

Popular Beliefs: Understanding the Hilly Society of Shimla

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Abstract:

The western Himalaya is the home of gods and goddesses and of god-fearing and honest people who have respect for all the religions. Their old conventions have never stood in their way of progress in this science dominated world. Their gods never fought for religion. Their fight was always aimed at promoting peace and harmony and feeling of mutual trust among the people

Keywords: Kul-Devata; Sthan-Devata; Gur;Doom; Bhut; Deity and Belief

Normally popular beliefs of a region reflects on its times and society. It portrays the true picture of life in the hilly regions of Shimla as envisaged since time immemorial. From the remotest time, man has been worshipping the supernatural forces, which were beyond his reach. Now the question arises in the mind of human being. What is worship? This term cannot be properly translated into any language, purposefully. One may say that the worship is the active side of the religion. Even, so the meaning does not stop the notion of the act, it is the belief that stays the attitude; it is the individual, family or clan which empowers the belief. Nor it can be defined by the objects for in the context of worship, it included not only communion with the deity, but also traffic with the devils or fiends; while it cannot be separated from the intercourse of man with man. It is believed that the strange and dangerous objects and phenomenon as well as the fatal incidents added to the turning of the man towards worship of invisible forces.

We have direct experience of various kinds or phenomena, internal and external. Within ourselves we experience the feeling of hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain, love and hatred, anger and fear, wonder and admiration, attraction and repulsion etc. In relation to ourselves and others around us, we have the experience of birth and death, growth and decay, health and disease, strength and weakness, etc. We are directly conscious of taking the outer world into ourselves through knowledge and of producing changes and modifications in the external world through our will and effort. Consequently in course of our progressive acquaintance with our environments, we not only form distinct conception of phenomena of light heat, sound, touch, natural phenomena, as rain and storm, mist and cloud, thunder and lightning, scorching summer and biting winter, flowing rivers and billowing Seas, extensive forests and sky larking mountains, above all supernatural human being- all these are of great interest to us".¹ This forms the basis of our future conduct in life.

We are born with the instinct of self- preservation and self- development, and the more this instinct mover us onward in this path, the more do we become conscious of how much we have to depend upon phenomena for qualification of our desires and inclinations and for the preservation and development of our life. We thus experience a close relationship between ourselves and the phenomena and world in wh-

ich we live and move.

In course of the development of our experience, we learn to conceive of some kinds of phenomena as good and beautiful, since they confer benefits and pleasure upon us, and some as evil and ugly, since they inflict injuries and unpleasant sensations upon us. Some are found to be beneficial under certain condition and injurious under others. Similarly some of the supernatural powers are found to be beneficial and friendly, when we can turn them into good account by dint of our own efforts, and injurious and hostile, when we cannot properly adjust ourselves with them or employ them wisely to serve our purposes. Therefore, some of the supernatural powers, which were the grounds of all powers and phenomena of the world, the recognition of whose existence was found by reason to be necessary for an adequate explanation of the phenomena of experience, were termed as *Devatas* or *Deo* (Deities). Hence, the primitive men, just emerging from the depths of a merely animal existence, found themselves face to face with mighty mysterious natural forces. They saw, felt and dreaded their operation. At times, they personified and defied them, and gave them names such as who all were/are expressive of the awe as exercised by their power, which impressed them to either worship them for grant of a particular wish or to seek their appeasement out of fear. They thus came to propitiate them.

The worshipping of the clan deity (*Kula-Devatas*) and village deity (*Sthan Devatas*)¹ is the most significant aspect of the traditional and incomprehensible folk of the Shimla hills, which had substantially contributed to the making of the culture of hilly society.² The predominant belief of the people of this region centred around the idea that their lives and their world is controlled, in addition to the *kula-devatas* and *sthan devatas* by innumerable spirits both good and bad.³ These were responsible for all unusual and unexpected boons and events, as well as disasters and calamities. Every clan and village is under the protection of these local deities, who are their principal guardian deities,⁴ the hilly folk relies on their clan and village deities for an easy solution of their problems and misfortunes. Therefore, their religious beliefs did not advance beyond the traditional worshipping of their clan deity and village deity. It can be safely inferred that though the hilly folk is unaffected by Brahminical ideas and beliefs, yet some of the inhabitants, besides worshipping their clan and village deities, also worshipped,⁵ different divine forms of Shiva and Vishnu. But they did not worship them as their principal guardian deities. It appears that the concept of universe did not interest the hilly folk.

The clan deity and the village deity are regarded as the principal guardian deities and worshipped under a great variety of different names in different villages and clans. In every village the shrine of these local deities could be seen. Some of the deities are periodically worshipped and propitiated. Whenever, the natural calamities befell on the villagers and draught hit the village or cattle disease makes its appearance, then the whole clan turned for protection to the clan deity/village deity. It is observed that this local vis-à-vis any other universal god's deities are considered to be more helpful in adversity and calamity. During such times, the *kula-devatas/sthan devatas* are approached by the member of the victim's family or elders of the village through *Gharinta*, *Gur/mali* (whose body the spirit of *kula-devata/sthan devata* take possession of) for knowing the cause of trouble/calamity and the remedies thereof. The *Gharinta* answers the queries. The remedies to these as suggested by the *kula-devata/village deity* are religiously followed. If need arose, then the concerned deity is appeared by the sacrificial offerings which consisted of sheep, goats or buffalo.⁶ Water is often pours over the animal's back or into the ears and if the animals shivers, then it is presumed that the sacrifice is accepted by the related deity. Later the actual mutton of the animal, so killed, is consumed as *prasadam* by the family members and people of the concerned village.⁷

According to the local traditions, these deities were more intimately concerned with the happiness and prosperity of the clan and the village. The people believed that even the cattle's are protected from the fatal diseases by these deities.⁸ One peculiar feature of these deities is that the female deities are predominant and their male counter parts occupied only a subordinate status. It was so because of the belief that the female are connected with fertility. Most of the female deities are shown to have male attendants, who are supposed to guard the shrines and carry out the commands of the female deities. Although the male deity has a shrine to himself, but his shrine is generally crowded with clay figures and mask of female deities.⁹ It is observed that the Temple priest (*Pujari*) is bound to offer prayer and offerings first to the female deity and then to the male deity.

Undoubtedly the most popular guardian deity of the region is Kandhasan (female deity) named after the highest peak of the region called kandha.¹⁰ She is worshipped everywhere throughout the region. No doubt every village has its own guardian deity, but all of them were subordinate to guardian deity of the region. Perhaps the real reason for such veneration over the other deities is that she is believed to be thoroughly feminine, hence could be more easily propitiated by prayer and offerings. Moreover, it was believed that she is ever-ready to defend them from evil. But she is considered to be more irritable, uncertain, and wayward in her temper and moods, at times dangerously spiteful, and prone to inflict diseases and calamities, if offended by neglect. This powerful female deity is worshipped by the inhabitants to appease her volatile anger, since it was believed that she could, in such a fit even devour and consume everything that came in her way. It is said that she relished blood. Therefore, periodically, a buffalo is sacrificed to quench her thirst for blood.¹¹

Another powerful female deity of the region is kotkali, locally known as *Panchali*-yet another form of *kali*. This form of the deity the most terrible, is worshipped at Dhangvi village of the region according to a Rajput *Gur/Ghdinta* Gopal Chauhan priest of the Kotkali, she could be described as follows.

One was required to adore with Ghee, Blood of Animals and oblations that is kotkali who has a terrible gaping mouth and uncombed hair; who four hands and a splendid garland formed of the heads of the giants. She killed a Superman called Bhamu Rao-eater of women's breasts and drank their blood; who holds a sword in her lotus-like hands; who is fearless and awarded blessings, who has a string of skulls round her neck and a throat besmeared with blood; who had terrible teeth and a smiling face; who is supposed to be a female deity of furious temper. It is this female deity, thirsty for blood of animals, who has to be appeased every now and then. Every family of the village is supposed to sacrifice a goat (as *Bhundo*) on a particular day in the month of Posh.¹² In the village Mashu, another tutelary female deity in the form of Durga, is worshipped, who is very popular among the peasantry. Every year during harvesting season (April) a fair *Zat* was held in her honour and different local Rajput clans used to play the game of archery called *Thotha*.

It is observed that the people of the region also used to worship certain tutelary male deities, such as, the Nag Devata¹³ of Shila Gawan Bhawan-*Ishwar Devata* of Pujarli and *Doom Devata* of Sharmila and Kuthan. The cult of the *Dooms* was one of the most remarkable cults of the Shimla hills and was a godling of the first rank. The two brothers *Doom-Sharta* and *Dum Sanata*¹⁴ are worshipped in many parts Kotkhai tehsil of Shimla district.

These male deities are very popular, generally honoured and propitiated throughout the Kotkhai region of the upper Shimla hills. Through these male deities of the region are regarded as martial deities, yet they were essentially homely clan-deities. Fighting and activity of any such type is not repugnant to their nature. It can be safely inferred that the Dum cult is an offshoot of hero worshipping. According to

Kanet (Rajput) *Gharinta* of Dooms as per the Mali of the Kuthan *Doom Devata*, the Dooms guarded the fields, crops, and herds of the peasantry, and drive away their enemies, the devils and fiends, who are ever on the watch to inflict disease, blight and other calamities. The inhabitants of the region invited these male deities to their homes for *Kheen* or *Jagera* (Religious Rituals) and appeased them. These clan-deities are invoked at festive gatherings, and offered a share of the food consumed. Their bodies were believed to be composed of ethereal particles; dependent for nourishment on the invisible elementary essence of the substances presented to them and to be furnished with senses capable of being gratified by the aroma of Ghee and Barley grain that are offered in fire. The *Zatra*¹⁶ (religious fair) of these deities is held every 3rd or 8th years and *Shant*¹⁷ (get together of local deities as well as the people of the region) ceremony is held every 25-40 years in their honour, when numerous animals are sacrificed. The images of the *Dooms* are decorated with ornaments and carries out in palanquins (*Palaki*) throughout the villages of the region under the guardian deities. The clan deity and village deity of Shimla hills, it is believed that these deities expect regular meals, occasional baths and constant attention.¹⁸

The worshipping of the clan and the village deity seem to be a combination of different local beliefs, superstitions and customs. The tradition as a whole might be redolent of the region. It can be safely inferred that the tradition of worshipping clan deity and village deity did not indicate any idea of praise, or expression of gratitude or desire for any spiritual blessing. The devotees just want to get rid of disease, calamity or to avert some of the minor perils in life. Therefore, the worshipping of these deities takes place on the occasion of some disaster or break out of disease. It is the general attitude of the people of the region that whenever, misfortune befalls, and then they take steps to appease the wrath of their clan or village deities.

Beliefs are the important aspects of the hilly society hence regulate all life. The significance of the study of beliefs proves the fact that beliefs have entered the warp and woof of the lives of the people and gives a meaning and purpose to it. Belief and faith, often regarded as synonyms', are interchangeable in common parlance, but are not so in reality. The earlier word 'Belief' is now commonly termed as 'faith; now faith has become a religious word for inner attitudes of conviction or trust. It can be applied to any system of religious beliefs and, "Worship that is clearly formulated and definitely accepted."¹⁹ Belief is less restricted in its application than faith. It includes every degree of convictions from the feeblest to the strongest. Whereas religious beliefs come under faith, all other forms of conviction pertaining to secular sphere are known as beliefs. An ordinary secular belief is different from a religious belief.²⁰ for it might even suggest nothing more than one's mere mental acceptance.

However, beliefs occupy a unique position in the life of every individual because it is natural for the mind to believe. There is an emotional necessity of holding on to beliefs. It is difficult to survive without beliefs in one form or the other. Every human being, whether theist or atheist holds innumerable beliefs. There are various needs of man- physical, logical, aesthetic and religious etc. Further it is to experience satisfaction that he religious in beliefs.²¹ Beliefs are indispensable for a person because without them, one would grope in wilderness and chaos. In fact, a man is a product of his beliefs which centres on theism and shun deism. The primary object and the village deity and many more such form assume proportions equivalent to God. Mahesh Sharma rightly argues that "the people are generally pantheistic but specifically they are henothistic."²² No doubt some of the inhabitants are pantheists', but to apply the term pantheism in general to this region is a grave mistake. A small segment of hilly society might be pantheists, but a larger segment of population are the believers in one personal deity, who cannot be

termed as pantheists, but are henotheists.²³ But such generalization of religious ideology sometime may confuse an avid follower of this science.

Beliefs from the earliest times in every kind of demonical influence have always been an essential ingredient in hilly society of the region. Their lives were environed by the world of spirits which controlled all the aspect of their lives. In fact, all troubles, problems, dangers, and disasters, famines, diseases with varying degrees of rank, power and malevolence. According to the local belief, some aimed at destroying the entire clan or village, some delighted in killing men, women, and children out of a sheer thirst for blood. Some takes a more misfortune.²⁴ These malignant spirits, take possession of the bodies of victims besides causing inflections at lives and often impelled them to frantic movements, in which all devils take particular delight.²⁵ Every village has also a guardian deity of its own to protect themselves from the attacks of evil spirits.

It is extremely difficult to classify/categorize these spirits of vague and amorphous beliefs. According to the local tradition, the spirits are classified as *Bhuts* (Ghost) *Paries* (Fairies) *Jal Paries* (Water spirit or fairies) *Suchi Paries*, (sky spires), *Chhidra* (terrifying spirit), *Banshira* (head less demon) *Dag* (female fiends) etc. According to a local belief, *Bhuta* (Ghost) is a spirit that emanated from a man who died a violent death either in an accident, or by way of suicide, or is killed by someone, and whose last rites had not been performed properly. The interview of local peoples and priests led me to the conclusion that the term *Bhut* is applied to all demons and ghosts indifferently. Such spirits revisit their old homes on haunts and took their abode in trees, and are addicted to roaming about between the 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. At times they would appear as monkey, cat, serpent, dog, or in other animal's forms. They can exercise both the good and evil powers over their living successors. Some of the principal *Bhut* are as follows:- *Dhaundhi Ra Bhut*, *Jahawal Ra Bhut*, *Teelu Ra Bhut* and these *Bhuts* of the region are appeased through offerings. In sickness or misfortunes, a big cake of half-cooked wheat flour with Ghee is rote around the head of the victim around at mid-night. Then this is placed on a crossing of four roads that led to the house or to the village to which *Bhut* (ghost) belongs. It is believed that *Bhut* does everything by night and it cast no shadow during its movement. Ceremonial purity was the only safe guard against the *Bhut* attacks.

Generally, these spirits are under the control of the spirit priest. The spirit-priest is believed to possess some supernatural powers, by virtue of which they are able to control these spirits. If someone suffered from a disease and does not recover with medicines, a priest (who possessed the knowhow of placating the spirit) is called and requested to diagnose the disease. Then the spirit priest communicated with the spirit through telepathically. If the priest finds any ordinary symptom of abnormality in the behavior of affected person, then it is regarded as a sign of demonical possession. The victims are made to inhale the smoke of chillies or are beaten up with thorny sticks. If the spirit could not be dispelled by these means, then a cake from seven kinds of grains (*Satnago*), is made, four or five little lams were then lit and placed upon the cake. Thereafter, the cake is placed on a stone, and taken to the cremation ground at mid-night, when the spirit of the deceased would enter the empowered person and through him demand what is wanted by the spirit. Full reliance is placed upon such spoken words of empowered person and the demands are religiously met.²⁶

The headless demon (*Banshira*) was considered as the chief demon or spirit of the jungle. The headless demon of Dandhi (name of place) is considered to be the protector of cattle, crops and travellers of the local area. If this demon calls any person by name or whistle then immediate harm could be averted by not heeding to his call.²⁷ It is a common practice among the hilly people to conservation a piece of forest

to the worship of such spirit. No tree is cut from that land even the tree leaves and branches are not broken,²⁸ it is believed that not only living beings are amenable to the influences of the spirit, but even inanimate objects too.

According to yet another belief if a woman die during her pregnancy, or die within the forty days of the birth of the child, then the woman became *Chureil* (female fiend). Female fiends are always malignant, especially towards the members of their own family, though they can assume the form of beautiful women. No one could survive if sighted by a *chureil*; and to avoid this fate a black goat has to be sacrificed to appease the female fiend.²⁹

The water fairies (*Suchi Paris*) and sky fairies mythical and, are generally considered as fiends. The fear of these fiends has deep impact on the psyche of women folk of the region,³⁰ it is believed that women are easy prey to them especially when they visit the sources of water, such as well, tank, streams and rivers etc. It is observed that the impact of these fiends could be averted by offering seven coloured flowers in the well or stream at mid-night with the help a priest well versed in *Markandya Purana*.

Further, the local myths of the region tell us about the concept of *Dag* (Witch), who are described as having, 'her eye brows meet, she has dull eyes, large cheeks, widely parted lips, protruding teeth, a long neck, pendulous breasts, a large belly and broad expanded feet and long tongue'. She appears as if the creator has made her a specimen of ugliness. It is believed that *dags* (witch) were capable of flying through the air and has magic power of landing in water. It is believed that they are supposed to envy the possession of a male heir. They are capable of destroying the crops, inflicting disease on children and the village folk. They can draw blood from their breast and could stretch their tongue as long as they wanted.³¹ It is believed that witches were expert in extracting the liver of the human beings and cattle and devouring the same. To avert the evil influence of witches, grains of barley and rice are mixed with cow-dung and plastered on the doors of the house.

Large segments of hilly society are of the views that certain individuals could cast a demonic spell. This power is either voluntary or involuntary. This spell in variably had malignant-influence upon both the animate and inanimate on which the evil eye of the individual rested. The superstitious beliefs about the disastrous influence of the malignant look is so deep rooted that every human misfortune is attributed to the evil eye which brought pain, sickness and all that is undesirable in human life.

The hilly people of the region believed that when the aged are not looked after properly and die aggrieved at the hands of their descendants, then the deceased becomes *Pap* (fiend) whose curse is usually supposed to befall the guilty member of the family. In case, there is illness or calamity in the family then the clan-deity is consulted, who would trace the cause of illness or calamity. If the cause of illness or calamity is found to be the displeasure of the deceased, then the idol of the deceased was put in the house and worshipped. If worshipping of the *Pap* was dispensed with, it was believed that leprosy or an epidemic or other calamities would overtake the family.³² The *Pap* (fiend) is also responsible for the loss of cattle and bareness, and children are not born in the affected family. The spirit of the deceased would take possession of family members, who would begin to swing his head and suggest remedies for epidemic and calamities.

Consequently, these hilly regions were/are flooded with a variety of shrines. Stone slabs were erected in honour of the spirits as the memorial of the dead,³³ these are usually built or placed by the sides of streams and, *Bawarhi* (wells). It was believed that raising these structure were on the edge of the water sources, would quench the thirst of the spirits. The rough outline of a pair of feet was carved on a block of rock near the spot which would depict that the work was a memorial act.³⁴ It is observed that this

immense realm of spirits, surrounds the hills of Shimla, and these myriads constantly exert an influence upon the inhabitants.

Superstitions are universal phenomena among mankind since it came into being. From cradle to death, man has wilfully been servile to these. He who was unable to resist the temptation to react in some special way to those situations, where superstition was traditionally sanctioned wilfully acquiesced to them,³⁵ both literate as well as illiterate believed in superstitions since inception of life. The mental processes concerned with fear and the involvement of the subconscious lead the individuals submit to the irrational beliefs. This irrational fear forms the base of bogey of superstitions and the following superstitions have flourish in the atmosphere of ignorance and mental fear, over long period of time.

A superstitious mind has always attached emotional and religious value of dream to them. It is believed that during sleep, the spirit of an individual visited the world of spirits and procured information,³⁶ false analogy and symbolism had influenced the origin and growth of superstitions connected with dreams.

It is believed that a dream at the end of a night is always quickly fulfilled. If in somebody dreams a dead relative appeared it stood for the death of a relative. An elephant in a dream meant that God Ganesh is angry and must be appeased. If a little baby child appeared saying pleasant things *kula-Devata* (Clan-deity) is benignant, but if something unpleasant is said clan-deity needed to be appeased. To see raw meat portended death and sickness in relations. To swim in clear water and reach the shore predicted recovery from the long illness. It was held that if a lady appeared dressed in red, with heavy ornaments, the lady would be goddess in disguise. If a person is seen, being dragged away by his dead relatives in a dream, it proclaimed his death.

The dreams were accepted as legitimate source of divine communication. In a dream, the deity is believed to reveal himself in a special way to the individual declaring the will of heaven and predicting the future,³⁷ the superstitious minds of the region were always afraid of inauspicious dreams as these predicted some evil to them.

Superstitions regarding good and bad omens are casual occurrences and phenomenon or incidents which were supposed to be portent of either the good or the bad destiny.³⁸ C.S. Burna in the context opines that “Curiosity, the desire for knowledge, the craving to penetrate mysteries and to know what the future holds in store, along with an animistic attitude of mind and a vague sentiment of awe towards incomprehended things are the root of belief in Omens.”³⁹

It is believed that the Extra Sensory Perception i.e. the 6th sense is much more developed in birds and animals. Consequently, the faculty of ‘seeing’ beyond is more functional in them. They act under supernatural impulses. Therefore, many superstitions are connected with bird’s animals, and different meanings were given to their odd behavior. If an owl hoots on a house then, the inhabitant is required to quit it for some days. Dogs are peculiarly gifted for they could see the fiends moving about and so their howling was a portent of evil. It was an evil omen to see a crow a time of one’s journey. Crow on one’s left hand, a dog running from one’s left to right, a snake appearing on one’s right to left were considered to be a inauspicious omen. It is believed that the howl of a female jackal is very bad omen, because it is considered as a messenger of *Yama* (God of Death). A crow coping on the roof of a house denoted the visit of a relative. It is considered a misfortune if one encountered an ass, a bull-buffalo and a cat early in the morning. Encircling of one’s head by vultures, too, is an evil omen. It was believed that if the buffalo delivered calf on Wednesday, it do not augur well for the owner. He has to give away the new born calf. If a cow would lie down while being milked, or blood came from her teats then the animals is supposed to be given away. If a cock, crows during mid-night, then it ought to be killed at once, if it crowed thrice,

portended death in the family; A white spot on the forehead a horse is unlucky to its owner for it portends the death of its owner.

Further, local myth forbade washing her head by a woman on Tuesday because this would result in, her brother falling sick; likewise she must not wash her head on Thursday for she would become widow. Shoes lying over the other indicated travel. It is dame luck to find silver but not “Gold. When about to undertake a journey, it indicated fortune if one came across a sweeper, a corpse, but a misfortune if one to meets a *Brahmana* (Priest) without *tilakam* on forehead. A village headman or a washer man was also equally considered symbols of ill luck. It is considered ill luck to sight a widow in early morning but woman with a child vice-versa. When setting out on any purposes, if one sees an empty bucket it does not augur well but a sign of good luck if the bucket is full of water or milk. Drinking milk before starting a journey was inauspicious whereas drinking sweet curd is considered auspicious. The dictum, therefore, is never proceeding on a journey if one called from behind at the take-off. If a man sneezes, when about to start a journey, the journey would be unsuccessful. So is the belief.

The twice born (upper caste) would never eat the food that has been cooked in the house during an eclipse solar or lunar. It must be given away to lowly people. Itching in the right palm indicated gain of wealth, and in the sole of the foot that a journey is near. Ringing in the right ear means pleasant news in prospect, but bad news if it is in the left ear. The throbbing of the right eye in case of males indicated good fortune, but fluttering of a woman’s heart predicted a misfortune. The throbbing of the left arm and shoulder of man are also considered to be equally inauspicious omen.

However, the birth marks on the body of a person were interpreted as differently. It is believed that children with dark marks on their eyes and forehead are considered inauspicious and indicated misfortune in the form of the destruction of the family. There is a strong belief that moles on one’s body too portend one’s fortune. The hilly people of the region gave due consideration to such moles. Mole on the nose and breast of a girl portend that her husband would be polygamous.

Thus, it can be safely surmised that the clan deity (*Kula-Devatas*) and village deity (*Sthan Devata*) are the earliest and more primitive objects of worship, while the inhabitants of region are, from the cradle to the burning ground, victims of a form of mental demon phobia. However, most of the beliefs come to us readily from antiquity. They are transmitted from person to person, and often accepted in childhood alongside more effective behavioural patterns. It is observed that the superstitious persons are always obsessed by a fear in their mind which make them to feel that their lives are environed by the world of spirits.

Thus it can be surmised that from the above study of the various facets of supernatural the people of the hilly society believed in the validity of both religious as well as secular beliefs and superstitions which portended joy and misery to them, though there is large variants connected with them such as birds, animals, natural phenomena, occurrences and the sight of a particular person. The popular faith, beliefs and superstitions are generally based on the principle that whatever is agreeable to their lives and whatever is pleasing to their mind is considered to be auspicious. On the contrary that which creates trouble to their activities and what even caused fear t them is inauspicious.

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 9. Nothing can be said in precision regarding the origin of the worshipping of Kula-deo (clan-deity). It seems that system of worshipping represented a very primitive cult of hilly people and some ceremonies seems to be as old as a toteminstic stage of religion. B R Sharma, "The Institutions of the village Gods in the Western Himalayas" in N.K. Rustomji and Charles Ramble, *Himalayan Environment and Culture*, Shimla, 1990. W. Crooke, *An Introduction to the popular religion of Northern India*, 1984. C.H. Buck, *Faith, Fairs and Festivals of India*, Calcutta, 1971. Mian Durga Singh, ' A Report n the Panjab Hill Tribes from the Native point of View,' in the *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXXXVI, December, 1907.
 10. These Kula-Deos were concerned only with the affairs of clan and nothing to do with universal affairs. Sthan- Devata was usually concerned or confined to his or her jurisdictions or villager. In addition, female deities were worshiped only as mother and sister of the male deity, but the same

- status was denied to the wife of the male deity. This reflected the male pre-dominance in husband – wife relationship in Western Himalayan society. Shantilal Nagar, Indian Gods and Goddesses, Vol. II, Delhi, 2000. E.B. Tylore, primitive Culture, Henry Whitehead, VGSI. T.A.P. Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, Madras, 1914. Mahesh Sharma, The Realm of Faith.
11. These clay or bras figures of female deities were of sister and mothers of goddesses of the male-deities. H.A. Rose, Indian Religions, Henry Whitehead, VGSI, R.J. Blackham, Incomparable India, V.S. Agrawala, Devi-Mahatma: The Glorification of the Great Goddess, Varanasi, 1963 (hereinafter) DMGGG. E.O. James, The Cult of Mother Goddess, London, 1959 (hereafter) CMG, Shantilal Nagar, IGG, Vol. I, G.C. Chauhan “Rare Sculptures and Panchayatana Type of Temple at Masali and Virata”, Shimla, H.P. in HPS, Delhi, 1999, p. 5-9.
 12. Balson state was divided into four *Faties* (Division) i.e. four natural division of the region such as Parali, Pachad, Dual and Beghawan. Pamela Kanwar, EUNCHP. G.C. Chauhan, “Feudal System of Balson and Baijnath States” in HCV, Shimla, 1996, p. 120-121. C.L. Dutta, RSHS. Hyde H. Montgomery, SHSUB.
 13. Sacrificed Buffalos flash was distributed among the *Koli* low caste of hilly society. E.O. James, CMG, Henry Whitehead, VGSI. Mahesh Sharma, The Realm of Faith. Chetan Singh, Natural Premises: Ecology and Peasant Life in the Western Himalaya, 1850-1950, Delhi, 1998.
 14. The Bar (mass killing of goats) took place in the month of *Posha* (December) to please the goddess and to quench the blood thirty male attendant of the deity. H.A. Rose, Indian Religions. V.S. Agrawala, DMGGG. Henry Whitehead, VGSI, R.J. Blackham, Incomparable India. Ajit Mookerjee, Kali, the Feminine Force, new York, 1988.
 15. H.A. Rose, Indian Religions, p. 147. H.A. Rose, “Hinduism in the Himalayas”, Indian Antiquary, XXXVI, 1907. A Glossary of the Caste and Tribes of the Panjab and North-West Frontier Province, Vol. 1, Lahore, 1919. These godding of the first rank were, worshiped with the cult of female deities, such as Nagarkoti and Kotkali. Laxmans Thakur (ed.) Where Mortals and Mountain Gods Meet, Shimla, 2001. James Fergusson, Tree and Serpent worship, Delhi, Rep. 1971. H.A. Rose, Indian Religions, op.cit. pp. 147-164. Sanjeev Maanra, Snake worship in Himachal Pradesh, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, P.U., Chandigarh, 1990. G.S. Main, History of Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, 1982. E.J. Buck, Simla Past and Present, Rep. Delhi, 1979.
 16. The cult of Nag, Bhawanshwar were particularly worshipped in Mashu and Shilabhadgawan region of the State. Pothies in Tankari and Hindi regarding the origin and worshipping of Bhawanshwar Devota of Mashu Village of Balson were also consulted.
 17. The annual fair was held in honours of the deity in the month of April. Som Ranchan, Durga Rahasya, Delhi, 2001, Wendell Charles Beane, Mytgh, Cult and Symbols in Sakta Hinduism, Delhi, 2001. K.R. Van-Kooij, Worship of the goddess According to the Kalika Purana, Leiden, 1972.
 18. Zatra was the occasional visit of the local deity to its devotees respective places. Devi Bhagavata, Venkatesvera Press, Bombay, 1925. Shantilal Nagar, IGG. Vol. I-II.
 19. H.A. Rose, op. cit., pp. 450-51 local religious ceremony in which the neighbouring deities were also invited along with their devotees. Mahesh Sharma, The Realm of Faith. Fredurick W. Bune, An Encyclopedia of Hindu Deities, Demi Gods, Godlings, Demns and Heroes, with special focus on Iconographic attributes, 3 Vols. Delhi, 2000. Interjit Indu, Science of Symbols: Deeper View of Indian Deities, 1977.
 20. John Keay, Into India, Rep. Delhi & 2000, p. 178. E.O. Mortin, The Gods in India – their History,

- Character and worship, Delhi, 1972.
21. Western's Dictionary of Synonym, London, 1961, p. 692.
 22. Ibid, p. 113.
 23. *Srimadbhagavadgita*, Gita press, Gorkhpur, 1967, 17.3 *Yo ychchhdha sa Aua-sa*.
 24. Mahesh Sharma, *The Realm of Faith*, Shimla, 2001, p. 9.
 25. Sharma argues that "interesting features of the Himalayan tradition was the variety of beliefs that the people entertained, while the ancestor-worship arose from the metaphysical understanding of life and death, the concept of guardian spirit invented from the sense of insecurity and helplessness in the face of natural or ecological calamity." P. 14.
 26. The New Oxford Dictionary of English, Oxford, 1998, define these terms as follow:
Pantheism: a doctrine which identifies god with the universe, or regards the universe as the manifestation of God.
Henotheism: Adherence to one particular God out of several especially by a family or clan, or a tribe etc.
The difference becomes abundantly clear even with a cursory look at the dictionary.
 27. M. Williams, *op.cit.* p. 231. The concept of totemism seems to be continued, large number of animals were killed and their blood was offered to the deities. The mixture of blood and barley was sprinkled over the field or thrown up in the air for them to eat.
 28. Ibid., p. 243. Sometimes the animals blood was applied to the body of the victims and sprinkled on the door posts of shrines or some time on the floor of the house. Every village had its own peculiar evil spirits, from their attacks clan deity and village guardian deity protect the inhabitants of the regions.
 29. H.A. Rose, *op.cit.*, p. 197. These stone slabs and Pindi were erected in the fields and sometime of its erection varied from place to place. The spirit of dead of the low caste people was considered as fiend and the spirit of darkness. It was more popular spirit than the spirit of light.
 30. Ibid, p. 212. The headless spirit (Banshira) was propitiated in some places by the sacrifices of goats and giving aims to the Brahmana to induced them to sing propitiatory hymns. H.A. Rose, 'The Legend of Banshira', *Indian Antiquary*, XXIII, 1903. Mahesh Sharma, *The Realm of Faith*.
 31. R.J. Blackham, *op. cit.*, p. 97. The weapons and the guns become ineffective and were subject to their malign powers. The sharpened edged weapons were wrapped in rages which were designed to keep away the power of the evil spirit who might lessen their usefulness.
 32. H.A. Rose, *op.cit.*, p. 206. It is believed that the Chureil had her feet setback wards and was hideous to behold. She longed for her child, but was a curse to others. The nails were driven in to the ground or floor near the corpse and her hands and feet fastened to them with rope to prevent the body from stretching and becoming Chureil.
 33. N. Trikha, *Faith and beliefs in the kathasaritsagar*, Delhi, 1991, p. 227.
 34. W. Crooke, *The Tribes of Northern India*, Delhi, 1973, pp. 262-63. An obscure, hymn was being recited by a expert *Brahmana* and made a loaf waved round the influenced person's head for nine times, a Tumbri, lamps were placed by night at a spot where four roads meet. A Witch (dag) become powerless if she lost vision or two upper front teeth, the inhabitants of the region observed a witch day (dagalee) in the month of Bhado (September).
 35. R.J. Blackham, *op.cit.*, p. 87. Malevalent Paps were appeased by offering than sweet chapti (*Lotees*) a loaf mixture of Gur and Wheat flour. Whenever a Brahmana (priest) or a young girl was killed, the

deceased also became Pap. Even, no one was allowed to take meals without offering these to the Pap.

36. H.A. Rose, op.cit. p. 197. The spirit worship also took the form of building or a bridge over a stream in the deceased's name, or making new roads, or improving old one or by cutting steps in the rock. To avoid falling pray to these spirits, the individual curtailed his liberty, and submitted to the consequential stresses that were substantially unreal.
37. Ibid.
38. F.E. Planer, Superstition, London, 1980, p.28.
39. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethies, New York, 1961, Vol. V, p. 33.
40. N. Trikha, op. cit. p. 217.
41. Ibid, p. 204.
42. C.S. Burna, The Handbook of Folklore, London, 1914, p. 120.