Chapter – VI
Modes of Worship
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The examination of the cults of the four folk-deities under discussion can not be considered as complete without an attempt to evolving a comprehensive understanding of the rituals and practices associated with these cults and their structural or architectural representation. The rituals and practices range from very simple to complex in nature and shrines of the folk-deities range from ordinary and inexpensive thaans (a small temple like structure or platform with the symbol of the deity engraved on it) to marble studded temples. Depending upon the class and caste of the devotees, performance of rituals and practices could be every day affair or held only on certain special days such as full moon day and the last day of the dark half of the month. Certain days, marked differently in case of each deity, are considered the most auspicious and observance of rituals in their main shrines where the idol of the deity or the mazars exists, is considered a must by the believers. Congregation of the devotees in large number at the main shrines of the deities on certain auspicious days turns it into a fair.

The icons of the deities also vary from a snake figure engraved upon a stone slab, a vague human shape made of either clay, or cow dung to horse riding decorated idols with spears in their hands. In many cases, these idols look no different from idols of Lord Vishnu or Lord Rama. The traditional rituals and practices that were performed to invoke the deities, their structural representations (including iconographic images) and the changes that occurred in these representations during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries are some of the aspects of the cultic worship of the folk-deities examined in this chapter.
I. Traditional rituals and modes of worship:

The setback caused to the hegemonic position of the Rajput ruling elite and other dominant sections in general and Brahmans in particular, combined with the assertion of the lower caste groups in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has been examined in the preceding chapters of this thesis. The 18th and 19th centuries witnessed the process of 'Rajputization' of the folk-deities and their appropriation into Brahmanical fold. The appropriation of the deities of the lower castes and subjugated groups was both mediated through and shaped by the introduction of Brahmanical rituals and practices into the traditional modes of worship and by modifying the existing ones. The rituals and practices evolved, by the devotees of the cult of the folk-deities in accordance with their needs and concerns, prior to the eighteenth century can be called the traditional system of rituals. These rituals and practices were simple and situation specific; they sought immediate resolution of the problems and did not require a professional priest to perform them. Injunction of Brahmanical rituals into the religious world of the deities made the worship elaborate and complex. The worship now involved rituals and practices that had to be performed by a professional, often a Brahman priest. It was believed that the Brahmanical ways of performing rituals and practices would achieve better results.

The new situation gradually tended to strengthen the hold of Brahmans over the traditional communities of followers of the cults of the deities and facilitated the appropriation of the popular deities into mainstream Hindu religious system. However, how far these Brahmanical rituals percolated down among the devotees belonging to the lower castes and other oppressed communities thereby indicating the degree of Brahmanical stronghold over these communities, needs to be examined.
(a) Rituals and modes of worship of Goga:

The process of the emergence of rituals and practices and modes of the cultic worship of the deities in pre-eighteenth century Rajasthan was largely determined by the concrete conditions of the life of their ordinary followers and the challenges they were faced with. Fear of snakebite, for example, constituted an important element in the worship of Goga and Teja. Deaths due to snakebite were very frequent. An official document of Bikaner state containing the mortality report of Bikaner city refers to deaths due to snakebite as one of the seven causes of 'most deaths'. The state had made special provisions for keeping medicines and antidotes of snakebites in the medical dispensaries. These facilities, however, remained confined only to the city and large portion of population had to seek protection by invoking their deities and performing rituals. Although 18th and 19th century sources do not provide us with information of this kind, it will be not be wrong to assume that the situation in pre-modern times could not have been better.

The snake was feared and hence worshipped. Offerings of milk and rice were made to the folk-deities to secure the goodwill of snakes. Various myths about Goga and Teja-depict their powers to control snakes and cure the snakebites-and thus provide theoretical justification for the veneration of these deities. Some devotees of Goga, in a personal interaction with the present researcher at the fair at Goga Meri in September, 1999 had narrated a story about how Goga had cleared the region of Nagaur of snakes, making habitation there possible. Mythical story of Goga controlling Basak, the king of snakes, from the womb of his mother is also popular in western Rajasthan. Another

1 The Bikaner Rajpatra; Vol. XL; no. 12; Jan, 1927, RSAB.
2 File No. 1325; year 1906, Mahakama Khas, Bikaner State, RSAB
3 G.W Briggs, The Chamars, Low price publication, first published in 1920, P.123.
popular belief that Goga, if not venerated, could do harm must have generated a fear in the mind of populace. Another set of devotees at the aforesaid fair narrated a story in which Goga wanted to marry a girl but the parents of the girl had turned down the proposal. The deity first turned into a snake, bit her and subsequently cured her to impress her parents. Popular narratives such as this must have instilled fear in the minds of the people and consolidated Goga’s cult following.

Apart from the fear of snakebite, the other reasons have been put forward for the worship of snakes. Jyoti Sahi has drawn a parallel between the growth of human beings and movement of time on the one hand and movement of snakes on the other. The development of man, from childhood to old age can be pictured in terms of spiral movement. Time itself moves spirally whereby a line of movement tends to return upon itself, like a snake biting its own tail. The relationship between the movement of snake and experience of the ‘self’, it is argued, encouraged people to venerate snake as god.4

Since, Goga and Teja were expected to ward off snakes and cure the snakebites, the methods of invoking the deities or performance of rituals in their name were also based on popular notions and were evolved by the people themselves. A popular notion that the snakes drink milk gave rise to a popular ritual of sprinkling milk in the direction in which the snake had been seen. Goga’s name had to be recited while sprinkling the milk. It was believed that once the milk had been sprinkled, the snake would never return to that place. Those who regarded Goga as their chief deity, venerated him on all-important occasions, religious or otherwise. The rituals were very simple and had no fixed scripture or any strict rules. The offerings made to the deity-included bhog of

traditional sweet puddings like kheer, lapsi and churma.\(^5\) The first day of ploughing the field was marked with performance of a ritual. A thread known as Goga-rakhdi was tied to the plough and the peasant uttered Hali Baldi Gogo Rakhvalo (Goga would protect the peasant and the bullocks).\(^6\) It was believed that tying of rakhi would protect the peasants and their bullocks from snakes that might come to the surface when the earth was upturned while ploughing the land. Navami (ninth day of full moon of the month) was supposed to be the auspicious day for the worship of Goga.

Some tribes in parts of Rajasthan and Punjab revered Goga and earned their livelihood by snake charming. They were instrumental in inventing new rituals and practices to please the deity and propagating their worship among the people. One such tribe, Mirasans in Punjab used to make a snake of dough, the symbol of Goga, and then painted it red and black at the end of the month of Sawan (July-August). They kept the snake symbol in a chhajj (winnowing basket) and carried it from house to house. The women at home then made offerings to the symbol of the snake god. After visiting the houses, the Mirasans used to bury the atta-snake and erect a small grave on it. The women worshiped it during the nine days of Bhadon and then set a basin of curd in the night, from which they offered a small portion to the grave kneeling on the ground and touching the earth with their foreheads. Then they gave the curd to their children at home. On that day, they did not make or eat butter.\(^7\) The gaduliyas (Iron smith) wore a locket bearing the embossed image of one or more snakes and called it sarpa ro phool or Gogaji

\(^5\) Shyamal Das, Vir Vinod, Part 2,p102
\(^6\) Report Murdumshumari Raj Marwar, 1891 Page.14
\(^7\) Punjab Notes And Queries, March 1885vol-11
ro phool. The gaduliyas, were a nomadic tribe who were always on the move and did not build any permanent structure to live in. The threat of snakebites in the make shift arrangements was the maximum. It was believed that the tabeej, if worn around the neck or the arm, would protect them from snakebite. Goga’s horse could also be a substitute to the icon of Goga and worshipped. On Krishna Navami, the kumhars (potters) made clay horses of Goga and distributed them free of cost to the villagers. The villagers in return for the clay horse, made offerings to Goga that eventually went to the kumhar. G. W. Briggs in his work The chamar\textsuperscript{10} has recorded the ritualistic curing of snakebites among the lowest caste groups. He observed that a person who had been bitten by snake was made to sit on the ground with a sheet thrown over him, so as to hide his face. If the patient happened to be a woman, she had to unloose her hair. If the person became unconscious, a twig of the neem tree was to be placed on his head. If the patient happened to be in his senses, ghee and black chilies were administered to him. One or two large covered earthen vessels were placed near him. The lids of the vessels and cymbals were beaten with a stick, and songs addressed to the mythical king Raja Parikshit, who according to a popular belief was once bitten by a snake, were sung. The songs were supposed to please the king of the snakes and the snake that had bitten the concerned person. It was also believed that the spirit of the snake came upon the victim of snakebite who then straightway began to dance or to shake his head. Whatever the victim spoke, while in a state of frenzy, was believed to be the words of the snake spirit. Any orders or command, if desired so by the ‘spirit’, was to be carried out immediately. For example,

\textsuperscript{8} S. P Ruhela; Society, Economy and Folk culture of a Rajasthani Nomadic Community; 1999, Indian Publication p.112

\textsuperscript{9} Shyamal Das, Vir Vinod; Vol. 2 Page 102

\textsuperscript{10} G. W. Briggs, The Chamars, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1920, pp.178-179
one patient who was believed to have been possessed by the snake spirit directed the onlookers to sing a specific song a certain number of times. Once the order was carried out, the snake 'spirit' was supposed to cure the patient and leave. The patient possessed by the snake 'spirit' often explained the reasons for the calamity and even told as to what offerings were to be made for his recovery. These offerings usually included a goat, bread, or clothes, which of course went to the ritual specialist conducting the entire ceremony.

In the villages of Rajasthan, a person bitten by snake was taken to the nearby temple of Goga for curing. While going to the temple, the patient had to be kept awake. The patient, therefore, was either made to walk or, if his condition did not permit him to walk, drums and utensils were beaten to make noise to keep him awake. The whole exercise of keeping the patient awake, it seems, provided psychological strength to resist the effects of the snake poison. The priest of the temple, after seeing the victim, recites Goga's name and enters into some kind of trance and starts sucking the snake bitten spot. After he had sucked and spat the poison several times; it was believed that the patient was cured. ¹¹ Besides propitiating Goga for cure and prevention of snakebites, ritual were also performed to invoke the deity to cure the people who were believed to have been possessed by the evil spirits. ¹²

Unlike the common people who worshipped Goga for warding off snakes and evil spirits occasionally and performed simple rituals, the bhagats and jogis were whole time

¹¹ This episode was narrated to the present researcher by a devotee of Goga in a personal interaction at Goga-meri - the main shrine of Goga in the month of September, 1999 at Goga-meri.
¹² After visiting the temple of Goga at Qasba Gangasar in district Bikaner in March 2002, it was found that people believed to have been possessed by evil spirits were frequent visitors to the temple. The Priest Om Prakash informed that his father who was also possessed by evil spirit had found an idol of Goga at that place and was cured. Subsequently, A temple of Goga was constructed there.
professional devotees and priests of Goga. They were instrumental in disseminating the myths, rituals and practices associated with the cultic worship of the deity. The rituals performed by these priests, however, were not very simple. A bhagat, who was initiated into the office of serving Goga, had to undertake pilgrimage to a major shrine of Goga, particularly one in Goga’s home territory in Rajasthan. There the aspirant had to acquaint himself with the rituals and practices associated with the worship of Goga. He also had to acquire and appropriate artifacts to perform rituals. Prominent among them was a chabuk, (iron whip) used ceremonially to confer the blessings of Guga. Bhagats and jogis also carried Goga’s flag or standard called chari. Chari was a long bamboo pole to which worshippers affixed brightly colored pieces of cloth. Topped with peacock feathers, the chari was made by a bhagat to carry in a ritual procession honoring Guga. Several groups of bhagats and jogis were seen carrying the chari when the present researcher visited the Goga Meri temple during the fair in the month of September 1999. Carrying chari was a part of traditional rituals performed for several centuries.

(c) Changes in rituals and modes of worship in 19th and 20th centuries:
In addition to the role of Goga as a deity who warded off snakes and evil spirits, in nineteenth and twentieth centuries he also began to be worshiped for the fulfillment of various spiritual and material desires-as is the case with the gods of Hindu pantheon. Many devotees, when interviewed at the fair at ‘Goga Meri’ in September, 1999, revealed that their financial condition has improved after they had began to worship Goga as their chief deity. The modes of worship have also undergone significant changes. Sprinkling milk and making occasional offerings at home is now matched with performing collective

pujas and a priest now mediates veneration of the deity. Burning of incense, jyot, and collective singing of arati, the essential elements of Brahmanical religion, have now acquired a centre stage in the ritual worship of Goga. It was observed that on certain auspicious days, when thousands of devotees gathered to make offerings and worship the deity at ‘Goga Meri’, performing puja for all the devotees by the temple priest becomes impossible. Several devotees, therefore, brought their own priests with them and performed the worship near the main temple. One such performance of worship was personally observed during the fair at Goga Meri in the month of September, 1999. A family belonging to the Vaishya community—including two women and two children had brought a Brahman priest with them. The puja was organized in the open premises of a dharamshala adjacent to the main temple of Goga. The worship began with burning of dry mango tree sticks in a Havan Kund (iron container to burn fire). A bowl full of ghee (clarified butter) was kept next to the Havan Kund and was used intermittently to keep the mango sticks burning. A dry coconut, a few leaves of mango tree, fruits, sweetmeats and some coins were placed in a plate, which were used by the priest in the course of worship. Another plate full of Havan Samagri (A mixture used for making ritualised offerings to burning scared fire) was also placed near the burning fire. The worship began with invocation of the name of lord Ganesha. The priest continued recitation of mantras—which people around could not understand as they were spoken in Sanskrit, for nearly forty-five minutes. Intermittently, the priests and the family participants kept offering fruits, sweets, and mixture to the fire after completion of one set of mantras or whenever the priest asked them. After completion of the worship,

14 According to the rituals of Brahmanical-Hindu religion, burning of mango tree sticks are considered pure and auspicious. Burning them, it is believed, cleans the atmosphere and gives a religious aura to the surroundings.
prasad was offered to Goga in the main temple by the head of the family. A part of remaining prasad was subsequently distributed among the people around. However, the number of public performance of worships such as this, in the gathering of nearly fifty to seventy thousand people, was not significant. The congregation of the people continued for three days—one day before and one day after the main auspicious day—ninth day of the bright half of the month. The number of public performances of such worships by personal priests on Navami was not more than twenty. Rest of the devotees stood in the queue for hours, waiting for their turn for darshan of the deity. Once reaching the inner enclosure where the mazar or samadhi of the deity facing the main entrance of the temple was situated, people competed with each other to touch and clean the mazar as they took a circle around it. Those who succeed in touching the mazar considered themselves lucky.

The bhajans of Guga, collected and printed under the titles-Goga Chalisa, Goga Puran, Goga Jeevan Chritra, vandana, arati begin with prayers meant to invoke Hindu gods and goddess such as Ganesa and Saraswati. The acceptance and popularity of the Goga Chalisa, arti, Goga Puran and vandana reflects a significant and gradual process of attaining fixed scriptures. Popular printed version of these texts, in the form of booklets and pamphlets, are a major source of propagating and injecting Brahmanical rituals and modes of worship to invoke the deity. Attainment of fixed scriptures is sought in order to standardize, after duly modifying them, the rituals and the religious practices associated with the non-Brahmanical folk-deities.

Although, the printed versions of the religious texts of Goga’s cult were available for sale not many followers, particularly those hailing from villages were found

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15 Shri Prithviji, Shri Gogayen, New Delhi,undated.
possessing them. Majority of the devotees gathered in the fair were not regular worshippers of Goga. Apart from visiting the main shrine of Goga once a year, worshipping Goga and performance of rituals were determined by the circumstances that might arise from time to time. Occasional worship and performance of rituals, however, had no Brahmanical influence. Traditional rituals such as sprinkling of milk, tying of Goga rakhadi and making offerings to Goga for protection from snakes still occupy large space in the religious world of the common people. Presence of Brahmanical rituals is visible only in the performance of pujas in the major temples of Goga. Day to day popular veneration is still very simple, rituals followed are unorthodox and suggest continuity with the past.

II. Rituals and Modes of Worship of Teja:

Teja draws his following mainly from the Jats-an agriculturist caste, as he was believed to have belonged to this community. The most common ritual observed by his followers was to wear a silver tabeej around their neck with a symbol-the deity on a horse with a sword drawn in his hand and a snake biting his tongue, imprinted on it. Once bitten by snake, Tejaji Ki Tanth (thread of Teja’s name) was tied on the left leg of the person. Tanth was tied to stop the spread of the poison in the body. The patient, thereafter, was taken to the temple or thaan of Teja, and healing was performed. Ritual cleansing was performed using a variety of healing methods. Sometimes the healer used a topical substance such as applying sacred cow’s urine (gaumutra) directly to the skin. More commonly, a sacred thread was tied and ashes (bhabhut) or mixture of holy water and

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ashes (kholan) was given to the victim for ingestion.\textsuperscript{17} Another important method of treating a victim of snakebite involved symbolic sucking of blood from the snakebite spot with the help of a long bamboo pole. The bhopas possessed by the spirit of Teja pretended to suck the blood through the bamboo pole. The pole was used to wash the effects of the poison away, while Ganga water (gangajal) was used to wash the poison from bhopa's mouth.\textsuperscript{18}

The thread of Teja's name was also tied to the animals as the threat of snakebite to them always loomed large.\textsuperscript{19} The same ritual was carried out in case of dog and insect bite as it was believed that Teja could mitigate the effect of all kinds of poisons. In fact, Teja was also worshipped and offerings were made to take care of skin problems such as skin rashes and boils.

The bhopas were the healers in the temples and a class of people called hajurias assisted them. The role of the hajurias was necessary during the trance onset of the bhopa, which was quick, intense and involved using of material such as cow urine (gaumutra), water, flowers, perfume and betel leaf as the 'spirit' of Teja was welcomed into the patient's body. Bhopa, it was believed, cured the patient by possessing Teja's spirit. A kind of Music called kheyla was sung during performance of healing rituals. The kheyla musicians assisted the bhopas in trance with music. Healing rituals were performed when a snake bitten person was brought to the temple and even otherwise on certain fixed days. Rituals were performed on each Dasmi (the tenth day of both dark and bright half of the month) according to the Hindu Lunar-based calendar, and every

\textsuperscript{17} Natalie Sarrazzin, Singing Kheyla: Ritual Music and Trance Healing in a Teja Temple in culture, Communities and Change; edited by Varsha Joshi, Rawat Publishers, 2002, p.273
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. P.273
\textsuperscript{19} Pema Ram, The Religious Movements in Medieval Rajasthan, Archana Publisher, Ajmer, 1977, p39
friday night. Rituals held on Dasham were considered more significant than those held on Friday nights. Additional ritual healing was carried out on occasions such as the Holi and Raksha Bandhan, and on Tejaji’s annual festival day of Tejala Dasham, which occurred on the bright moon days in early mid-September. Tejala Dasham included two days of special rituals and trance possession. On the Navami (ninth day), it was believed, that a big Jinn Bauji, spirit of a Muslim pir came to heal, and the following day on Tejala Dasham itself, Basak Raja’s spirit entered the bhopa. The bhopa also organized the healing on an emergency basis if the victim of snakebite was brought to the temple.  

During Bhadon–Shukla Dasmi the professionals who narrated the life episodes of Teja were invited in the gathering. They sang and narrated the life episodes of Teja with special focus on his marriage episode. This narration was called Bayavla banchvana. Some people on this day organized Katha Ka Vachan (story telling). The aforesaid rituals have been in prevalence since pre modern times when Teja was worshipped for specific purposes such as for curing snakebites and other ailments. The process of appropriation of the local deities into the mainstream of Hindu religion, it seems, did not affect Teja with the same intensity, unlike Goga and Ramdev, Teja, from very beginning, was identified as the deity of the Jat community in the popular consciousness. Unlike Goga and Ramdev, Teja did not possess multiple identities. By eighteenth century and even earlier Goga and Ramdev had acquired the identities of being Hindu, Muslim and being above Jat-Panth (Someone who had transcended the boundaries of caste and sect.) These multiple identities had provided space to various castes and communities to join the ranks of the followers of the deities. Each of these

21 Pema Ram, The Religious movements in Medieval Rajasthan, Archana Publisher, Ajmer, 1977, P39
groups then could claim these deities. Rajputs and Brahmins used these multiple identities to appropriate these deities into the fold of Hindu religious system. The lack of this multiple identity in the case of Teja seems to have played a significant role in keeping him a localized phenomenon with no significant change either in the social composition of his followers or rituals and modes of worship.

III. Rituals and Modes of Worship of Pabu

The religio-cultural practices of Pabu had emerged out of the traditions associated with the deity. Pabu was believed to have brought camel from Lanka to western Rajasthan. According to a popular belief, as informed in a personal interaction by Udda Ram-a barber by caste and a priest of Pabu’s temple in the village Ranisar in Bikaner in March 2001, there were no camels in Rajasthan and Pabu brought them from Iraq. It is still believed that it is because of this connection that when a camel dies, it turns its face in the direction of Mecca i.e. the West. Pabu is invoked and worshiped for Camel protection by raikas. Worship of Pabu is considered obligatory on several occasions particularly when a she camel is about to deliver a calf or when a she camel does not conceive or while inserting girban (a wooden pin) in the nose of the camel and installing plaan (saddle) on its back for the first time or on the day of shearing animals, before leaving for a cattle fair and before migrating with the animals.\(^{22}\) The rituals include offering of the first milk of the she camel to the deity after a calf is born and before it is allowed to suckle the calf. Once the sick animal is cured, the owner is advised to scatter bird feed worth four and a quarter rupees (or more) outside Pabu temple or on his

\(^{22}\) Vinay Kumar Srivastava; Religious Renunciation of a Pastoral People; Oxford University Press, Delhi; 1997; p.58
platform. The rice pudding (kheer) cooked in camel milk is sometimes offered to the deity before it is eaten by others.23

Raikas, who constitute the main followers of Pabu, were always on the move owing to their profession of camel breeding. Hence, they carried a ‘mobile temple’ of Pabu life story of Pabu depicted on a piece of cloth called phad. Phad gradually attained a sacred status of a mobile shrine.24 The cloth painting depicting life events of Pabu is about 15 feet in length and between four to five feet in width.25 The variation in the length of the scroll, however, is not uncommon. The phad narration is performed by professional singers-bhopas. Once invited and assured of a satisfactory financial reward for the performance, the bhopa along with his wife prepares the place. The performance takes place after nightfall, as the performance during the daytime is prohibited. Certain rituals are observed before the narration begins. Firstly the ground where the phad is to be erected is swept clean and incense sticks are lit. Then the phad is erected by tying the ropes attached to it (while making the phad, a rope is attached through a coloured band sewn on the top of the scroll.) to wooden poles set at each end.26 Once the phad is set, the balladeer recites an arati before the central figure of Pabu, and devotees make cash offerings to the deity. The Bhopa, thereafter blows a shankh (conch shell). He gets reward for blowing it as the devotees make offerings of coins to it. Although the singing of Pabu’s epic which is called phad banchna by the rural folks, constitute a religious liturgy, it is a cheerful and informal kind of program. The observation made by Komal

23 Ibid.
26 As observed during a performance of phad narration at Bikaner on 10 Oct, 1999
Kothari, a renowned folklorist, is that the entire epic takes two nights to complete. In the course of time, the Pabuji ballad has acquired many versions around the original bhomnia theme. Much of this accumulated material is of mythical nature. The balladeer plays ravanatha and dances as he sings and recites the verses of the epic tale.\textsuperscript{27} Phad banchna, therefore is one of the most common methods of venerating Pabu by the rural devotees. To seek resolution of the problems pertaining to the animals or otherwise devotees keep a mannat (vow), and invites the bhopa for phad banchna, once the wish is fulfilled.\textsuperscript{28}

The temples of Pabu began to be built only in post-eighteenth century period, after many raika's families started living a settled life and combined their traditional profession of camel breeding with cultivating lands, established permanent habitations and Rajput rulers extended their patronage to Pabu. Fixed habitations of devotees of the cult of Pabu made the places of the divine figure available to the people from other communities who could now seek blessings of the deity for their cattle. Gradually, the people from other communities began to join the rank and file of the followers of Pabu, firstly attracted by the specific functions-curing camels and other animals, assigned to the deity and subsequently they began to worship him for general spiritual and material welfare in the next birth. However, after visiting the temples of Pabu, it was found that the temples still have not received the kind of prominence that has been gained by the temples of gods of Hindu pantheon. The temple of Pabu at Qasba Gangasar in Bikaner can be cited as a case in point. The temple when visited in the month of March 2002, did not have the apparent ambience of a holy place. The temple is situated at a T-Junction called Pabu-Chowk, and

\textsuperscript{27} Komal Kothari, \textit{Op Cit. P.16}

\textsuperscript{28} Informed by a devotee named Kosalya, aged 35 in a personal interaction at Bikaner on 9\textsuperscript{th} Oct 1999
is built on a raised platform. On the one end of the platform, there is a Khejri tree and on the other end a Pipal tree. Inside the temple, there is a stone slab that has Pabu seated on horseback holding a flag engraved on it and in front of him is shown seven faces wearing turban. The incense sticks and jyot is lit every day in the morning and evening and (nagara) are played at the time of puja. The puja, however, is performed only in the evening. On inquiring about the threads that were tied around the trees, the priest of the temple informed that on seventh Saturday after the marriage, kaccha sooth (Red coloured thread specially used in puja among Hindus) is tied around the Pipal and the Khejri tree by the newly married couples. Once the thread is tied, it is believed, Pabu would ensure that their married life becomes happy and prosperous. In spite of Rajput ruling elite extending royal patronage to Pabu and worship of Pabu by some Brahman families, no significant Brahmanical influence is visible in the rituals and modes of worship followed by lower caste to invoke the deity. Pabu, though considered a Hindu deity, is still followed dominantly by raikas and thoris- the lower castes. The offering of camel milk and recitation of phad as a form of worship continue to remain the dominant rituals.

IV. Rituals and Modes of Worship of Ramdev:

'Meghwal' and 'Kamad' communities patronized Ramdev, in pre-nineteenth century. He was worshipped to ward off specific problems such as warts, a dermatological disorder, and the evil spirits, which were the common concerns in western Rajasthan. It was believed that if the people suffering from warts circumambulated Ramdev's thaan (pheri dena) and scattered bird feed on it, they could be cured in no time. He was also
worshipped for curing leprosy.\textsuperscript{29} Taking pledges in the name of the deity were very common and \textit{jamma jagran} was organized once the deity was believed to have fulfilled the wish of the devotees.\textsuperscript{30} The devotees also wore a locket around their neck with a picture of Ramdev riding horse imprinted on it with gold or silver colour. The locket was called \textit{phul}.\textsuperscript{31}

In case of rituals, religious practices and modes of worship of the deity, marked changes began to appear in the modern times especially in late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Uniform fixed rituals began to overshadow the earlier combination of rituals and practices. The \textit{thaans} with footprints of Ramdev were now matched with temple, small and big, in almost all parts of Rajasthan. In present times, almost every village of western Rajasthan has a temple of Ramdev. Some villages have even more than one temple of Ramdev.\textsuperscript{32} The most significant aspect of Ramdev temples is that they are active and Puja is performed in these temples regularly.

At Sadar Bazar in Bikaner City, in a temple of Ramdev, built in a busy lane and managed by people from Mali Caste, it was found that \textit{arati} was being performed at 8.30 in the morning. Approximately ten devotees with folded hands were singing \textit{arati} standing in front of sanctum sanctorum in two rows. Many more devotees gradually joined them after making offerings through the priest of the temple. In middle of the temple was the \textit{samadhi} of Ramdev with a flower garland lying on it. On both sides of \textit{samadhi}, two big mud horses and Peacock feathers were kept. Behind the \textit{samadhi}, one small idol of Ramdev in golden colour and two idols of his on horseback were kept. Pictures of Lord

\textsuperscript{29} Vinay Kumar Srivastava; \textit{Op. Cit.} p.64
\textsuperscript{30} Shukla and Singh P.47
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{32} Village Shri Ramsar in Bikaner has two Ramdev temples, one managed by the Gahlots, a Mali caste and the other Meghvals., personally visited in March, 2000
Visnu and Dwarkadheesh (Lord Krishna) were also pinned on the ceiling. Once arati was over, the devotees received parsad from the priest and the priest sprinkled holy water on them. The devotees then circumambulated the sanctum sanatorium four to five times before leaving the temple. While leaving, the devotees took ashes from dhupia (sacred fire, which is kept lighted throughout the day) and put it on their forehead. Some devotees took the ashes to mix it with water and drink. It is believed that the holy ashes cured them of any disease that they might have had. The aforesaid performance of worship suggests a strong influence of Brahmanical rituals as invoking of the deity now is mediated through temple pujas rather than collective singing of bhajans of Ramdev as was the case in pre-nineteenth century period.

At the temple of Ramdev at Sujandesar, the present researcher observed that no devotee was allowed near the enclosure of deity’s idol called nij. When asked, the priest of the temple informed that the restriction was to ensure the prevention of the leather articles inside the temple. Since, the devotees wore leather belts and other articles of leather and even their socks were polluted as they remained in touch with their leather shoes, they were not allowed beyond a certain point in the temple. The strict prohibition of the leather articles inside the temple indicated the desire to do away with the past of the deity when he was worshipped solely by castes involved in the dragging of dead animals and tanning of leather.

Similarly the rituals performed and the ambience maintained in the main temple of Ramdev at Runecha is similar to the rituals performed in any other temple of the gods of the Hindu pantheon. The priest of the temple belongs to the Brahmin caste, though the temple is maintained and managed by the Tanwar Rajputs, the descendants of Ramdev.
The priest informed the present researcher that the material used in puja of Ramdev is same as used in vidhi vidhan (Method of performing worship) of Lord Vishnu. Yagna too is performed at the temple occasionally. However, it is performed outside the main compound of the temple as there are several graves inside the main compound and yagna can not be performed in a graveyard.

The modification of rituals and modes of worship of the deities under study during nineteenth and twentieth centuries undoubtedly show significant impact of Brahmanical rituals and increased mediation of the priests, who in most cases and in all important temples, happens to be a Brahmin. The Brahmanical rituals, however, have not replaced the traditional forms of invoking the deities and unorthodox rituals followed by common people over the centuries. They seem to be co-existing in the everyday lives of the people. People combine the observance of simple and traditional rituals meant for invoking the deities for certain specific objectives and pressing problems with occasionally following the Brahmanical rituals whenever they visit the main shrine or other important temples of the deity. The complex rituals and mediation of a priest is preferred only when deity is worshipped for general spiritual welfare and prosperity for the next birth. For taking care of specific problems and protection of the family, the age-old methods are still considered valid.

V. Traditional Iconography and Structural Representation of the Folk-Deities:
The iconographic and structural representations of the folk-deities under study varied in nature and even continue to be so in most cases. The examination of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century sources and their comparison with the twentieth century sources shows that a definite change was taking place in the material representation of these
deities. Iconographic and structural representations of the four popular deities under study were increasingly modified on the pattern of artifacts associated with gods of Hindu pantheon.

The oral traditions and existing bardic literature of pre-nineteenth century suggest the absence of big temples or architectural structures of the folk-deities. There existed temples on a scroll of cloth (*phad*) to *meri.* Same structure when built on a leveled surface, it was known as *thaan.* This could be as high as six feet and even more and as small as one foot. A simple platform with a symbol of the deity engraved on a stone or terracotta slab and a flag is also known as *thaan.* *Thaan* or *meri* was small shrine where icons of the deities were very simple and inexpensive. Idols or symbols of the deities, in fact could be made with mud, wood, or engraved on stone slab. *Thaans* constructed on a raised *chabutra* (platform) with a coating of lime wash and icon of the deity, most of the time, were situated on the common land of the village, on byways or in the corner of the village streets. *Thaan* was also made inside the house in an arch shape carved out space in the wall known as *'Ala'* . In the *thaan*, carved in the wall or constructed separately, one generally did not find any idol or symbol whereas an idol or a vaguely shaped symbol was placed in relatively larger constructions. However, in few cases, just at the time of making offerings, fresh cow dung was placed inside the *'Ala'* as a symbol of the deity. Sometimes it was given shape of the human body. The pre-nineteenth century sources also record the term *devro*. *Devro* was a rectangular shaped construction and resembled temples. This term was also used for temples in pre modern Rajasthan society although it

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33 A small temple like structure constructed on natural mound of earth with a flag of the deity unfurled on top.
34 Thaans carved out in the wall in arch shaped *'Ala'* were personally observed in several villages of Bikaner and Hanumangarh districts of Rajasthan by the researcher.
could also be a hut with thatched roof\textsuperscript{35} and as small as one foot in height. Icons were placed inside these constructions and a white flag was kept unfurled on its top. The flag on top of devro of Ramdev bore footprints associated with the myth of Ramdevs' birth. Devro was constructed either in an enclosed premise belonging to the individual devotees or in the agricultural field. It, therefore, was not available for public offerings. However, no hard and fast rules applied to devros that were built in the fields. The thaans, and devros were constructed to venerate Goga, Teja and Ramdev. In case of Pabu there existed phad and the raikas, the traditional followers of Pabu, did not construct thaans or devros.

The inexpensive and ordinary construction of thaans and devros explains their popular nature. It suggests that they were built by the common people and did not enjoy the patronage of the socially and economically dominant sections of the society. However, it is not meant to suggest here that permanent and big structures could be built only if the deities enjoyed patronage of the dominant sections of the society. Apart from economic condition of the sections that reposed faith in the cults of these deities, the physical representations of the deities were largely determined by the existing ecological conditions. To explain this, it is imperative to look into the pattern of settlements and their duration, which in turn were determined by the ecological settings. On the western and northwestern side of the desert zone, agriculture tended to be confined to the select areas. Dry physical relief and unpredictable rainfall, in this part of the region, made pastoral nomadism a norm. As discussed earlier agriculture in this part of Rajasthan could not be a full time occupation owing to unpredictable rainfall and poor soil conditions.

\textsuperscript{35} Komal Kothari; The Shrine: An expression of Social Needs; in Gods of the Byways; Museum of Modern Art; Oxford; 1982; P.5-32;
The selected fields where agriculture became possible were those that were situated in the beds of seasonal streams and or near the water tanks. The tank water once collected during the rainy season was used for agricultural and domestic purposes. The tanks were generally constructed in the land depressions between two sand dunes where rainwater could be collected easily. Habitations in the desert tract were situated around these depressions.\textsuperscript{36} Habitations in such places could not be permanent feature. The villages shifted as soon as the tank dried up, agriculture became impossible, and drinking water became scarce. B.L. Bhadani dealing with agrarian economy of Marwar in his work \textit{Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs} has indicated that the large tracts of lands were categorized as ‘cultivable wasteland’ and ‘current fallow’ in the early twentieth century records. In the year 1899-1900, in Marwar, the area under actual cultivation was only 2.6 percent of land falling in the category of ‘current fallow’. The figure showing actual cultivated area however reached 50 percent in the year 1901-03. Based on the calculation of data available in various sources such as census and settlement reports, the author suggests that in this region, there was a tendency of shifting cultivation. Poor nature of soil did not allow it to be cultivated regularly. Settlement Report for the year 1930 records that after three years of cropping, the land was left fallow for next three years.\textsuperscript{37} Frequently occurring famines and draughts in this region made permanent habitations and agricultural operations difficult. Habitation in these conditions had to be shifted to a new location. The preparedness to shift, on the part of the people can be assessed from the nature of construction of their houses. They were mud houses with roofs hatched with wooden sticks, dry grass and shrubs. The houses were small consisting of one or two

\textsuperscript{36} Jodhpur Re Gawan Ri Khiyat, Village Bala Kuon, Bandhak no.7, Granthak no.3, 1889 A. D., P.3 RSAB

\textsuperscript{37} B.L. Bhadani, \textit{Peasants, Artisans and Entrepreneurs: Economy of Marwar in the Seventeenth Century}, Delhi, 1999, P.39
rooms with a shed added to the house for cattle. In place of outer walls, they had a circular boundary of thorny bushes so as to prevent stray cattle or creatures like snakes from entering into the premises. Shifting these houses could be done in no time. Wooden sticks and shrubs could be carried easily and mud walls could be erected as they were inexpensive and involved only human labour. Artisans and menials dependent on agricultural castes also shifted with the peasants. Meghwals, a low caste, whose occupation was to dispose off the dead animals and artisans from among them who worked on animal leather, were the traditional followers of Ramdev. Goga and Teja on the other hand were popular deities of those involved in agricultural operations. It is the impending threat of shifting their habitations, which discouraged them from constructing permanent shrines of these deities. Small arch shaped thaan or a simple platform was convenient as it could be abandoned and rebuilt at the site of the new habitation. In pre-modern times, there existed no icons in the said thaan. Platform of Ramdev had his footprints whereas household thaan of Goga, Teja and Ramdev dug in the wall, in most cases, had nothing installed in them. Crafting of icons involved expenses and placing them in the thaan to be abandoned could not be a wise step.

Pabu, on the other hand was traditionally known as ishta devta (chief deity) of the raikas, a non-agriculturist camel breeding community. Raikas were broadly divided into three groups, depending upon the region each one of them inhabited. Those residing in Marwar were known as maru, Godwara raikas were from Godwar and Kasias were the raikas of Kutch in Gujarat. Large herds of camels and sheep at their disposal determined their migratory nature as water and pasture lands, given the ecological conditions, could not be

38 Vinay K. Srivastava; Religious Renunciation of a Pastoral People; O.U.P.; 1997; P.19
available at one place for long. A community on move, most of the time, in search of pasture lands for their herds comprising camels and sheep could not dwell at one place for long. They usually hatched a hamlet of huts and migrated to other regions in no time when the situation demanded. The hamlets were termed *dhani*, a temporary accommodation in comparison to the villages. The term *dhan* had its evolution from the temporary constructions carried out in the fields, distantly located from the village, where few members of the peasant family or the whole family could stay during harvesting and cropping seasons. Staying in the field was necessitated owing to the increased amount of work required during cropping and harvesting season at a time when the peasants could not afford to waste time in walking for miles to reach the workplace. *Raikas* did not prefer calling themselves as ‘village dwellers’ (*gamwale*) and called themselves ‘hamlet dwellers’ (*dhaniwale*). Method of worship for mobile community of *raikas* could not include permanent structure in whatever form. Hence, they carried their temple on a long piece of cloth with painted pictures of Pabu depicting his life story. Pre-modern sources do not mention construction of permanent shrines of Pabu. Construction of Pabu’s temple was rather a later phenomenon when the living conditions of the *raikas* had undergone significant changes. Twentieth century has witnessed significant changes in the lifestyle of the *raikas*. Comparatively better artificial sources of irrigation and improved techniques of agricultural operations had reduced the permanent migration of the *raikas* significantly. They, now, have increasingly become dependent on agricultural castes for their livelihood. Migration though undertaken regularly is temporary in nature and they do not abandon their dwellings altogether. Women, children, and even some male members stay back and earn their livelihood by helping the dominant castes in
agricultural operations. Most of the raikas start their migration after the festival of lights (Diwali), in the month of November and return to their dwellings before the onset of monsoon. Breakdown of ties of interdependence with the agricultural castes sometime, however, swells the size of the migratory groups. Depiction of Pabu’s life events on a scroll of cloth, therefore, had become handy for this migratory group for the worship of their deity. Worshipping and making offerings to their deity, thus, could be done any time and anywhere. Tied to two bamboo shafts, the scroll of cloth could be erected into a temple within no time and could be rolled back once the offerings were made or at the time of departure.

It is important to note that in popular perception meri is associated with Goga whereas than belongs to Ramdev. However, in modern times this distinction seems to have been largely blurred. Followers of the deities under study generally do not differentiate between the two. Traditionally, the places of worship of Goga were constructed in the fields and Goga being a snake god was expected to protect his followers from snakebite. Since, the danger of snakebite was maximum while ploughing the land, it was considered appropriate to have the deity nearby. A small temple like structure, thus, was constructed on the mound of earth, natural or otherwise. This mound of earth was called meri. Hence, meri became synonymous with Goga’s place of worship. Construction of Goga’s place, either a platform or a temple shaped construction on the leveled ground or in the wall, however was commonly called than and not meri. The earlier literature on Goga speaks of his meri and not than. In a Literary source of 1253 A.D called Mantri Yashovir Prabandh, there is a mention of meri of Goga under a Khejri tree. The small shrine

40 Dr. Dashrath Sharma; “Gugaji Ke Samay Per Kinchit Aur Prakash”, Vardha, year 3, Issue 4, 1960
under the *Khejri* tree in the field indicates that the peasants with not many resources to build big structures, patronized the deity. Ramdev's place of worship referred to as *thaan*, could be both, a temple shaped construction and a platform with *pagliya* (footprint) of Ramdev imprinted on it. It was generally constructed under a tree with a white flag with his footprints imprinted on it. The *thaans* of Teja were equally simple and mostly dug in the wall by the believers. The *thaans* either contained nothing or could have a snake shaped symbol that was made of cow dung or clay. Public *thaans*, however, had a snake image of Teja engraved on a clay or stone slab, which was placed in the temple like structure or on *chabutra* (platform).

The traditional construction of places of worship of the folk-deities, be it *thaan* or *meri*, did not have a regular priest to carry out rituals associated with them. The individuals looked after shrines built in the fields or dug in the walls as it was a private domain of the believers. The shrines built in the public domain—either in the center of the village or urban locality, had a priest attached to them. However, they were never full time priests and 'served' the deities only in the mornings and evenings. A priest, often a 'low' caste person, cleaned the platform both in the mornings and evenings, lit *jyot* (sacred light) and burned *dhoop* (incense) and offered prayers. People did not visit these shrines regularly. The believers made the offerings only on certain auspicious days and the priest also took care of cleaning and decorating the *thaans* for that purpose.

VII. Change in Iconography and Structural Representations of the Folk-Deities:
The construction of the inexpensive shrines of the deities by the followers, who largely belonged to the lower castes and subordinate sections of peasantry, was a dominant
feature in the pre-nineteenth century. This, however, began to change with the change in
the religious preferences of the ruling Rajput elites and subsequently of other dominant
sections such as Brahmans. As discussed in the chapter dealing with appropriation and
contestation, the Rajput ruling elites and the ‘clean’ castes, owing to the compelling
conditions created by a combination of factors began to appropriate the deities, which
until then belonged to the lower caste groups and subordinate sections. These efforts of
appropriation found expression in physical representations as well as in rituals associated
with these deities.

Introducing elements of Hindu religious system into the religious practices
associated with the non-Brahmanical deities was conceived as a way of reinforcing the
social hegemony of the Rajput rulers and the Brahmanical elites. The change in the
religious preferences of the Rajput rulers, thus, was first reflected during the second half
of the eighteenth century when the four deities under study found a place in the hall of
heroes known as Taitees Karor Devataon Ka Sihan (Abode of three hundred and thirty
million gods of Hindu mythology) at Mandore. Goga, Teja, Ramdev and Pabu are among
the nine heroes whose figures are hewn out of a natural rock in the gallery of heroes.41
First time the deities were ascribed the image of warriors and characteristics of the Rajput
warriors with crowns on their heads and armed with spears were projected in the stone
cut figures. The new image, thus, began to cause a shift in the popular perception bout
these deities represented either by vague or no icon to a concrete icon with a message.
The characteristics of Goga and Teja, who were worshiped dominantly as snake gods and

41 Imperial Gazetteer of India: provincial series, Rajputana 1908, PP 200, Rajputana Gazetteer Vol. III-
A, Western Rajputana State Residency, 1909
Ramdev, who existed as a *pir* in the popular consciousness, were ignored in the new physical representations attributed to them.

**(a) Shrines of Pabu**

Documents pertaining to an early twentieth century personal collection suggest that temples of Pabu were constructed in the palaces of Bikaner and Lal Garh.\(^{42}\) Another early twentieth century work dealing that has recorded historical as well as socio-economic accounts of the Bikaner state, refers that the gates of the city and royal palaces were named after the deities.\(^{43}\) The Lallgarh Place of Maharaja in Bikaner had a temple of Pabuji and also a gate called Pabu gate. There is also a mention of *Pabu-Bari* (house of Pabu) in some of the program cards issued by the royal family of Bikaner.\(^{44}\)

Twentieth century witnessed proliferation of the temples of the folk-deities under study. Temples of all sizes and shapes were constructed not only in Rajasthan but also in many other cities of India. Temples of Ramdev in particular were built in the cities of Delhi, Madras, Ahmedabad and Bombay.\(^{45}\) A number of temples were personally visited during the field work by the present researcher in the years 2001 and 2002. A. D. Most of them, from their construction, appeared to be the modern structures and built by involving the communities living in the surrounding localities. In case of a temple of Pabu at Qasba Gangaser near Bikaner, the believers in a personal interaction claimed it to be hundred years old although it did not appear to be so from its construction. The members of *nai* community—a lower caste, that dominantly inhabited the locality surrounding the temple, had constructed it. The fact that the temple was built on a raised platform and the locality

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\(^{42}\) *Shiv Kishan, J. Vyas Sangrah*; file no. 21, Basta no. 2, Rajasthan State Archives, Bikaner

\(^{43}\) Among the five gates of Bikaner city wall, one is named as Goga Darwaza; See Sohanlal; *Tawarikh Raj Shri Bikaner*; Rajasthan state Archives, Bikaner

\(^{44}\) *Shiv Kishan ji Vyas Sangrah*; file No. 21 RSAB.

was predominantly inhabited by a low caste, suggests that the structure must had been modified into a temple from a *thaan* like structure. *Thaans*, as discussed earlier, were often constructed under a tree and the flag of the deity was tied on the tree as to make the presence of the *thaans* visible from a distance. Since the worship of Pabu was mainly conducted through recitation of *phad*, construction of temples had to be visualized a fresh. There existed not many *thaans*, which could be modified and added on to erect a temple as was the case with Goga and Ramdev. Apart from reference of one temple at Pabu’s village, Kolu in the inscriptions dated V.S. 1415 and 1483, other pre nineteenth century sources do not indicate existence of Pabu’s temple anywhere in the region under study. Most of Pabu’s temples seem to be relatively new and they are gradually increasing in number.

(b) Shrines of Ramdev

The earliest references of places of worships of Ramdev is found mentioned by Nainsi in his eighteenth century *Vigat*,. Nainsi, however, refers to it as *devro*\(^46\) as the term temple was not in use then. The main portion of the temple covering the grave of Ramdev at Runecha, it seems, has not been enlarged, as the structure still remains small. The temple compound has six entries, which have channel gates. Besides *samadhi* of Ramdev, there are pictures of Ramdev seated on horseback engraved on sandstone. The first significant structural change was made in the year 1912 by Ganga Singh, a Rajput king of Bikaner, who undertook the renovation work at the temple without changing the basic structure of the temple. Similarly, there is another temple of Ramdev at Sujandesar in the district Bikaner. Compared to numerous other temples in various parts of the region, this temple

\(^{46}\) Nainsi; *Vigat*; Vol. II Page No. 323
is big and has a vast compound. Besides the main small enclosure, where the samadhi of Ramdev exists, there are other tiny enclosures in the compound. Walls of the temple have pictures of Ramdev's parcha. Adjacent to the enclosure, there are three graves in the compound. Another temple worth mentioning, which was personally visited in the month of October, 2001, is the temple at Murasia in Jodhpur. It is located on a mountain and numerous caves around it are turned into enclosures for various other deities. Apart from the main temple of Ramdev there are tiny enclosures for Ramdev's guru Balinath and one for Hanuman. Another temple of Ramdev visited is situated in the village Ramsar. This temple is comparatively small in size and is managed by the Meghvals. The temple is constructed on a high raised and big platform. It has just one big enclosure unlike other temples with rooms or tiny enclosures in the compound. One comes across numerous small temples by roadside while traveling through the parts of western Rajasthan. Many of them have new structures with cemented and even marble floorings with tiles studded on the inside walls. Ramdev temple at Runecha in district Jaisalmer and Sujandesar in Bikaner are considered important pilgrimage centers by the believers. The belief associated with Runecha of Ramdev having taken live samadhi at that spot had made it a holy place for his followers. Similarly, the popular notion that Ramdev himself, by visiting Devisidas and Hiranand-the ancestors of the temple priest, in dream had desired the construction of the temple at Sujandesar had made it a pilgrim centre. Later, as apprised by the priest of the temple, it was extended and renovated by the king of

47 Depiction of Ramdev performing miracles. 'Parcha' is a term often used by the believers to signify the message delivered by the deity by way of performing miracles or appearing in dreams of the devotees.

48 Ramdev temples in Jodhpur city on a busy road near main market and the in Bikaner near the State Archives visited on Oct 2000 and March 2002 respectively, can be cited as examples.
Bikaner, Joravat Singh, who was also claimed to have been visited by Ramdev in his dream.

The temples at Runecha and Sujandesar are two pre-nineteenth century structures as they are referred to in the historical sources49 and it is also apparent from their structural designs and construction. There are numerous significant factors that separate them from temples of modern origin. These two shrines have small temples of Dalibai-a Meghwal devotee of Ramdev who is worshipped along with Ramdev, in front of the enclosures in the temple complex. Another important feature missing from the nineteenth and twentieth century temples of Ramdev is the existence of graves inside the temple complexes as is the case in temples of Ramdeora and Sujandesar. Not only that a mazar (grave) serves as a symbol of Ramdev in these temples for the purpose of worshipping and making offering to the deity, there exist many other graves inside the temple complexes.

The temple at Sujandesar, which is relatively smaller than the temple at Ramdeora, has three graves. The priest of the temple belongs to Mali, a 'low' caste. The temple priest in a personal interaction informed the present researcher that these graves belonged to his ancestors. The temple at Ramdeora on the other hand has numerous graves of different sizes. It seems, they were the graves of the ancestors of Tanwar dynasty, who not only owned the temple but also provided a priest for performing rituals and making offerings. Traditionally, the members of Tanwar dynasty resided inside the temple complex, but owing to the scarcity of space, they now have moved out. The very nature of the structures of the Ramdev temple indicates that it has a wide following as well as it gets plenty of financial donations, which is also reflected in the smooth management of the...
temples. The absence of graves in the modern temple structures of Ramdev suggests the impact of the changed composition of the followers and shift in the patronage pattern of the deity. Until the process of appropriation of the deities had began by the ruling Rajput elite and Brahmans, Ramdev was solely patronized, and his cult was propagated, by the Meghwals and other ‘low’ caste segments of the Rajasthan society. Carrying forward the traditions laid, these communities did not stop once Ramdev was deified. Dalibai, a Meghwal devotee too was deified and worshipped by them. The justification for Dalibai’s deification was sought by attributing verses and vanis to Ramdev having commanded his followers for worshipping Dalibai along with him. The new patrons, however, decided to appropriate Ramdev without his associate, Dalibai in this case. Dalibai, therefore was shunted out from not only the structural representations of the modern shrines of Ramdev, but also from the new traditions and myths, which originated during nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The temples of Dalibai in the two structures under discussion, however, were not touched. Nevertheless, it was observed that hardly any ‘clean’ caste devotee visited the temple of Dalibai or made offerings. Rather, idols of gods of Hindu pantheon began to occupy place in the modern temples of Ramdev as is the case in the temple at Murasia near Jodhpur where idol of Hanuman is placed in one of the enclosures of the temple. Except the temple owned and managed by the Meghvals in Ramsar village in Bikaner district, all other personally visited temples of Ramdev have the pictures or idols of the gods of Hindu Pantheon such as Hanuman, Satyanarayan, Laksmi, Vishnu, Shankar, Parvati Ganesh and Radha Krishna.

(c) Shrines of Goga:

50 For more information on Sharing of Ramdev temples by gods of Hindu pantheon see Mira Reym Binford, Mixing in the Color of Ram of Ramaja-A Folk Pilgrimage to the grave of a Rajput Hero Saint, Bardwell L. Smith eds, Hinduism New Essays in the History of Religions, leiden; E. J. Brill 1976
The shrines of Goga ranging from *thaans* to temples have different types of icons. The *thaans* in the village localities or fields often have snakes engraved on stone or terracotta slabs. The *thaans*, dug in the walls in the homes of believers, generally have no permanent icons in them. Icons made of mud or cow dung is placed at the time of occasional worshipping of Goga. This, as informed by the believers of many villages in parts of western Rajasthan, has been the pattern inherited and practiced since many generations. Horses made of mud or wood at home is also worshipped as Goga.\(^{51}\) In many houses, however, it was witnessed that glass framed photos or calendars of Goga, riding a horse with a spear in hand and snake around his neck with his mother standing in front of the horse trying to stop his departure, are used as icon for occasional worship. There are photos where Goga is holding a long staff in his hand and heads of two snakes meet above Goga’s head making crown for him.\(^{52}\) These photos are often brought by some members of the family who visit Goga Meri, the main temple of Goga at the time fair or are bought form the local market. Photos and calendars are gradually replacing the traditional iconography of Goga. Some temples in urban localities have the idols of Goga on horses. The image of Goga carved on stone is also a common cit.\(^{53}\) The icons of Goga remained small and were dominantly snake shaped as long as the agricultural communities and other subordinate sections, which helped the agricultural castes in their operations, worshipped him. The icons also remained insignificant as the deity was expected to protect the believers from snakebites and evil spirits. Structural representations were marked with significant changes soon after Goga began to be

\(^{51}\) Chandradan charan; Op. Cit. P. 22 and 26  
\(^{52}\) Punjab Notes And Query. Oct,1883 Vol. I, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi, PP.1  
\(^{53}\) Chandrandan charan; Op. Cit. P. 22and 26
worshipped by other socially dominant sections and received patronage of the Rajput rulers.

The main temple of Goga is situated in Pargana Nohar of Rajasthan bordering southwestern Haryana. The believers consider it as the pilgrimage center, as Goga was believed to have taken samadhi at that spot. The temple nearly sixty to seventy feet in height has a small enclosure with the mazar or samadhi of Goga in it. The temple is situated in a compound with a main gate where the entry of the devotees are regulated as the space inside the temple is very small and many devotees can not enter at the same time. A stone slab with Goga engraved on it is also placed alongside the samadhi. Goga in this picture is shown riding a horse with a shaft in his hand. Nearly half a kilometer from the main structure, is the temple of Gorakhnath, the guru of Goga. It is considered mandatory for the devotees to visit this temple before visiting and making offerings at the main temple of Goga. The temple of Gorakhnath, apart from having several rooms and a big hall has four enclosures. Idol of Goga is placed in one of them and others are occupied by the idols of Hanuman, Lord Shiva and Lord Krishna of the Hindu pantheon. Worshipping of gods of Hindu pantheon and popular deities under study in the same temple must have helped in their speedy appropriation into the mainstream of Hindu religion. The existence of graves in pre nineteenth century temples signifies that followers of Ramdev used to bury their dead. Since the owner of the temple or the priest lived inside the temple complex with their family, the dead were buried in the temple compound. Burying the dead undoubtedly was antithetical to the Brahmanical religion. The temples of Ramdev constructed by 'clean' castes and mediated through their priests, therefore, do not have this feature. One important feature, which establishes continuity
with the pre nineteenth century temple structures is the mazar. The existence of mazar along with other traditions have been analyzed by the scholars to establish Ramdev’s connection with Islam and a possible explanation for his following among Muslims.\footnote{For further details on this subject see D. Sila Khan; \textit{Conversions and shifting identities: Ramdev Pir and the Isma'illis in Rajasthan}; Manohar; 1997.}

However, as the Hinduization of the Ramdev cult gained ground, the mazar could be portrayed as Samadhi. Samadhi (voluntary burial of people alive, particularly saints) originally a Nathpanthi custom in this part of Rajasthan had long been assimilated into Brahmanical traditions. Following the same tradition, it was not difficult to convert the mazars as samadhis. New traditions were invented to show that Ramdev had decided to bury himself alive and had supervised the construction his own samadhi.\footnote{Dr. Pushpa Bhati; \textit{Rajasthan Ke Lok Devta Avem Lok Sahitya}; Bikaner’ 1996, PP. 114-122.} Stories and verses coined to this effect must have helped in creating new image of mazar. The changes in the structural representation of the deities as discussed above, however, do not suggest that traditional iconography and structures of these deities have ceased to exist. The pre-modern images and inexpensive thaans in the case of Goga, Teja and Ramdev and the phad in case of Pabu are still prevalent and co-exist with modern temple structures.