



Stories about the divine couple

Stories from the Puranas Retold

Written : Nalini Sahay
Edited : Deepak Sahay
Cover
Design : Nalini Sahay
Artists : Shijo Jacob
Folk and Tribal Artists
Layout : Govind Yasa
Ashok Yadav

deepam
India.com

© Copyright. 1999 - 2000 DeepamIndia.com
All rights reserved.

Fax : +91-11-6828383
Email : info@deepamindia.com



Contents

Marriage to Sati

Marriage To Parvati

Game of Dice

How Shiva could not live without Parvati?

An Equal Marriage

Ardhanarnari - Complete Wo/Man



Introduction

Our gods and goddesses have strong and vibrant personalities as described in the hymns of the Vedas and the stories in the Puranas. Most Hindus have heard these stories in childhood and have an easy familiarity with the ways of life and living that the gods display in their various Avatars. There is always a take-away message in the stories - sometimes it is ambiguous and leads to more questions; sometimes the message simply defines good and evil, right and wrong - but always, there is the possibility of relating to ones own personality and ones own situation. No doubt, this is why the stories have endured. I for one carry a sense of comfort that there is a special god/goddess to recall in a certain situation. The stories actually hold our faith, allowing us to accept all the gods as one and the one god as many.



There is also the matter of images. In a way the images of India - the great idols in worship, the wayside shrines, the calendar art images, the great and the small sculpture - are abstraction of the stories and the personal message of the stories.

In this book, written entirely for the web, the stories have been cast in a simplified mould. The intent is to familiarize the new visitor and to aid recall for the old friend.

All the images were commissioned by me with Tribal and Folk Artists. We had only to tell them the story and they drew the pictures. They knew the stories! Language was no barrier. Some readers may be familiar with the styles of Indian Folk and Tribal Art and will instantly recognize the Madhubani, the Warli, the Oriya and Bengal folk art. For others, given below is a chart :

An attempt is made in the stories to show the harmony between the gods and goddess; time coalesces and the gods are present at each others life events, a general value system emerges; the invocation is of god love rather than god fear.

We hope the reader enjoys this presentation of ancient text and is encouraged to delve deeper into our well of faith.



Andhra leather puppet and folk art



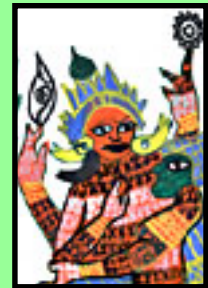
Madhubani style



Bengal folk art



Warli style



Madhya Pradesh
tribal art



Marriage to Sati



Shiva led the life of an ascetic, abandoning worldly life and choosing mountains and cremation grounds as his home. He kept the company of his ganas(followers), notorious for their unruly behaviour, with no sense of social obligations.



...Marriage to Sati



His disregard for rituals obligatory for both Gods and humans and his absolute indifference to social life alarmed the gods, especially Brahma. Brahma and Vishnu agreed that only a woman could divert Shiva from his ways. So, they asked the Mother Goddess to take birth as the daughter of Daksha, the son of Brahma, and who was the master of all sacrifices and ceremonies.



...Marriage to Sati



The Goddess was named Sati. From the very beginning she knew that her destiny was to marry Shiva, although her father did not entirely approve of Shiva's non-conformist ways and his blatant disregard for ritual. He had very little say in the matter however, as his daughter was bent on marrying Shiva. Daksha reluctantly agreed to the marriage, and the wedding was consecrated in the presence of all the gods.



...Marriage to Sati



At Shiva's abode Kailash, Sati saw the Moon and his consorts passing by. They told her they were going to participate in Daksha's sacrifice (Yagya).



...Marriage to Sati



Sati went to Shiva and told him about it and suggested that they should go for her father's yagya. Shiva told her that since he was not invited he would not go. But Sati insisted that she wanted to go and if Shiva would not she would go alone.



...Marriage to Sati



When Sati arrived at her father's palace she saw the grand preparations for the yagya. All the other gods except Shiva were invited and present. When Daksha saw Sati, instead of welcoming her, he insulted her in front of the gods. He told her that neither Shiva nor anyone who worshipped him was welcome to his yagya. All the gods and sages kept a studied silence. Furious at this insult, Sati immolated herself in her own inner fire.

Upon hearing of Sati's tragedy Shiva was overcome with grief and anger. In rage he plucked out a tuft of his hair. Two fierce deities came into being. They were Bhadrakali and Veerabhadra. They entered Daksha's sacrificial area with an army of rabid dogs, ghosts, ghouls, demons, fiends and spirits. They wrecked the hall, kicking sacred vessels, burning the pavilions, tearing tapestries and beheading the gods.



...Marriage to Sati



They dragged Daksha to the sacrificial fire, cut off his head and threw it into the flames. Shiva himself came and picked up the charred body of Sati and wandered through the universe. His grief threatened the very existence of the Cosmic Order. To distract Shiva Vishnu used his chakra to cut Sati's body into 51 parts. Shiva then regained his calm, restoring life to Daksha and the dead gods.



Marriage To Parvati



After the death of his first wife Sati, Shiva immersed himself in his own world of yogic practices and solitary meditation. The gods needed Shiva and wanted his presence. To bring him back into the world, Sati was reborn as Parvati the daughter of Himavat, the King of the Himalayas.



...Marriage To Parvati



The goddess Parvati, came into being with the sole intention of uniting with Shiva. For years and years she performed extreme austerities and prayers to impress Shiva. She had help from Gods as well - by Brahma's orders Kamadeva, the God of Love, tried to shoot his arrows of desire at Shiva to make him fall in love with Parvati.



...Marriage To Parvati

An irate Shiva, however, turned his third eye at Kamadev and reduced him to a pile of ashes. Parvati's prayers and meditations were so sincere, however, that Shiva soon found it difficult to ignore her. Finally when Parvati's prayers exceeded all limits, Shiva disguised himself as an old saint and visited her. After praising her beauty, he questioned her single-minded devotion. He asked her if Shiva was worth the effort.



...Marriage To Parvati



He even described his impossible habits: drunken revelry, intoxication, his ascetic excesses, his fascination for cremation grounds and so forth. He tried to persuade her not to be stubborn and to seek someone young and handsome instead. The indignant Parvati defended all her lover's eccentricities. Convinced by her devotion and faith in him, Shiva revealed his true form and agreed to marry her.



...Marriage To Parvati

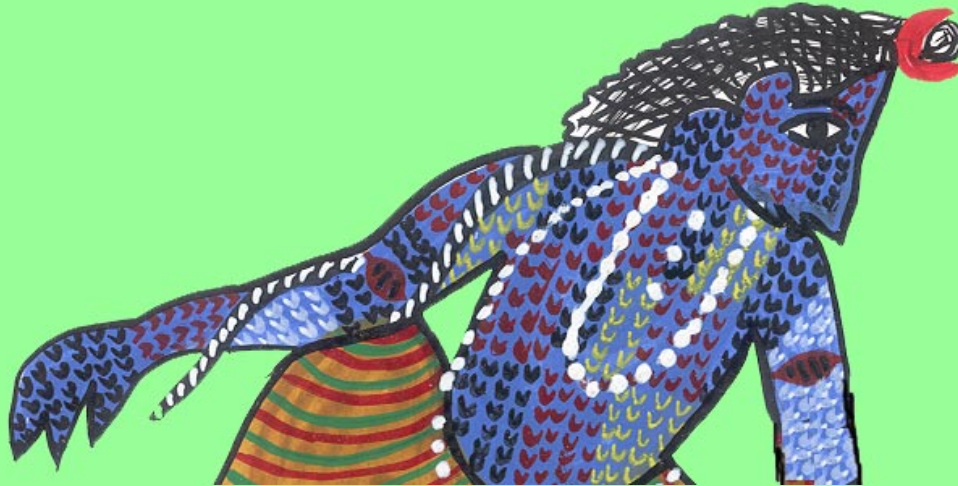


Parvati insisted on a big wedding, and persuaded Shiva to take the form of a handsome young man and meet her father to ask for her hand in marriage. Impressed by him, Himavat accepted Shiva's proposal.

But on the day of the wedding, Shiva went to Himavat's palace in his normal form. He was dressed in tiger skin, covered with ashes, garlanded with snakes, and seated on his bull, Nandi. He was also accompanied by his notorious ganas.



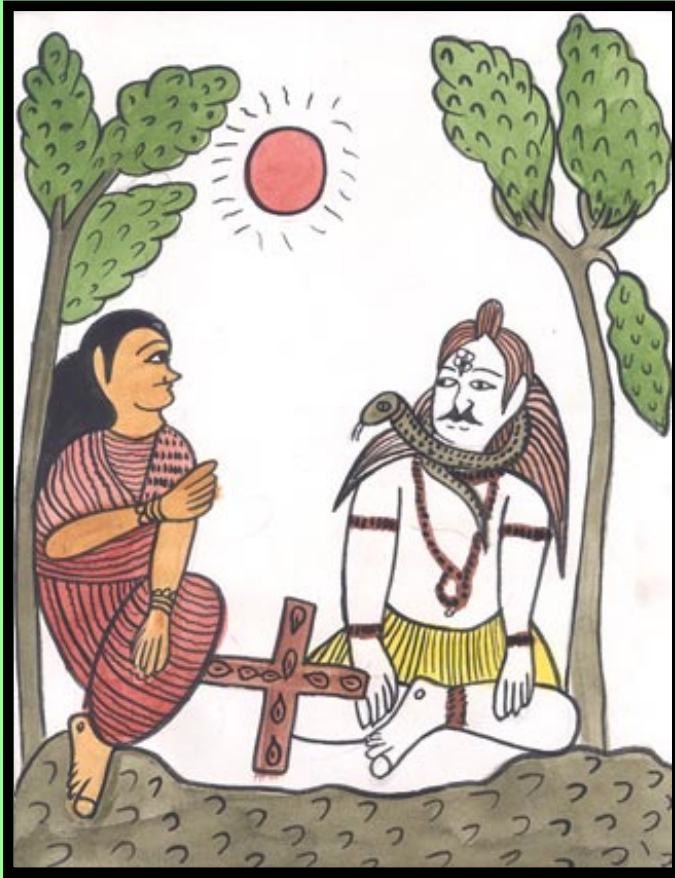
...Marriage To Parvati



Disgusted with his appearance, Parvati's mother promptly refused to let her daughter marry Shiva, the leader of this band of hooligans. Once again Shiva had to change his form into a handsome god, and the wedding was consecrated in the presence of all the gods.



Game of Dice



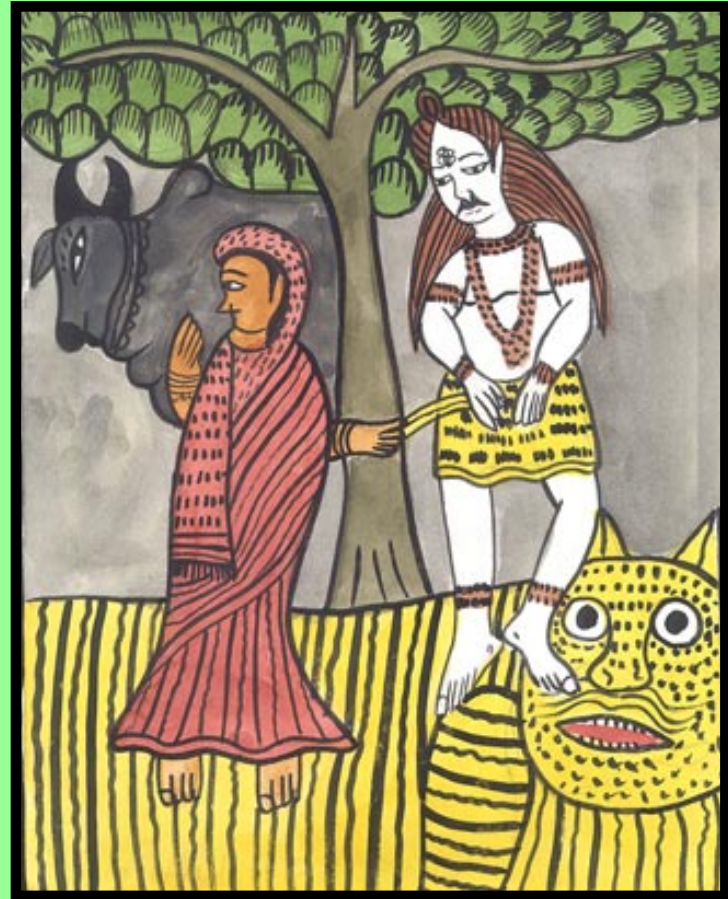
Once upon a time, Shiva and Parvati were playing dice on Mount Kailash. In a playful mood, Shiva wagered his trident, and Parvati her jewels. Shiva lost the game, his trident, and continued to lose all his possessions, down to his loincloth. Ashamed, Shiva left Kailash to go to the deodar forest, where he met Vishnu, who offered to help him. He told Shiva to play another game, and this time he guaranteed that Shiva would win.



...Game of Dice

Another game ensued, and sure enough, Shiva did win. A suspicious Parvati called him a cheat. Shiva offended, demanded an apology. Before the argument could degenerate into a serious fight, Vishnu intervened to pacify them both. He explained to Parvati that the dice moved as he desired, and not as she moved it. Therefore, Shiva did not actually win and nor did she actually lose. The entire game was merely an illusion.

They were both pacified by Vishnu's words, and realised that life itself is a game of dice, moved by forces beyond control. They said, "Let the gods bless all those who play dice on this day and realise this cosmic truth." This was the day of the festival of lights, or Diwali



How Shiva could not live without Parvati?



Shiva and Parvati would sit atop Mount Kailash and discuss the wonders of the universe. One day, Parvati was distracted, and was staring into the lake Mansarovar, watching the fishes swim. Angered by her lack of attention, Shiva said that if she was so interested in fish, she should become a fisherwoman.



...How Shiva could not live without Parvati?



Thus she took birth as the daughter of a fisherman. In the course of time, she made her father proud by her strength and beauty. She did all the work that was asked of her, cleaning the fish that were caught, steering her father's boat, and mending his nets. Her father had no worries apart from finding a good husband for her.



...How Shiva could not live without Parvati?



In the meantime, Shiva was regretting the way he had treated Parvati. He used to watch her from Kailash, and yearned for her day and night. His faithful gana, Manibhadra, saw his master pining for Parvati, and decided to do something about it. He became a huge shark, and began to attack the fishermen near Parvati's village.



...How Shiva could not live without Parvati?



Soon, most fishermen were too afraid to venture into the sea, and their source of livelihood was threatened. Parvati's father announced that whoever could capture the shark could marry his daughter. Shiva instantly transformed himself into a young fisherman and captured the shark. He thus brought Parvati back into his life..



An Equal Marriage

Siva and Parvati had a relationship of equals and their marriage had its stormy days. Often they were at logger heads as both wanted to fulfill the prayers of their devotees and sometimes this created conflict. Parvati may want to curse someone who had asked for Siva's blessings, or vice versa!

Rama was unable to get the better of Ravana in the battle at Lanka because Ravana was a Siva Bhakt. This was distressing the Gods immensely. How could a demon king be supported by Siva?

The outcome was that Ram and the other Gods went to see Siva to ask him to cease helping Ravana. Siva agreed to accompany them on the seventh day of the battle and be a spectator to Ravana's destruction. When Parvati heard what Siva was going to do, she was scandalized. How could Siva go to watch the downfall of his devout devotee? One who had braved the foulest weather to pray to him, who had unquestioningly followed the Yoga of Siva?



...An Equal Marriage

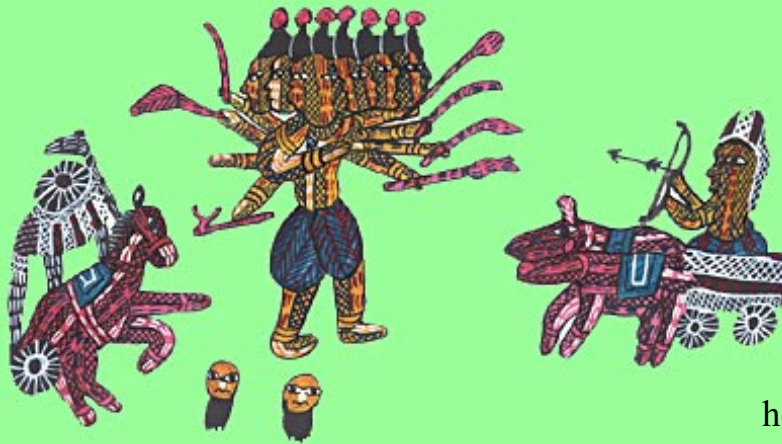


She questioned his reason and carried away, accused him of having a befuddled mind because of his hemp smoking habits, she blamed his choice of friends, she harangued him about the strange charnel houses and cemeteries that he visited. She went on about his attire, smeared with ash.

Siva was stung by her outburst. He retorted that she was mere woman and what did she know about life? She did not behave like a lady, always going out to battle for all sorts of people. Had'nt she drunk not only alcohol but the blood of her enemies? Who would like to hang out with her? Parvati eyes gleamed with rage at these insults. The gods were terrified of what would happen to them, caught between this cosmic muddle.



...An Equal Marriage



They entreated Rama to fall at Parvati's feet and ask for her help, or Ravana would destroy them all. Rama the gentle one did just that. In a trice Parvati understood Ravana's arrogance and falsehood. She agreed to

help Rama. She told him to perform a sacrifice and invite Ravana. If Ravana did not attend, he would destroy himself as he had avoided a great ritual, if he joined the ritual as a priest he would give Rama a blessing and this blessing would be his retribution.

Ravana attended the yajna as the priest and blessed Ram saying that he would be successful in achieving his objective. Ram defeated Ravana and he was killed by an arrow.



Ardhanarnari - Complete Wo/Man



Since Shiva practiced a life of austerity, he took care of his family by begging for food. One day while he was under the influence of stimulants, he forgot to fetch food for Parvati, Ganesh and Kartikeya. They were all famished and there was no dinner. What was left from the day before had been polished off by Ganesh's Rat and Kartikeya's Peacock. Parvati could not bear to see her sons hungry, so she left for her father's home. Shiva sheepishly stepped out to ask for alms.



... Ardhanarnari - Complete Wo/Man



On her way Parvati met Narada Muni. He said that she should teach Shiva a lesson - as she was also Annapurna, the goddess of plenty, she should cast a spell so that none of the houses where Shiva went begging gave him food. Narada Muni then changed his stride and went to Shiva, who was now having a bad time. Narada Muni told him to go home. He saw Parvati in the form of Annapurna standing at the door and she fed him. He was so joyous at the event that he embraced her. So tightly that they became one body. Since then Shiva and Parvati are also known as Ardhanarnari - the other half is woman.



ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

DeepamIndia.com is dedicated exclusively to the creation of eBooks. Maybe the first in the world ! We specialize in eBooks related to the artistic, cultural, folk and religious heritage of the Indian subcontinent. Our philosophy is to create eBooks that are short,snappy, easy to read. And we want readers to judge them by the standards of convenience, aesthetics and enjoyment; not only content.

The global village is not only for commerce, but also to share the rich legacy of our cultures.Our authors have varied experience -- in textiles, crafts,performing arts,the spiritual realm etc. and we provide an exciting working environment of mutual earning and learning. We hope you will enjoy this experience of India. And we look keenly to hear from you, the customer and you, the contributor.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Nalini Sahay

Nalini Sahay lives in Delhi.She chose to write these stories as an experiment for ebook publishing. As her Introduction to the series states “ it was surprising how the folk artists and the tribal artists were completely at ease with the stories and could illustrate them “. She believes the stories are relevant and plans to continue extracting them from the Puranas.



Other Books

Stories about Devi

Stories about Ganesh

Stories about Hanuman

Stories about Parvati

Stories about Shiva

Stories about the Rishis

Stories about Vishnu

deepam
India.com

© Copyright. 1999 - 2000 DeepamIndia.com
All rights reserved.

Fax : +91-11-6828383

Email : info@deepamindia.com

