

MOONGNAG

ABODE OF MOONGLESHER BAIRAVE



Moongnag at village Sirnoo

BY

CHANDER M. BHAT

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Moonghama Village is situated at a distance of about 1.5 km to the South West of Pulwama town. En-route Moonghama there is a small village Sirnoo (a KP Village) and in between Moonghama and Sirnoo is a small hamlet known as Kharpur. Moongnag forms part of hamlet Kharpur. These two villages Moonghama and Sirnoo are so close that members of both the villages participate in each others grief and sorrows. As such Kharpur forms the part of both the villages. There were 6 Kashmiri Pandit families in Kharpur hamlet nick named as Sadh.

Moonghama (*Manglahoma*) and its adjoining villages have been inhabited by the human tribes for the last about 5000 years. The most ancient among the habitations are Murran (*Mayurana*), Kangan (*Kangana*), Tiken (*Tikayana*), and Sirnoo (*Suriayana*). Some of the remains and "murties" have been found in these villages, while excavation, dates back to hey days of the Naga culture. In the year 1980 when Ghulam Ahmad Wani of village Doodura [nearby village of Murran] was constructing a house and during excavation for laying the plinth some idols belonging to the ancient period were found and the same were installed in a temple at village Tengpuna near Pulwama.

Then there are habitations like Mitrigam (*Maitriyagrama*) [birth place of famous patriotic poet Ghulam Ahmad 'Mahjoor'], Pahaligam (*Putrigama*), Zayagam (*Jayagrama*) and Drabgam (*Drabagrama*), which were founded by the Aryans. Akahala too belonged to the Aryan period. Both Shaivism and Buddhism flourished here from the 1st to 12th century. At village Akahala (*Aikshala*) we see a "Chaka-Pal" (*Chakrautapala*), a huge round boulder with a Shiv Linga engraved on it. Some of the finest idols of Vaishno, Durga and Buddha of the Gandhara Art were also found in village Thokerpora, in the year 1976 and all the statues were installed in the same temple at village Tengpuna.

Moongnag is a big spring of fresh water. There is a big temple with dharmshala on the bank of the spring. This spring abounds with fish. Early in the morning Pandits of village Kharpur, Moonghama and Sirnoo used to come here for pooja and after performing pooja put some grains in the spring as food to the fish.

There are some springs of Surya Dev (Sun God) at village Sirnoo and water of these springs is used by the villagers for cultivation/irrigation. Some water of these springs mingles with famous *Dharkol*. The name of village Sirnoo got modified with the passage of time as it was earlier known as Surya.

Moongnag is the asthapan of Moonglesher Bairave who is one of the Aasht Bairav's of the area and elder brother of these eight Bairav's is residing at village Achan and his name is Jagan Nath. One of these Aasht Bairav's is also residing at village Murran.

Festivals like Janamashtami, Shiv Ratri, and Navreh was being celebrated around the spring which comprises one kanal and two Marlas of land. Tenth day *kriya* was also being performed on the bank of this spring. The spring is surrounded with five Chinar trees and one Banyan Tree.

Sirnoo village is also called Sadhu Village as the ancestors of the village were nicknamed as Sadhus. Pandit Shanker Sadh, Pandit Ram Sadh, Pandit Kainth Sadh, Pandit Narayan Sadh are few among them.

These Sadhus were the diciples of Bona Kak of village Pinglena.

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[Shiv Lingam in Moongnag at village Sirnoo]

In Moonghama village there is a Ziarat of Shah Hamdan and Muslim brethren worship there and Pandits also pay humble salutations to the great sofi saint. It is believed that if the soil from the ground of this mosque is rubbed on a person's body that is ill, gets cured within few hours.

There is a verse that is on the tip of the tongue of every member of these villages. It reads as follows:

*"ATH MOONGA NAGAS GAN SAD LAAGAS
BAADAM BAGAS CHI FULYA JAAN."*

The worship of the village gods "Raza Sahib" is most ancient form of the Indian religion. Before the Aryan invasion, which probably took place in the second millennium B.C., the old inhabitants of India, who are sometimes called Dravidians, were a dark-skinned race with religious beliefs and customs that probably did not greatly differ from those of other primitive race. They believed the world to be propelled by a magnitude of spirits, good and bad, which were the cause of all unusual events, and especially of diseases and disasters.

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[Close up of Moongnag Spring]

This worship of the village Deity, or Raza Sahib, as it is called in Kashmiri, forms an important part of the conglomerate of religious beliefs, customs, and ceremonies which are generally classed together under the term Hinduism. In almost every village the Raza Sahib is periodically worshipped and propitiated. Shiva and Vishnu may be more dignified beings, but the village deity is regarded as a more present help in trouble, and is more intimately concerned with the happiness and prosperity of the villagers.

The origin of this form of Hinduism is lost in antiquity but it is certain that it represents a pre Aryan cult of the Dravidian people, more or less modified in various parts of North India by Brahmanical influence; and some details of the ceremonies seem to point back to a tokenistic stage of religion. The normal function of the Raza Sahib is the guardianship of the village, but many of them are believed to have other powers, especially in relation to disease and calamity. The village deities and their worship are widely different from the popular Hindu deities, Siva and Vishnu, and the worship that centres in the great Hindu temples.

Shiva and Vishnu represent forces of nature: Shiva symbolizes the power of destruction and the idea of life through death, Vishnu the power of preservation and the idea of salvation. Both these Gods and the system of religion connected with them are the outcome of philosophic reflection on the universe as a whole. But the village deities, on the other hand, have no relation to the Universe. They are related, not to great world forces, but to such simple facts as choleras, cattle disease etc.

The village deities are almost universally worshipped with annual sacrifices and in Kashmir the same practice continued. The sacrifice of lamb, in Kashmiri "*Raza Kath*" was offered to the village deity or Raza Sahib when the wish made by a villager especially the Pandits was fulfilled. The lamb so sacrificed was then cooked without any spices and distributed amongst the villagers. When the lamb is sacrificed the blood of the lamb is collected in an earthen pot called "*Took*" in Kashmiri and the blood is added to flour to make a paste and this paste is applied to the lid of the pot in which the dish is prepared. All the parts of the

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lamb are prepared including the legs etc. The member who has performed the sacrifice retains big chunk of the dish.

The details of the eight Bairaves with place of residence are as follows:

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|----|------------------|------------------|
| a) | Shri Jagan Nath | Village Achan |
| b) | Shri Nandkisher | Village Sumbal |
| c) | Shri Ganganand | Village Mattan |
| d) | Shri Kakvishal | Village Pargachu |
| e) | Shri Jeevan Nath | Village Ladhoo |
| f) | Shri Moonglesher | Village Sirnoo |
| g) | Shri Omkar Nath | Village Drussu |
| h) | Shri Neilkanth | Village Murran |

Bairave of village Achan, Shri Jagan Nath is the eldest one and that of village Murran Shri Neilkanth is the youngest one. Shri Keshev Nath was the grandfather of the *Aasht Bairaves*. Raza Sahib of Achan and Sirnoo were vegetarian and rest was non-vegetarian.

There was a small spring called Raza Nag in the south of this cremation ground at Village Murran. This cremation ground was having a land of about five kanals. Raza Sahib of Murran often used to visit his brother Moonglesher Bairave at Haarpur, Sirnoo and he has been seen by some of the members of this village. Shri Aziz Chaan (carpenter) was running a water mill at Gratabal and he told me that he has seen Raza Sahib several times. 'Some unusual sound was heard by me. This sound was heard for years together and I noted the day and date. Once I went to the mill at night, to watch the source of these unusual sounds on that particular day, which was noted by me. To my surprise, I saw an elderly person with white turban riding a black horse going towards village Sirnoo. The sound was coming from the iron bells tied to the horse. I bowed before him from the mill and went away to my home' said Shri Aziz Chaan (an elderly person of 92 years of village Murran).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Chander M. Bhat

Born on 20th March, 1960 in Murran a village in North Kashmir, Chander M. Bhat is presently working as an Assistant Supdt. Posts, in Department of Posts, Govt. of India. His articles regarding Posts and of non-political nature stand widely published in various papers and magazines of the country. A booklet "How to Collect Stamps" published by the Department of Posts, has earned him genuine accolades. He worked on the project of tracing the roots of his co-villagers and of the village Murran, resulting into the culmination of a widely acclaimed book "Murran ...My Village. Man with depth, Chander M. Bhat has also another book, "Ocean by Drops" (collection of poems) in his vase having colorful poems. His book "Ancient History of Jammu and Kashmir", confirms his researching capability. Various research papers like "The Splendor that is Amarnath" and "Vitasta...The Sacred River of Kashmir" are valuable additions to his works that has proved very fruitful and guiding force in the exile period of Kashmiri Pandits community of which the author is also a member.

Presently the author is working on "OOL...THE NEST" - a six volume project [each volume of about 2500 pages] on all the 595 Kashmiri Pandit villages of Kashmir.

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