghaznavi attacked and plundered the temple of Somnath. Now the Lord again appeared in the dream of Dutta brothers and gave them instructions, to take His *lingam* away from Saurashtra. They followed the instructions and with the *lingam* came down to their native village. They changed the name of the village from Bhagirathpatti-gangapatti to Saurashtra, which later became distorted as Saurath, however they did not share the secret of Somnath with anybody. The *lingam* was kept in a marshy land on the bank of the river Kamla. The Dutta brothers died without telling the story of the *lingam* to anybody.

After 150 years, a saint, Fakirchand, started constructing a *dharmashala* there. All of a sudden at night, Lord Shiva appeared in his dream and told him the entire episode. He said how his men had hurt Him by breaking the upper most part of the *lingam* with an axe. The Lord said.

“I am Somnath Mahadeo of the coastal Saurashtra. After the attack of Mohammad Ghaznavi two religious sons of this village brought my *lingam* here on my instruction. This secret they did not share with anybody, as the fear of Mohammad Ghaznavi was prevalent in Mithila too. This compelled me to live in isolation in a marshy and bushy land. No devotee visits here to offer prayer to me. Now, as you have started clearing this place, I am sure, the devotees of this and surrounding villages will once again take care of me.”

Fakirchand got up early in the morning and recollected his dream. To check the episode, he went to the site and found that his men had unknowingly attacked the *lingam* of Somnath with their axe making it

bleed profusely. In this way the existence of the Lord of Somnath was confirmed. A small temple was erected and facilities such as a well, a small flower garden, a pond etc were made for the devotees.

All narratives, anecdotes, *mantras* and beliefs among the tribals and folk give a scope to see how the basic features (symptoms) of *shivataṭṭav* are retained by these people. Shiva belongs to them and vice versa. The indigenous communities of India have created a unique relationship with him. The Onges of Andaman and Nicobar Islands believe that when they are inside the sea for fish their God, who with his nature is like Shiva, remains in the land killing and keeping away the wild ghosts, bad spirits, dangerous animals, snakes etc., so that when the Onges come back from the sea they should live fear free life. Again, as soon as they come back from the sea to the jungle, their God goes in the sea to control the harmful, ebbs and tides, and also bad and harmful spirits in order to create safe life for his believers. So, he is a household god who resides with the people and for the people. He is unseen but always felt by his devotees. Now, cannot we also create a school of thinkers (or believers) which give an alternative that Shiva is a borrowed god for the Hindus! Shiva might have been named by the Hindus but he is the God of the tribes. The Indian tribes lead their life the way Hindu mythology talks about the lifestyle of Shiva.

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[1] The *Vedas*

[2] The *Dharmshashtras*

§ Low caste characters in the narratives

[3] Low caste king