

Tape 1 translation--done by Mrs. Harish. Tape 1 of 2 Bagrunda July 25, 1995 in UVM office, Prabhuji, Gulabji, Kesuji, Maxine.

This was our first discussion about gavri. We asked them to tell us about gavri. Where it comes from, history, etc. And about the Bhil people.

Side A:

Kesuji:

As far as I know, I have heard in stories, in the beginning there was no life on earth. Only water. Water all over. There was the main supreme being [Indra I believe] (see handwritten version) as we believe in him and no other life only water. After that there was a power in the form of fume. God thought of making Sansar (the world, the mortal world)--life on earth--with the help of female power, shakti. He thought, how to do this? Then by the power of (the third eye???) he, with the power of shakti, the female power, created three sons--[Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh]. He told them to be with shakti and create sansar, ie the world. They refused. They said they consider shakti as their mother. They could not possible have suh a relation. They can't do it. God was annoyed and destroyed them. He then created them again.

How was gavri created with Shiv ji is shown like this. Shivji used to go on meditation trips for 12 years. Parvati (his wife) served him. One she asked for leave to visit er parents, the Himachal. Shivji refused. He said, if you go who will look after me? She did not respond, but when he went again to his place of [Meditation????] Dhyan she went to her parents. This created tension between them. As Shiv ji was all alone Parvati thought of testing his fidelity to her. So she transormed herself into Bhilni (a Bhil woman) and went to his place to Dhyan to collect grass (fodder). When Shivji saw her thought, my wife Parvati has gone to her parents, then why not take the service of this woman. He tried to woo her, and said, come to my place and serve me.

She wanted to test him further. So she said, No, I can't come to you. My Bhil husband is waiting for me. Shiv ji said, tell me his name. Tell me your father's name. As Parvati was disguised as a Bhil woman (Bhilni) she gave Bhil names for Shiv as Sava Bhil, and a Bhil name for her father, Hema Bhil. Shiv ji said to her, don't worry, I am Lord Mahesh, King of the Universe. Don't bother about your husand. I will tackle him.

Now Parvati became really worried. She thought, let me see how far he goes. His senses are all cahnged. So she further tested him.

She said, I can't tay here unless you behave like my Bhil husband. Do the things that my Bhil husband does for me. What does he do, asked Shiv ji. He prepares roti while I keep _____ in front of him. So Shiv ji did that. What else does he do, he asked. He brings wood from the jungle. Lord Shiva did that also. Then what else does he do? Well, he used to sing and play Dhol and carry me on his shoulder and dance. Shiv ji did that too. When this whole drama was over Shiv ji said, now com to my place and let us marry. So Parvati came out of her disguise as Bhilni, and Shiv ji said, oh you have cheated me.

From thta day onward Parvati is a daughter of our community (jati) and Bhil relationship with Shiv ji was established.

(After this there was much discussion among those assembled...Kesu, Gulab and some other men who had come in to listen...Kesu continued, although the conversation is not clear and the translator did not understand some of this:

Parvati entreated Shiv ji to see how far the Lord Shiv j would go in this matter. Shiv ji was very uneasy. Meanwhile there was Akashwani of course from Parvati.

That you who is the Lord-Master of the world have made this mistake by not recognizing me is not good. Anybody could deceive you. I have been with you in four forms: 1st I was Parvati. 2nd I was with 9 colors. 3rd I was Bhilani. 4th I am on your head. Looking at all your actions I see how much you love other women. How far you can live without me. Also now thinking of any other woman. But I see that you are not firm, you are distracted. This time it was OK, it was myself who seduced you. But if you are this weak any woman can hypnotize you. This is of good on your part. of good for your strength. I became Bhilani only to test your strength. Now please don't commit such a mistake again.

So in this way we get how sansar was created. How simple was Lord Shiv. How and why Lord Shiv and Parvati became members of the Bhil community.

Now what happens...Shiv ji sits for a 12 year meditation. Parvati serves him. In the same jungle as his meditation retreat there was a raksha, a devil. He asked Parvati, O mother, who is this Lord. Why do you look after him? She said, I look after him because he is my husband and he is sitting in meditation. The raksha said, "Can I serve him as well?" Yes, why not Parvati replied. The raksha said, if I serve him what will I get in return? Parvati said that the day he opens his eyes after meditation, the first person he sees will be given his blessings. So the raksha also started doing sewa, service, to Shiv ji. Then one day he asked Parvati, O mother, this man is all alone. He has a cow, no buffalo, no money, no ornaments. What would I ask from such a man? Without thinking Parvati said, ask him for the kada, ornament, he has on his arm.

When Shiv ji awoke from his samadhi [sumadhan...meditation, concentration] he saw the raksha and asked him to request any blessing. He asked for the kada, which Shiv ji immediately turned over to him. But now the raksha didn't know what to do with it. Shiv ji explained that it had the power to destroy anyone. All that we have to do is to move it in a circle over someone's head and they will turn into ashes. The raksha thought of testing this out. He thought to do this to Shiv ji himself. Shiv ji ran away to save his own life, and the raksha ran after him. Parvati became worried about her husband. At last Shiv ran into a cave to save himself from the devil and the Bhasmi kada (the power of the bracelet to turn any living being into ashes.) The raksha sealed the entrance of the cave with a giant stone.

Parvati came along and the raksha said to her, by now Shiv ji must have died of suffocation, so you be my wife or else I will kill you now.

Parvati and Shiv ji in the cave both prayed to Vishnu, "save us, lord, we are in trouble." Parvati prayed, save us we are in trouble. My character/reputation is at stake. There was chaos in Kailash. For Parvati there was no way out. She prayed to Vishnu for help. To the raksha she said I will marry you but first you must fulfill these shart terms, provisions. He said OK.

(There is some discussion amongst the men present...some say no, no, this story becomes before that etc.)

The raksha said to Parvati tell me what you want me to do for you. I will do whatever you say. Now in those days a man's word was just like making a declaration. (Word was like the stamp people sign today) Nobody, no man or woman, would go against it. Once a word is given it was final.

Parvati said, you will have to do all that my husband used to do. OK, tell me what he used to do because the kada will do all the jobs for the raksha.

Se said he used to play musical instruments with his own hands (from his body parts) and he would take me up on his shoulders and dance. And he made _____ from _____, and sugarcane from rice. ??? She gave him several demands and they were all fulfilled by the raksha because he had the kada with him. Now parvati had to be his wife. He took her to him. She started doing his service but continued praying to Vishnu to come to her rescue and preserve her purity.

Lord Vishnu appeared in the form of a beautiful woman...more beautiful even than Parvati. Vishnu appeared in front of the raksha and diverted his attention away from Parvati. Women were the raksha's weakness and he immediately shifted his attention to "Mohini". Mohini said I am more beautiful than Parvati. The raksha agreed and proposed marriage to her. Mohini said I have conditions. My first husband used to dance for me, moving his hand vigorously in circles over his head...like this. (They show how by making circles over their heads with their arms.) If you dance in the same way I will go with you. She said Parvati is dirty. I am beautiful. Be with me. Come let's dance.

The raksha was happy to have two women instead of one. Mohini said you make me your wife. Show me any artha any goods that you have. He was so attracted to her he said I have the kada of Shiv. I received it after doing his seva tapsya. Don't tell this to anybody. Then she said my previous husband used to dance. You also dance. then he started dancing for her. Waving his arms over his head. And he turned into ashes.

As he lay dying he spoke to Lord Vishnu. O Lord I could not recognize you. Now I recognize you. Please do something for me that I may be remembered after my death. I have worshipped Lord Shiva.

In the gavri dance the face of Basmasur (is remembered) and the clothes worn by that player are of Lord Shanker (Shiv ji). Only after his death was he known as Basmasur...the ashen devil.

(Now there was discussion among themselves.)

Now how did the name Gavri come to be given to Parvati. Some say because she was with Gora (Mohini) hence the name Gavri was given....

What is the real history? We will have to take some time to decide upon that. To find out. It is deep. We will have to ask our parents, elders. Whatever we know we have given you.

Side B

Gavri and the Bhil people:

Lord Indra, the lord of rains, told the mor (peacock) that I will not come. There will be no rain on earth for 12 years. No life. I will melt the whole world. How will you survive? The mor said I will be there even then I will remain alive. For 12 years Indra stopped the rain. There was no life. No man, woman or child survived. No animals. After that when the lord prepared for heavy rains a voice came from the mor: "I am still alive."

Gulabji: During these days when there was no rain from Lord Indra, during those days the Bhil people thought of Gauri. That she is a daughter of a Bhil and we will be helped by her. So they worshipped her, and remembered her and prayed to her to go to Indra and please him. You are our daughter. You are a goddess. Please go to Indra. Gauri said I will go but I am afraid. But the day of rakhi (raksha bandhan) is coming. I can go and make him my brother. Thereafter I can ask for protection from him.

She turned herself into a Kolan--a Bhil tribe (Gotra???) and went to the Baniya shop and got a rakhi and other things needed for Rakhi puja. She also went to the sweet shop and bought

laddu and started out for Indra. She did not know the way. So she pulled a thread from her mouth and went to Lord Indra. The chowkidar stopped her at the gate. She said I am his sister and have come for Rakhi. Indra was given the message, and he gave permission for her to enter. She was in the form of Kolan [a Bhil jati or gotra????].

Kesuji: This is the Indian tradition of relationship between brother and sister. Brothers undertake to protect the sister. To come to her rescue. And sisters bless brothers for his well being. On this event this relationship between Indra and Gauri was established. She touched his feet. He said I will come this month of Savan and be with you for five weeks at least once in every three years. I will come stay with you and protect man and animal, all life on earth.

[In return] you will have to maintain certain conditions. You will remain pious. Not eat meat or drink wine. Keep cleanliness all over. Remain barefooted Do kirtan on Shravi purnima. Not sleep [in your home?????] or use quilts.

There is now much discussion about this. Kesuji says that his father wrote a paper for this for a conference at Tribal Research Institute in Udaipur. They will ask their elders and other people for more information....

Lord Shankar & Parvati during Gauri khel for 5 weeks. Parvati said it is your responsibility that if someone dies you will give him life again. There was a Binjara (Gypsy) and one Meena. The Binjara died during a quarrel. Parvati thought he should be alive....(discussion)...thus there are different games (plays) in Gauri khel...

You must have heard of Mahabharat. The Aklaya Bhil, even before that. The Ramayan. Shabri Bilni. Then Hema Bhil ki Ladki and Shiv.

Origin of Gauri and Shiv. Bhil were even before, because Parvati says my Bhil was like this and that. Shabri - Kevat. They were before. Gauri Bhil, even Valmiki...he was a Bhil. He was very poor. His livelihood was _____. He caught a Sadhu who said to him, I have nothing [but knowledge]. Do you know what good is and what is evil. Yes I do Valmiki replied. Are other people going to share? Yes they will. You please go and ask. He went away saying be here when I come. He asked his parents, his wife, etc. would you share with this sadhu. They said no, it is your duty to earn a livelihood for us.

[The discussion is about the history of gavri and its origin]

Lord Indra threatened the Peacock that he would not shower rain for twelve years and how then would the peacock be able to survive. The peacock says that it wouldn't die. Lord Indra says that he will melt the earth then what will the peacock do So the peacock challenges that nothing would be able to cause it to perish. So Indra did not shower rain for 12 years, all the creatures perished but the peacock survived. Indra prepared to send down torrential rain and thunder could be heard and the peacock cried, addressing Indra that it was still alive. The peacock was such a creature and the peacock exists even today.

Now during this time when there was drought there was no food and water and the cattle were dying. The Bhils approached Gavra and beseeched her to rescue them. They pleaded for her help and requested her to go to Lord Indra and bring rain or else they would all perish. Now Gavra had to think of a plan, a way to approach Lord Indra and appease him Rakshabhandan was around the corner. So she disguised herself a Kolan and went to Lord Indra. But before going there she went to a sweet shop and bought some laddoos and then to a Baniya and bought Rakhi threads and coconut and then set off.

On arriving there she called out to Lord Indra. He could not recognize her voice. So she sent his guards to find out. Gaura told them that was Indra's sister and she had come to meet him and to tie a Rakhi on his wrist. The guard conveyed her message to Lord Indra and he beckoned to the guards to bring her in his palace. So she came in and touched his feet and told him that she had come to tie a Rakhi for him and also to meet him. Then she performed the ceremony of tying the Rakhi thread and ever since that day this festival is thus celebrated.

Then she asked for his blessings in return and asked him to shower rain on earth. The people of earth were distraught and troubled and he could bring relief Then she said that this tradition must continue and that every year on the full moon day in the month of Sawan (August) she would leave Kailashpuri and come to his kingdom in the guise of a Brahmin woman and tie the sacred thread and he would give his blessings in return. And she also requested him to shower rain from time to time on earth so that the inhabitants of earth would be happy and free from woe. That he would protect Mrityu Lok. Thus this sacred relationship between a brother and sister was established. He must also protect the cattle or they must die in the drought if rains are not timely.

And as a matter of tradition I (Gaura) will also be with you. I will protect the cattle also. But Rakshabandhan will be celebrated on the full moon day in the month of Sawan. In fact, Gavri is played only after Rakshabandhan is over. [It begins after Rakhi] So then Gaura comes to Mrityu lok. And she protects the cattle for at least three years.

Once Gaura comes it's like the cattle has been immunised for three years. (As the people spread out in other places they have started incorporating imitations from films, too.) But Gaura promised to come every three years and that when she comes she will stay for a month and a quarter and when she is here she expect the people to strictly follow certain vows. That for the period they must be devoted to her in totality. And hence she laid down certain restrictions for them. That they will not eat any green vegetables, nor will they eat meat, or non-vegetarian food, no taking liquor or any alcoholic drink. they must clean their houses nicely and for a month and a quarter the people will pray to her.

And you [the players] will leave your house in total devotion to Gaura Surrender yourselves in Bhakti to Gaura and go about bare footed. No shoes or slippers to be worn. Have rotis prepared from [bamboo???]. And using a sheet (Gudri) to cover yourselves for this specific period of time. They all have to promise to live this and in consummate devotion to Gaura. Only then she says she will be willing to come and stay with them.

Another aspect of Gavri is that both Shivji and Amea have decided to shoulder certain responsibilities. That while Gavri is played and someone dies then they had vowed to rejuvenate the person. When Gauri is performed today in some Gavis they show Gaura manifesting herself

to keep her promise and in some Gauris they don't show anything. For instance, in the last part, when the Banjara episode is played and the Banjara is attacked by the Meenas as robbers, who also kill him. Shivji and Parvati are [sometimes] shown passing that way and though Shiva moves forward indifferently Parvati becomes very adamant and eventually Shiva has to give in and bring a vessel with Ami and sprinkle it on the Banjara and bring him back to life.

Lord Shiva is worshipped with the same devotion that Ramdeoji is. So this is how this particular episode they give a proof of their promise and this is how we get an introduction to Lord Shiva and Amia and their promise to immortalize their name on earth.

Similarly if we take the case of Bhasmasur. Lord Vishnu had taken the form of a beautiful woman (Mohini) to destroy Bhasmasur and he did so. All these stories are based on Devi and Devata. And this base is sustained up to this day. Bheru, Bhawani and the 9 lakh devis and devtas figure in even today. All the stories and episodes emanate from the people's belief in devis and devatas for their general well being and happiness. Gorja has 9 lakh devtas with her. But the Kutakdiya has all the information and we can compare with him.

There are certain episodes in Gauri that tell about the origin of the earth. One is in the beginning, then there is one about the Jogi and there is one in the middle, Shivji Dali and Kunal. This one also depicts and tells how Lord Shiva created the universe. When Gauri is played the entire history of Gauri, beginning from the origin is sung as well as played. Even the stories emanate from this history and the whole background is given. It is sung and shown in the form of stories and we weave in some of our own and other stories into the whole thing.

Since when have the Bhils been settled in Udaipur and Bagrunda and this area?

Prabhuji: The people who maintain the history of the Bhils in the form of written records are known as the Badhwas. The Badhwa of our area lives in Mavli which is towards Chittorgh and he will be able to give this information.

But what do you feel about this?

We have been born in this century and so many years later that we may not be able to give you the correct information. Maybe the elders in the village may tell us something that who were the original settlers of Bagrunda, whether people of any other caste lived here before the Bhils settled here. We do not have this proper information.

Kesu: When did the Bhils come into existence and where and what happened before the gotras were formed? Bhil is a gotra. Let us go back to Gauri and if we can recall that Parvati mentions that she is daughter of Hemajal, who was a Bhil, and that she is married to Sewaliya Bhil. When she had taken Avtar at Hemajal's house. In the history of Gavri in the beginning Bi Kuteria and Bhil Kala Suwa are mentioned. Today Bhil Kala Suvas are becoming very rare. They are hardly to be found. These two, Kateria and Kala Suva were created first and they were both Bhil gotras. But even prior to this if we analyze who was Hemajal? He was a Bhil. He was a Bhil king at that. And this means that Bhils are not a recent tribe, they have been living on earth since these days. A very ancient tribe. Where did the 9 lakh devis go? They went to Thaliya Vera and who was there--Bhil Dhariya. So the Bhil gotra have been there since those ages. They are of a recent appearance. And when Dharati Mata, Mother Earth, and when the three Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh were assigned different duties, Brahma was to look after the origin of the universe and to maintain all the records of Vedas, Upanishads etc. and to be a mentor and guide. Vishnu's job was to look after and protect the earth and Shiv was to be the Lord of Creation on the universe. So when initially men were created there must have been a few other jati but Bhils were also there.

And if you go through our Shastras we will surely find evidence of this. And even in later years in the Mahabharata there was a Bhil known as Eklavya [an excellent archer]. But these epics come much later and even before the Mahabharata we can find evidence of the existence of Bhils in Parvati's statement, "I am the daughter of Hemajal Bhil and the wife of Sewaliya Bhil." This song is also sung in Gavri.

If we go through the Kathas (texts) about Lord Shankar we will surely find mention about the Bhils. Whatever information we have today or whatever beliefs we maintain we believe that the

origin of the Bhils took place along with the origin of Gavri. In fact even before Gavri because of Bhil who was living before Gavri was played. And in Gavri too Parvati sings in praise of Bhils. If you recall the story of Bhasmasur when he is after Parvati and she tries to avoid him she sings a long song in praise of her husband the Bhil--actually Lord Vishnu in Mohini's form--but she pretends to be a Bhil woman. This is a very long song.

And if we explore history and go to the period of the epics then we could take instances from Ramayana. When Ramchandraji is in exile in the forest he is offered berries by a Bhil woman called Shabari and he eats them. The Boatman who ferried him across the river was also a Bhil. In fact Ramayana was written by a man named Rishi Valmiki. He became a Rishi much later. He was a Bhil-- Vandy Bhil, Valu Bhil. He earned his living through dacoitery, theft, waylaying travelers in the jungle and killing and looting. This was his job and he supported his family in this way and did no other work.

One day he caught a Sadhu Mahatma and took away his stick and Kamandal (lota). Sadhuji said that he had nothing to give him. But what is your work? What do you do? So he said that he waylaid and robbed people to earn a living and to support his family. The Sadhu said that he had nothing of which Valu Bhil could rob him. So again he asked him whether he was doing all this only for himself or was he doing it for someone else? Was someone else behind him, the cause? So Valu replied that his family was behind him and he was doing all this for their sake. To look after them. Then the Sadhu asked Valu whether he believed in sin and religion? Valu replied that he did believe. So then Mahatmaji told him that he was sinning and he would have to face the consequences of his sinful deeds. So Valu told him that he alone was not responsible for what he does. Valu was told that although he was doing this for the sake of his near and dear ones but he was the doer and so he alone would have to face the consequences.

But Valu insisted that everyone in his family would have to share the consequences as he was doing it for their sake. So the Mahatma asked him to go home and tell his family what he does and ask them if they were willing to share the responsibility and the consequences. Tell them that they are equally sinners and see what they tell you. So Valu accepted but before going he made the Mahatma promise to stay there and not leave until he returned. The Mahatma gave a promise that he would wait for him to return with an answer.

Valu went home and called his wife and revealed to her all that he did to earn a living for the family and asked her whether she and the others would equally face the consequences. So she replied that they would not be held responsible for his acts because they took whatever he gave them but they were not even aware of how he was bringing it or what he was doing to support them. So how could they be held responsible nor would they be shareholders in his sinful deeds.

Valu realized how he stood with them. So he quickly returned to the Mahatma and told him that he had realized his mistake and was feeling bad and wanted to repent. I am treading the wrong path and the Mahatma should advise him and show him the correct path. The Mahatma gave him a sermon and told him to remember God and to take his name Ram Ram as many times as he could. That was the only way he would be able to repent for his sinful actions and be redeemed. So Valu immediately sat under a tree and started calling God's name, "Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram..."

He forgot his family and the whole world and only remembered God. He called God's name so much that Ram Ram Ram became opposite, reversed, and sounded like Mara, Mara. 12 years passed and God decided to see if the man whom he had reformed was still there and whether he had mended his ways actually. So he passed by that way, changed his form, and found Valu Bhil sitting under a tree and calling out Ram Ram Ram, actually in fact Mara Mara Mara. He was actually saying Ram from within but it sounded like Mara Mara. These were the words coming out of his mouth. When God saw this, his devotion, he went and stood before him and said, "What do you want my disciple?" So Valu said, "Lord nothing. I only want to be redeemed. Tell me what I can do for 12 years so that I am able to free myself from the cycle of birth and death. What Karma should I do for this?"

So God gave him his blessings and then³ Valu Bhil became Rishi Valmiki and wrote the Ramayana and 12 years after the completion of the epic Lord Rama was born on earth. He took Avtar on earth. So this great Valmiki Rishi of the epic Ramayana fame was a Bhil man.

You are Gameti? Gametis are also Bhils?

Gameti is also Bhil. But Gameti was originally a term used to address the Mukhiya of the village who adopted the title as a Gotra name and gradually the other Bhils also followed the same practice. Gut Gameti as a title. It is a Bhil word.

Are the Meenas also Bhils?

Yes they are also Bhils. They indulge in robbery and theft and that's their job. Just like the government has an army, similarly Meenas have a Fauj (army) and people of other castes would generally seek their support and help when traveling or carrying things especially valuables from one place to another. Because at that time there were no vehicles and distances through jungles also had to be covered on foot. So the Meenas and also the Gameti would be requested to help out on such occasions.

Do the Meenas and Gameti marry amongst each other today.

Yes of course. Meena is a gotra. Gameti is also a gotra. But both are Adivasis. They are Bhils. The jati is the same.

So you are Adivasis, Bhils, Gameti. Which name do you prefer most?

We are Bhils. But we are Adivasis. The name which came first is Bhil. It is the oldest. Lord Shankar did Tapasya for 12 years and Mehajal comes into the picture. Where Parvati takes Avtar (as his daughter). The other jati came later. Adivasi means people who inhabited the earth from the beginning. Adi means beginning. Vasi means people who reside in a certain place. So it means people who have been living from the beginning of creation. Adivasi is not the name of a jati. Bhil is a jati.

Are the Adivasis found all over India?

Yes.

Is the word Adivasi new?

Prabhuji: Yes the word is new. but there are again two different concepts. People misinterpret the word Adivasi today. It has become synonymous with backward people. Even the government refers to Adivasis that way, as underdeveloped, backward, settled, but Adivasi means Adi kaal [time, samay], from the period which is the beginning. From the Days of Baba Adam. The word may be somewhat new, but there is this difference in concept and understanding.

Which name do you like best?

Bhil. We like the word, the name Bhil. And if you go through the Patwaris records of our land holdings in the village you will find the name Bhil attached to our names. Even if you look at the revenue records you will find the word Bhil, the name Bhil there. We are traditionally Bhils. Even the Meenas and Gameti are all Bhils.

Take the case of the Meghwals Meghwal is a new name, recently acquired in the last 50 years or so. These people were all called Chamar, Balai, Bambi, etc.

Tape 2 translation--done by Tushida. Tape2 of 2 Bagruna July 25, 1995 in UVM office, Prabhujji, Gulabji, Kesuji, Maxine.

Kesuji:

The Meghwal people gradually developed a sense of aversion towards their caste. They felt that they were called "Balai" (messenger) and "Chamar" and that people looked down on them and their caste. The Meghwals developed an inferiority complex and then they adopted the name Meghwal. They started identifying themselves as Meghwals saying that "Meghwal" sounds like a good name, let's adopt it...in that way....Maybe even in the West and in your country such instances must have occurred within the caste structure.

Like the original word "Bhil." Some amongst the Bhils also, some of the educated and literate, felt in the same way as the Meghwals that "Gameti" seems to be fine and they changed their jati name to Gameti, which is the later changed or adopted name. The illiterate did not enter into such changes of names. Like the "Rawats" of Sawai Madhopur place) or the Minas who settled near Salumbar. Then there are the Gomas too. Rawats are Bhils but they do not give their girls in matrimony to the other Bhil castes. Rawat is a gotra. Rawat, Gameti, Meena, Adivasis...all are Bhils. So are Goomies. They got scattered during Navratri.

Prabhujji: What they did was correct and sensible. I endorse their actions. In place of their caste which was Bhil they instead adopted the name Gameti, Rawat, Meena, etc.

Kesuji: Similarly there are three main gotras amongst the Bhils. These are Kala Sava, Kateria, and Kalawa. Then these three main gotras gradually split into more gotras: Unerie and Kapatia...all these came later. These emerged from the main three gotras. These Bhils all lived in one place and scattered during Navratr Kala Suvas are now in Khewara.

Maxine: Do they intermarry amongst these three gotras or only within their own gotra?

Kesuji: No these are separate gotras. In fact these gotras came into existence because of marriages.

Gulabji: For example, Kesuji related that a Shakti appeared from within the earth. The shakti created three men and urged these men to consummate with her the relationship of man and wife. But the three men withdrew saying that You (Shakti) are our mother and we cannot accept you as our wife. We are your children. Then Shakti destroyed the three men and created Paras, a rare and unique stone. The word paras was commonly used among some of the bhil jati in the early days. So shakti created paras and rejuvenated man and woman. From one side of Paras emerged a Devi and from the other side emerged a man. He asked, who are you? I am a woman, she replied. He asked, who are you? I am a man he replied.

Paras is not found in the world today. It is a stone that turns ordinary stones into gold at its touch. At that time paras existed. It was also believed that a man attained immortality by its touch. There is a saying here in our area "Paras ri khan kate nahien" "This stone cannot be mined anywhere in the world." That is how the different gotras in our castes came into being. That is why there are separate gotras. This is one legend and there are many similar tales. We have also learned about this because of our Sanskar [purification, improvement, refinement, investiture with the sacred thread--dictionary defs.] Because we were destined by God for this purpose. When we were young a very saintly man, Mahatma, lived near our village. He told us all this and we feel grateful to him. He gave us knowledge and information and enabled us to understand these things and thus we have come to believe these legends. Had the Mahatma not lived here we too would not have known much or would have been interested either. But since many of these things are not written down in written form we may have forgotten certain things and our knowledge may be partial.

Maxine: You are all separated amongst the Bhils. Some Bhils settled in Rajasthan, others in Gujarat, and in other places, but gavri is performed only in Udaipur. Why is that?

Kesuji: Gavri is performed in Mewar.

Maxine: But not all over Mewar?

Kesuji: It is done all over Mewar. It is done in Udaipur district and also in Chittor. Chittor is part of Mewar, like Udaipur is also in Mewar. People who migrated to other parts did not maintain the tradition or gradually they preferred to distance themselves from the practice, from this tradition, and over the years it became for them a thing of the past. They forgot all about the gavri and their old traditions. Some of them did not even like the gavri play. But the bhils in Mewar in order to uphold their old traditions and to maintain their history they continued and still continue to perform gavri. The history of Mewar is very old. Great and famous people, like Kanara, Parasram, Ranakpur, Meera, Maharana Pratap were all born in Mewar. You have heard of Meenas and these Meenas were settled in Kanora-Sesuri.

In the old times when things (goods) has to be taken from one place to another the Binjaras used to carry these things. There is a ghat place between Desuri and Ghanerao. A fierce war ensued in this place between Lakhi Binjara and Meena. This is depicted in the last part of Gavri.

As Gulabji has told us during the time of Maharanas the Binjaras would [transport things for them]. There were no vehicles then and people who carried burdens from place to place were called Balai. Ghanerao was one such area where thieves and dacoits were usually around. The Balai were Bhils. ?????? These people who carried goods from one place to the other were paid for their services. So once an argument ensued between the Binjara and the Balai and he refused to serve the Binjara. The Binjara probably did not pay him for his services. So the Balai refused to carry his load. So the Binjara decided that he did not require help and he would manage all by himself. Now these Binjara people were usually very wealthy and possessed plenty of gold and jewellery. Now when he was travelling the Balai thought that he would take revenge for being given a raw deal and the best place to attack the Binjara was the Ghanerao ghat section. He disguised himself as a Meena (covered his face with a scarf so very little of it showed). This was to avoid being recognized or else he would be taken and punished.

The name Meena stuck ever since this incident when the balai changed his name and took on the guise of Meena. When he was attacked he asked Who are you? He replied Meena. So he attacked the Binjara and the two fought and Binjara was killed. But before dying the Binjara prayed to and remembered the Kul Devi and Bheriya. It is believed that there are more than 9 lakh devata and devi worshipped all over the country.

So even today when Gavri is performed this incident and this fight is shown and the gods and goddesses descend in favor of the Binjara and the gods and goddesses he worshipped come to his rescue. [The Binjara was travelling with his bodyguard Minari. [this could be where the name Mina comes from. In Jaipur the Mina are the bodyguards to the Maharajan.]

Even today this is depicted in Gavri. After Binjara is killed Lord Shankar and Parvati appear on the scene and the Goddess Parvati shows her benevolence and mercy. Lord Shankar and Parvati were going in another direction...for example the Binjara were to go to Udaipur but Lord Shankar and Parvati were to go towards Ranakpur. Lord Shankar was leading the way and Parvati was following him. On the way they came across Binjari, the Binjara's wife. Her husband had been killed and she was weeping bitterly. When she saw the Godly pair walking from there she cried aloud and beseeched them to protect her saying, I am alone. I have small children. There are bullocks. The woods are dense and frightening. Please help me, protect me. Lord Shankar closed his eyes and ignored her and continued walking. He said so many people are born and die each day

in Mritylok (the earth). He urged Parvati to hurry up and move on. But Parvati was adamant and said to Shiva, O dear husband-lord. She is poor. Her husband is dead. She is alone. Please help her. She is all alone in the forest. Be kind and merciful towards her. So Shiva said, "What mercy do you want me to show? What do you expect me to do? Don't be so stubborn and rigid. Let's carry on."

But Parvati refused to budge. She told Shiva that until you bring her husband back to life and fulfil this wish of mine I will not move from here." So Lord Shankar brought him back to life and then he was reunited with his wife and children and he got all his riches (gold, jewelry and precious stones) back to him.

It takes almost 3 hours to enact this episode in gavri. The entire story is sung. Besides the Binjara, Meena, there is a Dhani (tax collector). Even during those days there was a tax collector. A government existed which collected a tax. Anyone passing through their jungle territory was subject to a tax. If you go to Ranakpur you will find a place called Dhani Chabutra (platform or dais) where the tax collector collected his tax.

July 26, 1995 am UVM office. Discussion with Prabhuji about the previous day's talk with Gulabji and Kesuji.

M: What are Parvati's names?

P: Her parents named her Parvati. This was her first name, her birth name.

M: Who were her parents?

P: Parvati's father was called Himajal He was a king. It is believed that he was a Bhil by caste.

M: Who was Parvati's mother?

P: I don't remember that. But Parvati was married to Shiva. She is also known as Amia and Gora which means Gavri. The Gavri drama shows the episodes and how she got the other two names besides Parvati. Once, Devi Amba went to Pihaan lok. There are three regions in Indian mythology

heaven Dev Lok

earth Mrityu Lok

hell Pishach or Pihaan lok

So Goddess Amba went to Pihaan lok to fetch Amrit (a powerful potion, a magic drink which can bring the dead back to life. The king of this region was Vasak and the queen was his wife Queen Padma. When Amba reached Pihaan lok Vasak was fast asleep. Amba asked Padma to awaken her husband so that she could tell him that she was taking Amrit Jal, so that later he would not accuse her of stealing and call her a thief. Padma requested Amba not to awaken her husband and said that Amba should quickly do her job, take what she had come for and leave. If her husband were to wake up and see her there he would destroy her. But Amba insisted that Vasak be awakened and she would only take Amrit Jal after telling him. So Padma woke Vasak. When he got up and found devi Amba near his wife Padma he was enraged. He wondered how she dared to reach Pihaan Lok from Mrityu lok. He blew on her and she perished.

When Shiv and Parvati came to know of this they became anxious as Amba had gone to Pihaan Lok because of their support. They were behind her. Parvati prayed, O Lord. Please bring back Amba to life again. Then Lord Shakar poured Amrit into Pihaan lok on devi Amba and she was rejuvenated. From there and then on Parvati came to be known as Amia. This is her second name.

The third name Gavri means Gora. Once a rakshas called Bhasmasur trapped Lord Shankar in a cave and closed the mouth with a huge rock and sat there. He wanted to acquire Parvati for himself. So he got after lord Shiva because of a boon granted to him by lord shiva himself. Parvati prayed to Lord Vishnu, O Lord please help us. This demon will otherwise destroy us.

Vishnu heard the prayer and responded at once. He transformed himself into a beautiful woman [a kamini] and came down from Dev Lok to the place where Bhasmasur had kept Shiva and Parvati

as captives. Vishnu transformed himself into a woman even more beautiful than Parvati to tempt Bhasmasur. She went to him and said, "Look at me. Why are you trying to take this ugly, dirty woman. I am so much more beautiful." Lord Vishnu succeeded in wooing Bhasmasur and started dancing, and urged Bhasmasur to join in which he did. They danced in rapture and Vishnu made Bhasmasur perform hand movements during the dance. Bhasmasur had a bracelet which would bring about his own demise if the bracelet was waved over his head and the words Basam Ho (reduced to ashes) were uttered by God. Vishnu made Bhasmasur raise his hand over his own head, which he did because he was so entranced with her beauty, and as he did Vishnu uttered the words Basam Ho. He was instantly reduced to ashes.

This is how the demon acquired the name Bhasmasur and hence came to be known as such. But before he died he realised that the beautiful woman was Vishnu. He begged God, "Please forgive me. I am at fault. I did not know your true identity. But please grant me this much before I die. That my name should be immortalised on earth. Please don't wipe out my name along with me."

Vishnu granted him his wish but with one condition, that Bhasmasur's name would be attached to Vishnu's name. His name would be remembered along with Vishnu's name. Not alone.

So this role, this form that Vishnu took of the beautiful woman to entice Bhasmasur to kill him. He took the name Gori. And Gori means Gavri.

Even today in Gavri dance drama there are 2 female roles called Rahi. They are two independent (separate) characters and roles. One Rahi is called Parvati. The other Rahi is called Amia. She is also called Gori. Then there is an old woman (Budhiya) with long hair and a fat nose, a long moustache and a Raksha's face. [Bhasmasur] Even today this character is played in the enactment of Gavri.

M: The old woman is performed by a man?

P: Yes it is actually a man. The face is that of Bhasmasur Rakshas. Lord Vishnu thus fulfilled his promise to Bhasmasur. That his name shall not be wiped out forever. The Budhiya's face is that of a demon. Secondly they all move in circles during this play but the old woman moves in the opposite direction to the others.

Thus there are three names of Parvati. From her parent's house [the name Parvati], Amia from the Pihana lok episode and Gavri from the episode of the enticing woman. It is one and the same Parvati, but she performed different tasks and has different names with each role.

M: It says in some books that Gavri Mela was held in April during the spring-summer months since the days of the Maharanas who ruled 200 years ago.

P: Maharana Pratap ruled about 450 years ago. Then his son ascended to the throne.

M: Bhim Singh was Maharana 200 years ago when the British came to India. Then somebody wrote a book in English saying that Gavri mela was started by Maharana Bhim Singh and even today this mela is held in Udaipur. Lake Pichola. In the old city.

P: No. This is not Gavri. This is Gangaur Mela and these two are different melas.

M: Then since when has the Gavri Mela been held amongst the Bhils?

P: From the history that the Bhils tell us, not what other castes tell us, but according to Bhil culture, this is what their ancestors passed on in their traditions. That is how we know about the Gavri.

SIDE B

M: From the information given by Kesu ji we know that there are two aspects of history. One is about their culture and also about their traditions and their deities since a long time back. But there is the other aspect of history that deals with the information about the Maharanas, the British, the government, the bhils, other people of Gogunda, Rajput history of Gogunda, etc.

P: Well the information that has been passed from one generation to the next, that knowledge is very old. The history of Rajas and Maharanas, that came much later. There is no written record of when Shiva and Parvati existed, what period in time and history. The culture and history of the Bhils communicated down the generations through oral tradition is very old. Kings and maharanas did not exist at that time. As Kesu ji told us that it began when there was only fog on this earth, in this universe. Man did not yet exist and God existed in some other form. On the basis of their religious beliefs, the traditional beliefs, their belief in deities. We believe whatever has been told to us because their religious beliefs and traditions are alive even to this day.

The history of the maharanas does not begin as early as this. Besides there have been a lot of political changes in Hindustan. The Phirangis (foreigners) came to our country. First the turks, then the Mughals. Tourmulane invaded Idia from Afghaistan. His son Babur came from Kabul, led an invasion, conquered portions and settled here. He was the founder of Mughal dynasty. Then his son Humayan ruled and then his son Akbar ruled over India and established his sovereignty in Delhi. About 450 years back Akbar conquered Chittor and portions of Udaipur in Mewar But Maharana Pratap did not accept this sovereignty, challenged him and waged war against him and did not allow him to enslave Mewar.

M: so during the period of Maharana Pratap and Akbar were the bhils in Mewar?

Yes. When the battle of Haldighati was fought between Akbar and Maharana Pratap the Bhils of Gogunda had extended to the Maharana their full support and aid and it was because of the bhils that maharana pratap could uphold his sovereignty and self respect. Then Akbar's son Jehangir took over the throne and it was during his reign that the British came to India as traders. For commercial activity. They arrived at the ports of Bombay, Surat, Calcutta, Madras and moved to Delhi through their shrewd policy of divide and rule. While carrying on trade they realised that the Indian rulers were fighting amongst themselves and the british were able to understand and take a trip of the internal politics. They adopted the policy of divide and rule and created further rift among the Indian rulers and kings to their advantage. They aggravated the existing fighting and gradually established their supremacy over India during Jehangir's rule Indians became slaves to the britishers and british rule. After Jehangir they ruled over India for 7 generations. The britishers. The rules of India put up a long and courageous fight. Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi fought against them in 1857. At last Mahatma Gandhi initiated Satyagraha which aimed at uniting the Indians and bringing the whole country together to fight the English. He carried on his struggle through Ahimsa and on August 15, 1947, India attained independence from the Britishers and for the first time Congress came to power in India.

M: This is the history of India, of the Mughals, English and Indian people. But the other history of gods and goddesses, the deities, [they also call history]. When we talk about the history of these people, the mughals, english, etc. what do we call that?

P: Political history. (rajniti ki itihās).

M: will Gulab and Kesu bhai be able to relate the history of Mewar?

P: No they cannot relate political history because they have not read it. Only the educated people can tell you about political history. History was a subject until class X.

Bhil history and knowledge about their history is available with people called Badhwa, Rao Badhwa. They kept the history of their jati and people. In our area the history of the bhils in this area is maintained by Badhwas living in Chittor. This work is maintained by them from generation to generation.

Heeraji and Devilalji are Badhwas of this area. Devilalji is doing this work at present too but before him his father kept the records and before him his father and so on and so forth. They maintain the history of the Bhils.

M: Since when have Meghwals been in Gogunda?

P: I am not sure. We will contact Devilalji. The history of the Meghwals is very long. Many years back there was a rishi (sadhu) by the name of Megh Rishi. The Meghwal name originated from him. Of course there were many other people, many other rishis (sadhus-saintly men).

M: There are books giving information about the Bhils in Udaipur but there is no mention about the Meghwals in books in English.

P: The reason for this is that the bhils were a prominent tribe and were always in the forefront compared to other jatis. From the religious viewpoint because or through the gauri and from the political angle they came to the forefront because of the support they gave to the Maharanas. Their association with the Maharanas and also because they came/they originated here first. Long before the others. But these are not recorded even in government records. Even the kings knew that every caste kept its own records and that every caste had its own Badhwas and they maintained historical records.

M: Were there separate Maharanas in Gogunda. Independent, separate from Udaipur?

P: Yes they were separate. Before Congress there was the rule of Raja and Rani. During the British rule there was royalty in Gogunda, Udaipur, Mewar, and they refused to accept servitude to the Britishers. There were Thikanas and these were princely states and territories. They branched from the main state in Udaipur...from Udaipur branched Gogunda and Delwara. In Gogunda there were several villages and they were associated with a separate Thikana. A few villages came under 1 Thikana. Our village Bagrunda was under Gogunda and Maharaja Bhairon Singh Jala ruled in Gogunda. The last ruler of Bagrunda and his family continues to live there even today. Similarly the present Maharana of Udaipur is Arvind Singhji, his father was Maharana Bhagwat Singh. And his father was Maharana Bhopa Singhji. Bhagwat Singhji died 15-20 years back when Sant. Indira Gandhi was our Prime Minister. Bhopal Singhji's father was Maharana Fateh Singh.

M: So today the Maharana of Gogunda is not there.

P: No the government administration is there today.

M: Do the havelis still exist?

Yes, they are huge and they were called Ravalas. The Maharanas lived in palaces like Tripoliya palace in Udaipur and in the smaller Thikanas there were Havelis. Like in Gogunda there was Ravalas.

M: In the old days what work did the Meghwals do?

P: Some people are of the opinion that in the past there was a lot of pressure, at the time of the system that existed under the Raja-Maharajas. The Meghwals basically made shoes from animal leather. That was their job. They also worked as Balai when the Rajas and Maharajas demanded it of them. The old Meghwal name was Balai and before that they were called Chamars. But those who were educated changed their name to Meghwal.

M: Are there chamars all over India?

P: Yes and during the days of the Rajas-Maharajas our job was to make shoes. To get leather from animals and also to be messengers (Balai) of the Maharana in the village. [Balapna means to carry messages.] Messages regarding administrative system and also to carry letters and messages from village to village for [and to] the Maharana. The villages were administered by the Maharana and he could call people whenever he wanted.

The Bhils [also] carried loads, weight, for the Maharanas. Carry things from place to place. Basically they would carry grass, firewood, things like that. Even today some of the people still exist who served the Maharana. Carrying things or messages My own father did the work of carrying messages from here to Delwara and Udaipur and back. All on foot.

M: Did he also work for the Gogunda Rana?

P: At that time Bagruna Thikana was part of Delwara, not Gogunda. When the territory was divided and distributed by the Maharana at that time Bagruna was made a part of Delwara, which comes between Udaipur and Nathdwara.

Tapes #3 and #4 Bagrunda UVM office 26/7/95. Interview with Gulab ji. Also present Prabhu ji, Raju ji. Questions from Schedule of Questions.

Name: Gulab Ram Village: Khera Jati: Bhil Age 41 years. Father's name: Kevala Ba schooling/education: nil

We have already discussed the origin **and history** of gavri.

Q1 When did gavri begin to be played?

Gulab: gavri is played after Rakshabandhan which is celebrated on the Purnima (full moon) of Shraavan. [Shraavan-Badhon refers to the rainy season according to the Hindu calendar.] So from the Pachan [5th day after the full moon] of the Badhon month, after Rakshabandhan, we begin to play gavri and it continues till the 9th day or 13th day of the month of Asoj. This is by the Hindi calendar. 15 days of the waxing and 15 of the waning moon. It finishes on Asoj Teras(13th) or Asoj Nam (9th).

But in village Khalawar, which is further from Jhadol they begin gavri on the Anavasya (no moon) of Bhadon month. They follow a separate tradition. But they finish on the same day as we and the others. They play for a shorter period, only for 15-17 days unlike us. We play for one and a quarter months, 35-37 days. These Khalawar Bhils wear the gavri clothes on the 2nd day of Asjob and play for 15-17 days only.

[clarify are these self designated Bhils or Minas?]

Q2: Your jati is Bhil. Was your jati called Bhil from the very beginning or was it known by any other name?

From the beginning it is called Bhil. But in later years there were changes and the Bhils started to call themselves by some different names, like Gameti, Meena, Garasia, Bhomia and Rawat Meena and so on. All these were originally Bhil. Take for instance the history of the Bhomias. it dates back to the days of the great Maharana Pratap. He fought the famous battle of Haldighati against Akbar and during this battle the Bhils supported and helped the Maharana and he was victorious. Ever since the relationship between the Bhils and the Maharanas became cordial. And the Sun God is witness to this. Bhomia means or refers to the people living in the land of Bhomat. Bho means Bhumi [earth, ground, soil] so probably the Bhils living in Bhomat came to call themselves Bhomias.

3. Are all the tribals in Mewar Bhils?

Yes. They are all Bhils.

4. But they have different names in local usage?

They have different names like Bhomia, Garasia, Meena, Rawat, etc. And these people who have changed their names have now begun to consider themselves superior to the other Bhils. But according to the government administration they all fall into the category of Adivasi or tribal. They are all Adivasis. When some of the Bhils acquired education they developed an inferiority complex in relating themselves to the Bhils or calling themselves Bhils. They began to look down upon the Bhils after changing their names. They despised being known or called as Bhils and called themselves Meena, Gameti etc. and today there are some Bhils who also add Singh [surname of Rajputs and other upper castes]. All these changes came with education.

5. When do you use the name Bhil? This is your old name, not the new changed name?

The truth is that the Mukhiya [head] of the village was a Gameti. The man who was chosen as the headman of the village was called Gameti. So Gameti was elevated with his post, his position as the head of the village. This name Gameti stuck on and was changed into the jati name. And first it was the Mukhiya who called himself Gameti, and soon the other villagers followed suit.

But if you look into the land records and the revenue records of the government it still says Bhil in those records.

6. What name shall I use for your jati?

My jati is Bhil. (Mera jati ka nam Bhil hey.)

7. In Bagrunda, besides the Bhils, do the people of the other jati play gavri?

No the people of the other jati do not play gavri, only the Bhils do. But there is a difference. When the village and the people accept gavri then it involves the whole community not the Bhils in isolation. The Rajputs, Mahajans, Meghwals, Kumars, Nai Lohar, Gujjars are all involved and it is with general consensus that the villages accepts or takes gavri. Every one of the whole village e.g. Bagrunda would be involved in the decision making but it s played by the Bhils only. All communities and castes are involved. We all do Jagran (keeping awake all night by the altar) for our Devi and ask Gorja whether she is going to come. [clarify this name.] We request Gauri to come and Gorja puts on the gavri clothes for the players. So this is done on the advice and suggestion of the whole village.

8. Do the Meenas play gavri? Or any other people or any other jati?

No they don't. The reason is that the educated amongst them gradually discontinued this practice and tradition because they wanted to avoid the expense involved which they thought were quite unnecessary. Earlier they used to do gavri but later they stopped playing it.

9. Is gavri played in other parts of Rajasthan or other parts of India? Is gavri performed anyplace else in Rajasthan or in India?

It is performed in Udaipur district, Rajsamand and Chittor [erstwhile Mewar]. Earlier it was performed in Dungarpur and Banswara districts but now no more. They gradually began to feel that it is very time consuming. Some of the literate Bhils are now employed in government offices and they cannot spare so much time every day for a month. So they avoid gavri. In these districts the Adivasi Bhils have greater education (like Dungarpur, Banswara) than our area which is still steeped in illiteracy. Those people found that the tradition of gavri was now quite irrelevant, time consuming and useless. And also a burden on their pockets. They have discontinued only in the last 8-10 years gradually.

10. In the villages where gavri is not played any longer do the people still continue to call themselves Bhil?

No they call themselves Meenas, not Bhils any longer. Gavri s not played in the other states of India as far as we know and if it is we are not aware of it.

11. Who, what is gavri all about?

Gavri is about the Devis and Devatas (deities). The whole village accepts gavri. There is general consensus. We invoke the deities for general peace and happiness. So that our agricultural produce is not effected, our cattle remains free from affliction and disease and the people all live together in peace and harmony. We perform gavri to please our deities, so that Gavra remains happy. And we do not invite the wrath of our devis and devatas. Here in the remote parts of the district we villagers had o access to government hospitals and medical facilities. And so in case of the outbreak of any epidemic we always invoked our deities to contain the disease and restore normalcy and prosperity.

12. What are the stories of gavri about?

The stories are about the devis and the devtas. Bheru, Bhawarri, etc. In fact there are many deities and they all have different names. Some are more powerful and some are less significant but there are myriad of them with different names.

13. How would you categorize the people in gavri?

In gavri we have three types of groups--the children, the youth and the village elders. The village in which gavri is to be played, we have these three groups of people performing different roles in the play. They all belong to the Bhil families. The role is given to those who can perform well the roles are decided accordingly. Only the good players/perform play the different characters.

14. Why don't the women perform or take part in gavri?

Because from the beginning according to our traditions they have never been players in gavri. also because Gaura who is in gavri is present during the performances. Now these women have to stay back at the altar and the temple places to look after them. They sing geets and they do sewa at the temples and also keep a fast for both meals. Gaura leaves her altar and joins the Gavri. She comes in the name of Bheru, Bhawann and the 9 lakh devi devatas She represents them all and she stays there for a month and a quarter.

All the men folk--children, youth and elders--g to play gavri, but at the altar of these deities someone has to do the sewa, light the diyas, do the aarti, light incense, and do the pooja. The men folk of the other communities are of course there (since they do not play gavri) but from among the Bhils someone has to be there to perform these rituals at the altar of he deities so the women stay back and look after this front and hence they do not play gavri.

15. From where have the stories in gavri originated?

These stories have been passed down through the oral tradition and they are part and parcel of our traditions. They have been handed down the generations. I fact all our information, all our knowledge about gavri is based on these very stories. t is these stories that tell us about the origin of the universe and how Gavra came to be and that Gaura actually exists. We have come to know about all this and much more through the stories in gavri. They are an integral part of the whole play.

16. Are all these stories old, or are there any new additions, new versions or new stories?

The stories are old and have been passed down to us. But speaking in today's context there is a flavor of the present times in the social context. These stories are old and have been a medium of instruction and education to us. In fact if any of the player deviates or speaks something inappropriate he is immediately told where he has gone wrong. Or whatever he is saying or doing is inappropriate and not in keeping with the old story line. This is one aspect.

But there is a difference today in perspective. There have been certain innovations and additions or variations to make the show more entertaining. Today also we have the forest department which penalizes offenders so also at that time such an institution existed and the Dani performed the duties and functions of the forest guard.

But the younger generation are trying to imitate films. They are copying from certain films and incorporating certain new sequences sin the gavri. Most popular among these is the episode between the Devar (hu yo br) and Babhi. This has been especially drawn from films. Besides certain songs on request are also there which are based on movie songs. So one finds that modern cinema has gradually begun to influence the stories of gavri.

People seek entertainment and the players make their buck. The audience and the villagers always gave money. But that was for Gavri, in the name of Gavri. But today they are paying for entertainment. But the older generation and the elders are against these newer practices. They don't understand why it should be done. They don't appreciate it. In fact they despise it. But these are more recent trends. The old stories are there but some of them are being presented in the modern form.

17. Will any village near Bagrunda or any other neighboring village play gavri or take gavri this year?

We get to know about this only after Rakshabandhan. We can't say anything now.

18. How does the idea or thought of playing gavri come to their mind?

The idea or decision about playing gavri is not something which one does out of one's own choice or feelings. nobody feels like playing gavri for the fun of it or simply like that. The village people do a jagaran [all night worship at the altar] and ask the devi and she decides that all right I will come or I am coming for a month and a quarter. You have to accept me. You are bound to. Then all the villagers meet up and take a decision and accept the taking of gavri in the village or her coming, manifesting herself in their village during the performances. The villagers then accept and take the responsibility of gavri She blesses the people (Aashirwad) and conveys that it would now be her responsibility to protect the village people and the cattle against disease and trouble for the coming 3 years. Sometimes when there is an epidemic and our cattle die or there is trouble in the village, disharmony or anguish amongst the people, they invoke the goddess, invite her to come, accept to take the responsibility of gavri and then it is decided or that is how it is determined which village gavri will be played in. So it is not out of sheer desire or choice.

19. In which villages is gavri played?

It is played in this whole area--Ranakpur, Bhomat and right up to Udaipur. Ranakpur is 70 kms. from Bagruna. EG they go to Ranakpur, Bhomat and Mewar.

20. How do you decide that gavri will go to that village or villages? Go to a certain village?

When Gavri moves from the village the direction in which it will go is decided. The devi decides the direction the gavri players will go in. Then the elders and Mukhiya of the village get together and decide that we will go and camp in the Mahajans village or Gujjars village etc. Then the time is also decided by the devi. After the direction, village and time have been fixed, one man called Aguwa or Pujara from the village goes to the other village and conveys the message that gavri is coming to your village and you can prepare for the arrival and welcome. Those villagers get busy organizing for gavri. Especially organizing for food and meals.

The pujara takes a huge platter and they generally put some money (as a token of having received the message and their acceptance) in that. Now when it is known that gavri will go to a certain village i.e. the Mahajan's village or Rajput's village or Kumhar's village then an unmarried girl (kuwai) of that village comes forward to receive the Paati. One Gavri arrives then the villagers welcome gavri by a vandana, put a tilk, do an Aari [ceremonious welcome]. Then the guests are served a meal. After the meal gavri is played. They begin soon after. But if the village has no kuwai then the Mukhiya receives the Paati. But only after consulting the whole village he accepts. And then it becomes his responsibility to announce and inform the villagers regarding gavri's schedule, time of arrival so that arrangements, especially for food can be done.

21. I have heard that gavri was played in Lake Palace hotel?

They used to play in the palace. People used to take gavr to the palace premises earlier. It was part of the tradition in Mewar.

22. When did they play gavri at the hotel?

That was later. There was no hotel before. Only the Maharanas premises. It was part of the Maharanas property. It was only later that a hotel began to be run there So gavri was played in that place, where a hotel exists today.

23. How far can gavri go in one day?

If it has to go to a neighboring village then it may be a distance of 2 kms. and sometimes it may be a distance of 10 kms. or so. Say if there is a fair or any other function in a village and gavri has to go there or is invited to come there they may travel even 8-10 km or slightly more.

24. When you play gavri in another village, then after winding up for that one day, do you return back to your village or stay in another village?

When we begin gavri we play in our village on the first day, then near our village on the second day and we keep moving farther and farther as we continue to perform gavri. But we return or Gavri [Gaura] returns to the village only on Dev Julni Gyaras. Gavri returns to her village to take a bath. They don't take a bath in between except on this particular day. Dev [deity] Julni [bathe] Gyaras [11th day after waxing/waning moon] so it implies the day when the deities take a bath. In fact it is known all over India as Dev Jhulni Gyaras" and on this day the deities bathe. Gavri is not played on this day. [this is a holiday all over India. Even a school holiday].

But the players do not go into their houses. They eat and sleep in the temple premises. In fact for that period--from the commencement of Gavri till its close--there are certain restrictions which have to be adhered to like no going home, no eating green vegetables, no non-veg food and no alcohol. And they do not wear shoes on their feet. So on the other days they put up at the host village except on Dev Julni Gyaras.

25. For how many days is gavri performed?

For a month and a quarter. 35-37 days. But there are times when in a single year we have double months (e.g. 2 January months). This is not unusual in the Hindu calendar. Since gavri is played during the months of Shravan-Bhadon and if there is a double Bhadon month then gavri is played for that whole month also. So it is played for one extra month in such an instance. So the time is then almost doubled.

26. When does gavri finish/close?

On the 9th day of Asoj. In fact it gets over between the 7th, 8th to 12th, 13th in the month of Asoj. But again there is no particular or fixed day for every gavri. It may give over on different days in different villages, but around the same time.

27. In one day for how many hours is gavri played.

It is played from 10 am to 6 PM during the day. About 8 hours. And sometimes at night too from 10 up to 2 am but not always. We play at night only if the villagers want us to, not otherwise.

But we have to play for 3 nights as part of the gavri tradition even if the villagers do not request us to. Still we have to play at night on Gyaras (there will be 2 gyaras in one month. And one rati Joga (keeping up at the altar all night.) This Rati Joga is towards the end period of gavri.

28. How do you prepare for gavri?

We begin our preparations after Rakshabandhan. New clothes are bought from the market for the players. [actually fabric is bought and the costumes are stitched] There are two costumes of women (of course worn by men) and one costume of the budhiya. In all there are 9 sets of costumes called Nau Nogati. There is a separate costume for the Budhiya old woman, separate for the Rai and even the 2 stitched for the rais are different. A different costume for Parvati and a different costume for Gera. The costume meant for the bhopa has a symbol on it and the one for the devi has a trident on the back.

Every costume has a special symbol on it. Then they do not dress at their own will or as and when they feel like. Devi manifests herself and makes the players wear their costumes.

Then there is a chief or Mukhiya in gavri called the Kostakdiya and he wears a black costume. He holds a stick in his hand and also wears a turban. And this man relates the different stories of gavri. He is the chief narrator. But before being assigned this role he takes a vow from the Devi and once he is given that word of promise then he becomes the narrator. There are certain risks or dangers in playing gavri. There have been times when one player has cast a magic spell on another with the intention to cause harm and there have been deaths too on one or two occasions. They do what we call Tantra Manta. So this narrator or Kootakdiya also takes the responsibility of protecting the players. All the villagers together collect money to pay him and he is responsible for the safety and protection of Gavri.

29. How much money is spent by a village on playing gavri?

Earlier a minimum of Rs. 5,000 was spent. But today the total expenditure made by the whole village would amount to Rs. 10,000. The money is jointly spent by the villagers. It is not an expense incurred by an individual or one family. But it is the total expense made by all the villagers jointly. This does not include the money spent on food.

30. How much would be the expenses incurred if the Khera people played gavri?

When Gavri is performed in a village it is done on general consensus involving the people of all communities--Mahajans, Rajputs, Meghwals etc. so the expenses are shared by them all not just the Khera people.

31. If gavri is played in your village Gulabji what would be your family's contribution or your individual contribution towards the expenses?

A minimum of Rs. 3,000. Firstly everyone (all members of the family) gets new clothes stitched or buys new clothes and food has to be stored, bought. This has to be organized because enough food is required not just for the family members but for relatives and other guests who come on Gyaras and also on the final days of gavri end one has to be prepared to feed many more people besides one's own family for at least 3-4 days.

secondly during gavri they practice abstinence, so as soon as gavri is over there is a lot of feasting and merry making. People started eating meat again and also consuming liquor and alcohol. This again means more expenditure.

In today's time there is a new trend. The government has liquor joints on contract, situated outside of octroi posts and these contractors send at least 2 bottles to each family which means spending at least Rs 50. and every family is bound or expected to buy it. But in many families 2 bottles aren't enough for a celebration so they use local hand made liquor, Mahua. The contractor would not allow them to use this local liquor if they didn't buy from him. He overlooks this. [local people don't have licenses to brew Mahout liquor.]

32. When the Gavri of one village goes to another village to perform there what would be the expenses of the hosts?

An estimated Rs. 200. They would put 100 rs. a coconut in the platter carrying the message of gavri coming, and expenses of two meals [presumably for the performers]. They don't cook separately for the gavri. The usual practice is that everyone brings food from their house and they pool it together and feed the gavri at the village temple premise. So every household spends about five rupees on food. If it is a big village then there would be about 100-150 people in gavri and a smaller village would have approximately 60-70 people, like Bagrunda village. So if there are 70 people and the individual family expense is Rs. 5 for two meals the villagers would around Rs. 350 for one meal for gavri (700 for two meals) and they also give around 200 as a token along with tilak. So the village spends around a thousand rupees jointly in all.

33. Do your children like gavri?

Yes they do. There are feelings of excitement, happiness and thrill and they express the desire and hope that someday they will also play gavri.

34. What about yourself Gulabji? Do you feel that the gavri tradition is good? So you consider it as something good?

Gavri is good in my opinion, good in the sense that since it protects our cattle and wealth against diseases and brings peace and happiness, in that sense we accept it as good. To illustrate further, in a village called Deora ka Khera when it was time for gavri to appear and manifest herself they refused to take gavri and consequently about 25-30 buffalo died at one time. An epidemic occurred against the cattle and a lot of animals -- cows, goats, buffaloes, died. Then the villagers themselves went to the Devi's altar and the Devi said that she was not prepared to protect their

cattle and this was the price they were having to pay for refusing to take Gavri. So the villagers collectively decided and immediately gave their consent for taking gavri. As soon as they took this decision the disease was contained and the cattle stopped dying. Even the government hospital doctor failed to control the spread of the infections. So it is necessary for us to take gavri in to avoid such a situation. It is not a matter of likes or dislikes, it is a necessity. Once gavri comes then that particular village is free from disease for the coming three to five years. And besides we do not have to spend money unnecessarily on medicines and other things as we may need to in case of an epidemic.

35. Do the children know about the different parts and roles played in gavri? Which role do they like and enjoy.

There are three episodes that children enjoy most. The part when the monkeys appear. In fact children also play the role of monkeys in gavri. Then they enjoy the war, the Bad shah emperor's army fights a battle. (I think here the reference is to the Akbar and his war against Maharana Pratap.) And they also enjoy the Meena thief episode. The children are interested especially in these episodes.

36. If Bagruna goes to Majam, how are the relations between the people of Bagruna and Majam?

Very cordial. They are welcoming and warm. They also organize for our food, tea, bidis and they are very hospitable.

Probhuji: The relationships are generally reciprocal. If Bagruna gavri goes to Majam then there is gavri coming to Majam. These people will also go to Bagruna to play gavri...it is give and take.

37. Is gavri played at Jaipur?

No, it is not.

38. You have been watching gavri since many years. Can you describe the changes that have come to pass over the years in your own lifetime. As you can recollect in the performances and compare them to today's performance of gavri?

There has been a gradual change in the presentation of gavri over the years. Today in gavri there is a lot of imitation from films, new fashion, new requests, songs based on movie songs and lyrics, like the Devar-Bhabhi episodes and dialogues (bro in law, sis in law) I feel that the modern generation is quick to imitate. It is a characteristic which is prominent in today's generation. This tendency shows in the presentation of gavri also. But the fundamentals, the tradition, the thinking is still an integral ingredient in today's gavri. But added to this is the element of entertainment. Comparing--I mean if you draw a comparison to films--the more the entertainment the greater the audience. Similar is the case with gavri. And secondly, the greater the audience the more the money. That's the difference in perception between earlier days and today's times.

39. Has the presentation of gavri been influenced by television and cinema, and have any changes related with TV and films come into gavri?

It has been influenced by cinema, not by TV. And especially in the presentation of songs whose lyrics and music have been drawn from film music. And also certain dance presentations--like the characters playing the female roles perform dances which was not there earlier. So the influence is evidently from cinema. The earlier gavri dances were very different. Unlike today's, which are basically copied from films. But the roles, the characters, have remained uninfluenced so far.

40. Have you seen the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata on television?

Yes we have seen it on TV. It is different [than gavri.]

41. When does gavri get over?

On the thirteenth (13th) of Asoj month.

42. How do you finish gavri. What do you do?

We have a function. We send out word, call our relatives, friends, well wishes. We will send you an invitation in America and you must come.

43. For how many days?

We have a function for 2 days in the end. So first we send out word, invitations. Then there are kumhar's (potters) who make elephants because Gavra rides on an elephant and returns to her susral house (inlaws). One is your parents home where you come from and then the elephant carries her back to her husband's house.

During these 2 days we do Jagaran (stay up all night at the temple) and also play gavri at night. (Earlier mentioned--gavri has to be played on 3 nights--2 days of Jaaran before the end and one other day earlier mentioned). The potter makes 2 elephants, one he fashions from clay and the other from sentra. One for Lord Shiva and the other for Parvati and they ride around the village. People worship them, make offerings of fruits and keep a fast on that night. And we break this fast on the following night. One night is garavan and the other is valavan. (see Hindi notes). Before breaking the fast we light a diya with our mouth or hand. It is believed that if we have not done the proper Tapsya then we may even get burnt. After the lighting of the diya the girls (daughters and sisters of the village) bring fruits and serve us and we break the fast. Then Geet are sung. Then all the guests who have been invited for the occasion are offered food and drink by the villagers. Then the handing over or retreat of Gavri, Gavri Ujala, is done and the villagers buy cloth material, have a coat tailored and the guests who have been invited to the village do the Paharavni... [from pahena--see Hindi...when one sees off a daughter she is given clothes from the mother's house...paharavni...] That's how we end the gavri ceremonies.

44. Are there people in your village who dislike or do not appreciate gavri?

Yes there are. But we must look at this in two different ways. Let's not talk about the village. Let's look within ourselves too. There are many people who feel that it will increase their expenses and bring economic burdens. But there are certain traditions which cannot be violated, especially when there is unanimous decision. So even people who dislike gavri cannot avoid it. They're bound by tradition. Secondly some look upon it as a waste of valuable time along with money. But again he apprehension and fear of inviting the devi's wrath, anger, unnecessarily which will result in disease among cattle and peace and serenity being shattered. So they buckle under to the pressure and hence find there is no choice or no two ways. If they avoid gavri and misfortune befalls the village they have to go back to the Devi. So to avoid this predicament they continue doing gavri.

45. Is gavri performed after 5 or 10 years?

It is usually done after 3 years but sometimes it may even go up to 5 years and sometimes up to 10 years. We do gavri to maintain peace and happiness in the village. So if everything is going well Gavri may be done even after 10 years. But in case there is some disturbance, disease, misery, unhappiness, if the cattle become sick and die, then we take Gauri after 3 years. So the minimum is 3 years, the maximum, not beyond, is 10 years.

46. How do you decide the roles in gavri?

Everyone has different roles to play. But there are so many stories and episodes related with gavri. So it is very important that the person playing that particular role is well aware of the story. So this is a determining factor. Of course other factors are that he has a great liking for gavri. Is able to sing and dance and is well versed with the stories besides being a good player and must enjoy his role and be interested in gavri.

47. Gulabji what role do you play?

I have played several different roles. [Kesuji and Prabhu ji]: The role he enjoys and the one which suits him is the role of the Meena's other. Besides he has played other roles like Binjara, Krishna, Bhasmasur etc.

48. Are your children learning gavri from you or by watching and are they inspired by you. Will they also play gavri in the future?

Yes they are learning. Both my boys have already started taking part in gavri performances.

49. When you watch gavri, not when you play, how do you feel?

I enjoy watching when the vai of the Devta is done. When they play according to the actual traditions, history, the old gavri stories which have been passed down to us, based on the deities and the devtas. Then I enjoy watching gavri. But where there is imitation and artificiality only to bring in the element of entertainment for the sake of earning money I am not happy. Watching the episodes.

50. How do you feel when you play gavri yourself?

I feel energized, excited, charged with emotions and fervor and despite performing for long hours I do not feel tired. My blood turns hot and I feel empowered by Goddess Shakti. Suppose when we are performing a certain story and somebody in the audience raises a question in between we stop him there...the reason is that he might distract the players. While performing our concentration is entirely in our role and we are always conscious about what we speak. We should not say anything incorrect or use indecent language or else people would criticize us and point a finger at us. We are very careful about the role we play. Even in the songs or dance performances within the stories we are careful about doing what is correct and we try to ensure that nothing goes wrong. We are conscious about right and wrong, correct and improper.

51. When you play gavri or watch it, what do you feel or think about afterwards.

After watching when we reflect back we are able to focus on the shortcomings. How much was the actual or real story and how much was artificial. How much was correct and what went wrong and where. When we are watching we are fully engrossed. It is only later than we reflect and ponder. When we are performing ourselves we think later whether we had missed out on something, whether everything went in the correct order of things. It is an ancient and living tradition and whether we have made any mistake in performing our roles so that we could improve in the future and not repeat our mistakes.

52. Is gavri necessary for you. Is it useful or beneficial for you, is it important, or is it all three?

It can be considered in all three aspects. It is important because the people have belief in it. It is a tradition and also it is a medium of learning for us. A medium through which the old tradition is handed down through the generations and serves as a vehicle of communication. It also imparts experience. It has religious significance and it is important because it serves to teach. It is necessary for our peace and happiness. So that our cattle are free from all afflictions and we are free from disease and difficulties and problems. It is beneficial because when people become trained and experienced players they are also hired by other villages to perform in their gavri and hence they earn good money. People from a distance of almost 30-40 kms. would also hire good gavri players if necessary and during the one and a quarter months they pay them a few thousand rupees. Thirdly the art is passed on. The experience is passed on from one generation to the another. Like Kesu and his father and his uncle used to play gavri and he learnt from them. Not only this, even the people of other villages can hire good experienced players to train and teach them if they are interested in learning gavri. So it is important, necessary and useful for the individual and the village in the larger context.

53. Is gavri important for women?

As far as importance is concerned that has been answered. And even as far as whether it is useful and necessary for them...well women are a part of the family. So we cannot consider them

in isolation or separately. It has to be seen from the angle of where the family as a whole unit and women are part of the whole.

54. Is gavri necessary for the elders in the village?

Yes it is. Because they have performed roles, so they have been able to teach the next generation. They have handed it down to the next generation. secondly if they did not accept this tradition, if they had no belief in it, then how would the others come to accept it. After all it is a tradition which has to be carried into the future.

55. Is it necessary for youth?

Yes it is.

56. Is there anything else that you would like to say about gavri. Something which you have not been able to express so far. Any other information or suggestion not discussed already.

2nd tape begins here: I have given all the information that I knew. We have already discussed the different traditions related with gavri. All this discussion and information that I have given is actually from the people's beliefs, their thinking and the traditions they follow and uphold, or discard. It has centered around the people's beliefs or disbeliefs. But actually if we discuss the stories of gavri they are all very lengthy. The stories have different phaliyon [episodes????] We would have to sit at length to discuss these things. But the beliefs of the village, the families, the people, I have communicated to you. There are separate stories that are played during the day ad separate stories played during the night.

57. Whatever knowledge you have Gulabji regarding the different stories let us talk about that.

There are two aspects of this. First there is tradition which has been handed down to us but today many changes have been brought about for various reasons we have already discussed. I know the following stories: Mama Haal Birchchu (scorpion) Kade, Kaal Beliya, Binjara and the one on the underworld where the context of Lord Krishna comes in.

The ones I am doubtful about is where the Badshah ki Fary...emperor's army lays siege and where Nahar Kare...so we will discuss these episodes and stories based on tradition and the devi devtas which are played in the morning.

The story of Bhasmasur. Shiv and Parvati is related again. That Bhasmasur was after Parvati. So enamored by her beauty. Shivji was trapped in a cave and Bhasmasur sat at the mouth of the cave in a huge rock. He had this boon from Shankarji that he would die neither inside a house nor outside a house, after acquiring the bracelet from him. He wanted to kill Shakar. So Parvati went to God and complained that Bhasmasur is after her husband. This is where Krishna Heera comes in. When Parvati complained to Brahmaji that Bhasmasur is trying to kill Shankar and what is to be done. So Krishna and Radhika accompanied Parvati to the place where Bhasmasur was sitting on the giant rock. Then they coaxed her to dance and finished him. He died just at the entrance of the cave, neither inside nor outside it.

Prabhuji: [Krishna had taken Avatar during the Treta yug, during the Pandavas and the Mahabharata and the story of gavri dates back to the origin of the universe. So how is it possible for Krishna to be born or present in the same period at Vishnu.] Yes what is a more acceptable version could be that Vishnu took the Avatar or Krishna in the Treta Yug, later. So how does Krishna Heera figure in case here. The Mohini form was taken by Vishnu and not by Krishna. Shakar-Parvati and Krishna-Radhika do not belong to the same period.

Unclear who is speaking now: The boon to Bhasmasur was given by Shankar and Vishnu became Mohini. So when Bhasmasur died Shankar came out of the cave and a Brahmin gave him Gavra (to mortgage). Mortgaged Gavra to Shankar for rel. 25 p.

Prabhuji: But where does the Brahmin come from and this particular incident is nowhere depicted when gavri is played. Parvati served Lord Shankar and Bhasmasur copied her only to get the secret of the bracelet and to acquire it. He served Shankar too.

[The discussion is joined with Gopilalji village Jarenwas. Pratapji village Jeerai and Lalo baji.]

Parvati manifested herself (Avatar) in almost 24 forms. She became Hema Bhil's daughter and married a Sewaliya Bhil So she had said when asked by Bhasmasur. The origin of the world Bhil lies herein. It was used by Parvati for the first time. Hema Bhil Nagadchi. Very religious man and talented and proficient in instrumental and vocal music and well versed in traditions. Today the Bhils call themselves Gametis, Rawats, Meena, and so on, but the original word is Bhil. Parvati had taken Avatar in a Bhil family.

Parvati is known by three names: Parvati, Amia and Gavra. They are all manifestations of one but at different times for different purposes Parvati is her old name. When someone who has died was rejuvenated by sprinkling Amia which was done by Shankar she began to be called Amia. [Shankar sprinkled amia at her behest.] When Bhamsasur saw her she was called Gavra. The name Gavra is taken along with Parvati. Gorya also means Gavra.

She was Parvati in j (heaven). There were the 3 gods--Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar. Brahma had a Brahmani (Brahman woman). Vishnu had Laxmi and Shankar had Parvati. They were all doing Tapasya except Vishnu ji Brahma was the Guru, teacher, well versed in all the religious texts. Shankar was a Kaladhari, like an artist or a performer, he could create situations. He did Tapasya and he created a cycle of 12 year p. Vishnu was like a leader like an overseer, to keep watch over good and evil and to take steps accordingly.

But Gavri play centers around only the Devis and Devatas. All the episodes that are played and the various stories are all emanating from the devis and devtas. The stories have been created thus. The source is all there -- only one source -- devis and devtas. Our tradition, which is very old, is based on our belief in devis and devtas. Gavri that we see today is modified for various reasons. There is a lot of imitation too but the central theme is only one. If you have noticed that where we begin gavri...the first thing done is to make our offering to the Devis-Devtas (bhog). If you look at the different stories...the one showing Shiv & Parvati farming, they drive away the monkeys. They are all related. Then the one about the Baka where Krishna comes in. This is also related to the Devi Devtas. Then where Devi ambav agrees to marry the demon and the Rakshas follows her into the water riding on his horse while Ambav is floating away further from him on Lotus leaves. The horse gallops on water but is not drowned. This is also related with Ambav.

The episode related with the Badshah is also related with Devi Ambav. When the Mughal Badshah attacked the fort of Chittorgh. The Bhils fought with the Maharana of Mewar against the Badshah. These were not the Bhils of Bhomat who helped Rana Pratap. That happened much later. This episode dates back to the time of Rana Sanga even before Udai Singh and Panna Bhai. When Bhana Shah fought against the Mughals with Rana Sanga. The Mughal ruler who led the attack on Chittorgh was Alauddin Khilji. Rani Padmini performed Johar. Bhilu Rana who was the Bhil chieftain prayed aloud saying If there is a Hindu Deva on this earth then come to our rescue. Come and form our side against these invaders. He has come to corrupt our religion. Then Devi Ambav on hearing his call came and helped the Bhil army and the Maharana and they succeeded in pushing back Alauddin's forces. Even in this episode Ambav devi is the main theme. So all the stories of Gavri and the tradition of Gauri has evolved from and revolves around the Devi

8/8/95 Bagruna Bhura-ji (Kesu-ji's elder brother) Prabhu ji, Maxine, Bhanwarlal
Tape #5 (1 of 2)

The interview began with Bhura ji listening to the tape of Gulab ji and Kesu ji, tape 1 July 25, 1995 Bagruna. Only after he had listened to the first side of the tape did he begin speaking.

Name: Bhuraji. Father's name Dhannaji. Age 50-55 years old. Village: Bagruna.

Bhuraji:

In today's age of Kalyug people don't know old legends and they have forgotten about these things. It is important to pass on this information so that it is retained for future generations.
HARE OM.

We begin from the beginning.

The period when nothing existed, there was no earth, no sky, no sun and moon, neither Brahma or Vishnu or Mahesh existed, not even Shakti. Only darkness and a dense fog prevailed over the universe. And amidst this existed God Almighty the Father Naranjan Nirakar. He was formless and he neither ate nor drank. OM. That was god almighty., Naranjan Nirakar. From OM emerged Shakti. [Shakti appeared.] Shakti was shining in that darkness. Shakti said, O Niranjan Nirakar you have created Shakti and now be my husband and fulfill this relationship.

God replied my child you are my daughter, and this is impossible. Shakti said, "If this is not possible as you say then I will distribute my power. I will burn myself and be reduced to ashes. Niranjan Nirakar said "Child, forgive me. I will do something for your sake." NN thought to himself that there is neither earth or sky. Only darkness. What shall I do. What or how shall I create? Thinking to himself he decided and with the help of light/radiance from Om he made one egg and dashed it so that it split open and broke into two. One portion went up to form Brahma Mandal, to form the sky. the other half formed the earth.

Now Om Shakti grew restless and said to NN that I cannot wait any longer. Only you are present in the universe and you have promised to do something for my sake. When will you do it? She is not ready to forgive NN unless he fulfills her desire. So NN thought again and made three "putlas" [lit. puppets] and told Shakti to go to them and they would consummate the relationship she desired. Shakti went to Brahmaji and said, "Brahmaji, marry me. I will be your devoted wife. I am Shakti and I am burning. I have fire within me. Please put out my fire." Brahma replied, "Sister, I am your brother. We are children of the same father. We are brother and sister I cannot marry you."

Shakti said, "If you cannot marry me I will distribute my [Shakti] power and reduce you to ashes with my fire." "Do what you like" said Brahma, "but I cannot help you." Shakti reduced Brahma to ashes. She then approached Vishnu and Mahesh turn by turn. They said exactly what Brahmaji had to say and also met with a similar fate.

After destroying Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh Shakti returned to NN. He said "Child, why have you come back? What do you want? Where are the three men I gave you?" Shakti told him that none married her and she had burnt them to ashes, and she insisted that NN should marry her or else she would do the same to him. Such was Om Shakti or Mother Shakti and the fire in he was the flame of devotion. [see Hindi on translation.]

NN again promised to help her and begged to be forgiven. He re-created the three putlas Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. But this time he granted them boons [vardaan--a bestowal, benefaction, boon] which entailed certain responsibilities and duties. "Brahmaji" NN said, "You shall be Guru

(teacher) of the world, Gurumukji of this creation. Vishnu, you will be the sustainer of the universe and you shall protect the whole world." And then NN turned to Shakti and said, "Child, go to Mahesh and he will marry you. Do not go to Brahma or Vishnu and do not say anything to them. Go only to Mahadesh and propose to him and he will fulfill your desire. This is my word. [so it seems that Mahadesh-Shiv was given the boon of procreation, recreation.]

So she goes. NN had given a mountain peak--Kailash Puri [Mount Kailash, the abode of Shiv ji.] to Shiva and he made Kailash Durgri. So NN asked Shakti before leaving to go there and said "Child, if he is approaching from one direction you go from the opposite direction. [Even today in Indian marriages when the couple circles the haven, sacred fire, they go in one direction first and then the opposite later. They take seven pheras.] So Shakti did as she was told and the two, Shiv Shakti, were united. "You are my husband and you are my wife" they said to each other. NN united the two and he made the union possible and he was their father too. They were both created by him. Thus relationships developed and further segregated on the Universe.

Now the universe was created but on this universe there was [still] no earth [prithvi]. All the three men he created were entrusted with different responsibilities, duties. Now it was Shiv ji's duty to create Prithvi in the universe and to enable growth and progress. Now they were married and Omdevi Amiya said to Shiv, "Lord, how shall we create Prithvi on this universe?" Shiv ji pondered and said, "I have NN's boon. His Mantra. His word. I must do it. So he began the process of creation:

So he produced/created a Jat from his Jata [long hair like sadhus keep]. A Bhil from his eyebrows. Naklang jogi [devotee] from his nose. A Rajput from his _____ and a carpenter from his chest, also known as Vishevakarma. He created a Meena from his underarms, Bayandevi from his arms and a Mahajan [baniya] from his palm. A barber from his nails, a teli [oil merchant] from his knees and a cobbler from his mustache. Thus he created the different jati and they had specific jobs to perform.

The earth had been created but they said that the earth knows nothing and how will it even grow [produce]. It doesn't know how to do work or what work to do. We will have to educate them. We have to give them information. So Shiv ji brought wood and went to the carpenter's house. "I want a plow Can you make one for me. I want to plow my fields." Shiv ji guided him as to what was to be done. Thus he trained him. When the plow was done he said now where shall I go next. So he went to the gujjars house and called out to him, "I need bullocks to plow my field." The Gujjar said, You are the giver, the creator, and you want to buy bullocks." He gave him the bullocks.

Then Shiv ji went to the Jat and said, "I have come to you for land. My name is Shiv Shankar. Can you give me some land?" The Jat said he could do this only after consulting with his wife. He went into his house and asked his wife. His wife reproached him and said, "You have your own children. What will you give them. How will you bring them up? What will you earn and what will we eat? Forget Bhola Shankar Shambhu. Go and refuse." But he said no, no we cannot refuse him. Then his wife said, give him a corner piece and let him go. Don't give him our main portion [of land]. So the Jat asked Shiv ji how much land he wanted. One foot, two or three feet, how much? Did he want it for sitting and meditating? Shiv ji told him that he wanted it for farming, to plant trees, flowers, fruits, vegetables, and make it green. So he gave him a good plot of land.

Now Shiv ji returned to Kailashpuri and said to Amia, I want you to advise. On the earth they don't know how to produce anything. We will have to educate and train them. What do you say? She accepted and they descended on the earth. Shiv started ploughing and Amia started sowing seeds and all the people watched how they were working. [even today generally men plow, women walk alongside them with the seeds and drop them into the earth.]

Suddenly a Meena came and picked up the seeds she was sowing and began eating them. He even took them from Parvati's [now she is called Parvati] hands and ate them. Shiv left his plow to see who was this person? He said Oh. It is the Meena. He is the thief. He is small. So Meena was born for thievery. He was created to earn his living by thievery.

So everyone began to perform the tasks that they had been created for. The carpenter, barber, Mahajan, Rajput were all entrusted their jobs and trained, educated. Thus was the beginning on this earth.

Shakti had taken avtar--would neither be born nor would die. Now Shivji felt that he wanted to be immortalized on the earth. Who would otherwise remember him? Who was Shivji? Where was he married and how was Parvati born and how were they married and where did she come from. Who was she, etc. It is important to give this information to the inhabitants of the earth. Shiv ji and Parvati were talking about this and they said, we shall have to make a plan. Shiv ji was sitting in meditation. Parvati was devoted to him and she looked after him, did his sewa, did Parikrama [circumnambulation, going around an idol as a mark of reverence] and Namaskar every day. So now they also wanted to be remembered eternally on earth.

So it was decided that Parvati would transform herself and go to the earth first and Shiv ji would follow and do the same later. But there was one problem. If Parvati went who would look after Shivji while he was in meditation? Who would do his sewa? So Shivji said, "I have an answer for this." He rubbed his hands all over his body and removed the dirt from it and from that he made Narad Muni. "He will serve me in your absence. We have to perpetuate our name in this world. So you must leave now. I will meditate for 12 years and then will come to earth as an incarnation (Avatar). So Parvati left, satisfied that Narad who has been created by Shiv himself will serve him well in her absence.

Shiva sat down in meditation and recited the Mantra, the name of Nirayan Nirakar. Parvati went straight to a King's House [raaval: a king, chieftain, title of some kings of Rajputana.]--Himajal. They were a childless couple [Himajal and his wife.] Om Devi Shakti Parvati had the power to transform herself into a flower and planted herself in the pond from where the Dasis [slave girls] came to fill water. So when these Dasi girls came and noticed the flower they went into raptures over its beauty and tried to pluck it to carry it back to the palace. But they could not. So they returned to the palace. [each time they came near it it moved away from them.] When the queen asked them why they had taken so long they told her about this beautiful flower and how it had evaded their touch. It was a wonderful and strange flower. Himajal's queen asked the Dasis to take her to the sight and when she was the flower she herself went into an ecstasy and prayed to Lord Vishnu, O Lord. I wish this flower would fall into my lap" and she stretched out her hand to pluck it and it fell right into her lap.

She took the flower and they all returned to the palace and she put the flower on a shelf. Then she noticed that there was a little girl sitting in the flower She was overjoyed because they had no child. Om Shakti had transformed herself into the baby. They were grateful to God. He has been kind to us. He has given us a daughter. We have been blessed by the Almighty. They looked after her with great care and devotion but she started growing in an amazing way. [Shiv ji would get up from his meditation after 12 years and then would descend on earth. So she had to be a woman within 12 years...that was their plan when Shakti came to earth.] When she was six months old she looked like 12 years. And when she was 12 she appeared to be 24.

Now after 12 years Shiv arose after completing his meditation. It was time for him to come to earth and perform a marriage ceremony on earth with Parvati. He had to fulfill his word given to her in accordance with their plan. So Shiv called Narad. He said to him, "There is a king by the name of Himajal. He has one daughter. Go to him and ask for his daughter's hand for me." [Narad replied] "Maharaj, you are an ascetic. You live in a jungle. Who will give his daughter to you. Himajal will

never agree. If I take this proposal he'll hammer me and chase me away. I won't go Lord." Shiv said, "Narad do as I say. At least go once with the proposal and speak to Himajal." So Narad very reluctantly left for Himajal's palace. All the way he was crying loudly, "Narayan, narayan, narayan." On reaching there Himajal asked him, Who are you? What brings you here? Narad told him that he had come from Kailashpuri. He was named Narad Muni. Then he said that I have come with a proposal, to seek your daughter's hand.

Himajal said, I see. Yes, I have a daughter and I have to marry her. But let me think over your proposal. First I must know about the man who proposes. His background, his family, his culture. How is his house. And so on and so forth. Then I will decide. I am willing to consider. Himajal did not turn down the proposal. Narad relaxed. "Maharaj I will tell you what you want to know. There is a Maharaj who lives in Kailashpuri. He is an ascetic. He meditates. I have come with his proposal."

"What" shouted Himajal. "An ascetic for my only daughter. How dare you suggest it. She is going to live with a hermit in the jungle? Go away. Get out of my sight at once." He called for his guards and asked them to give Narad a thrashing and not bother even if they broke his mouth for uttering such things. Narad fled but not before he received a beating. He called out, "On Shiv you have put me in this predicament. O Hari." And he reached Kailashpuri and narrated the story to Shiv saying that he had been properly thrashed. Shiva said, "Don't lie, Narad. Tell me if you are hurt. Show me one single wound. I have been there to protect you all along. I have followed you like a shadow."

Narad said "O lord it is true. I am not injured or hurt but they did beat me." Shiv said, let us plan our next step. What is to be done? Narad said, I don't want to go back a second time. Shiv told him not to worry, do as I say and things will work out fine.

One by one other suitors began approaching Himajal seeking his daughter's hand in marriage He did not refuse anyone. Now Shiv came riding on ka horses (sacred ash horses) to Himajal's house. He sought his daughter's hand and Himajal agreed. [but he had been agreeing to all the suitors.] Now Shiv asked Narad to take the horses and go once again to Himajal with his proposal and tell him he had been sent by the same person who had come riding on the horses. Narad was apprehensive and scared of receiving another beating. But Shiva persuaded him to go and so he went. They were doing this to perpetuate their name on earth. He went to Himajal and said as he was told by Shiv. Diamonds fell out of the horse's mouth. Oh Oh, he said. This is no ordinary horse." He immediately agreed to the wedding. "I will marry my daughter and arrange for the marriage."

But meantime Himajal did not refuse all the other proposals as well. (what is being conveyed is that god created such a situation. The same king refused him the first time and he made him accept the second time He repeated the whole drama. God created this change of heart in Himajal. First he put him in a quandary and confused him and later enabled him to firm up his mind. He did this, all this, intentionally, with the idea, We should be remembered forever on earth.)

Now there was only one girl and 1,2,3 suitors. How could they all marry one girl. Now Shivji arrived and came as a Jogi--hermit and took along with him from Mount Kailash its rocks and jungles and all the creatures of the jungle: snakes, mongoose. Now everyone on earth was scared. The king saw all this--all these wild animals--and said to Shiv that please camp outside the town. We will bring the girl to you. Please keep the bharat outside and we will bring here there to perform the marriage ceremony.

Shiv agreed and he went alone to Himajal's palace. Now the women gossiped that he halted there and wouldn't come. We had to request him and cajole him to come. Now the other suitors also arrived. Who would marry Himajal's daughter? So Shiv used his powers and Lo! other brides appeared. He endowed these Dasis with the necessary qualities. One was Shivji beti. One

Jhaduliyo Avatar. One Ruthi ro avtar and one Resiliyo Avatar. He transformed all the Dasis into Avatars and when the suitors came and asked what qualities does she have, they were told that she is Jhaduliyo Avatar and so on. So they agreed.

Shiva married Himajal's daughter Parvati/Amia and this was the first marriage ceremony on earth. Marriages were performed since thereafter on earth. They did this to educate the people. How to prepare the Roan Dwar [the gate outside where the bride touches with the sword to announce her husband's arrival.] How the sacred thread is tied and fire lit and the Pheras (encircling the fire) are undertaken. To teach the people they enacted this whole [ceremony]. Theirs was the first marriage on earth. So their name is always remembered, as they wanted to be immortalized on earth.

Then they returned to Kailashpuri. It was time again for Shiv to sit and meditate for 12 years. He told Parvati and she said, Lord you can sit in meditation. I have always served you and I will continue to serve you." Shiv shut his eyes and sat in meditation.

Now Bhasmasur the Raksha found his way to Shiva's dhurrie [where he sat meditating] while wandering in the mountains. When his eyes fell on Amia he fell in love with her at once. "What a beautiful woman. She must be Mahadev's wife. But I must have her. How shall I fulfill my desire?" He thought and hit upon the idea that he has to first get close to Parvati and get all the secrets and information. So he went and befriended her. He sat near her and tried to find out everything about Mahadev. When would he get up from his meditation? Parvati said he would only open his eyes after 12 years. So Bhasmasur told Parvati that he was filled with the desire to serve Shiv and if he did so devotedly would he also be granted something by Shiv? Parvati said of course you would be.

Bhasmasur had noticed the armlet [bhasmi kada] that Shiv was wearing. He asked Parvati and she told him that it was bhasmi Kada and if you hold it over someone's head and utter the words "basam ho" the person would be reduced to ashes. Oh I see said Bhasmasur. Now he was possessed with the desire to have the bracelet. Shiv could not be killed in any other way. But with the bracelet he would be able to reduce Shiva to ashes and then Parvati would be all his. He served Shiv night and day and waited patiently for him to open his eyes. For 12 years he was a devoted servant. After which when Shiv opened his eyes he saw Bhasmasur before him.

Shiv said, "Child, what do you want? Why are you here?" Bhasmasur replied that Lord you were in meditation for 12 years and I have served you. Would you grant me something in return for my devotion and service to you? "Of course," Shiv replied. Ask what you want. I will fulfill your wish today and that is my word.

Immediately Bhasmasur said, Lord what is that you wear on your forearm? I wish to possess it." Shiv was dumb struck by his request. Oh God, he cried. What shall I do now? A word once given has to be honored. The earth will tremble if a promise is not fulfilled." Bhasmasur cried "Lord, fulfill your promise." Shiv agreed, but told him to stand far from him and then stretch out your arm; I will put it on your arm myself. Bhasmasur wanted to kill Shiv instantly and Shiv realized this. So Shiv told Bhasmasur to go even further way and stretch out his arm. If he had stood close Bhasmasur would hold the bracelet over his head immediately and reduce him to ashes. Now Bhasmasur thought I will kill Shiv and have Parvati to myself. I won't leave her. And then he ran after Shiv. Shiv fled and was trailed by the demon. There were many caves in Kailash so Shiv ran inside one and pulled a huge rock over its mouth. Bhasmasur searched all around to no avail. Shiv was hiding and the demon could not find him.

Bhasmasur became tired and gave up on the trail. He decided that Parvati would return to Shiv Dhurri [the place where he meditated] looking for her husband. So he said let me disguise myself to look exactly like Shiv and sit on the dhurrie and when Parvati comes I will carry her away. So

he tied his tresses into a knot over his head, wore a snake around his neck, took a necklace in his hand a trishul [trident] and sat in meditation waiting for Parvati.

On the other side in Amrapur (Dev lok) Lord Vishnu, Avatar of Lord Krishna, approached Brahmaji to find out what was happening on Mritya lok. Why was there so much darkness? Why was his throne unsteady? Has there been a storm or has a boat capsized or has some danger befallen his followers and devotees. Or a great devotee may have been born or may have died? Please inquire what the matter is. Something is terribly wrong. Indrasan [Indra's throne] also became unsteady and Indra too cried. Look! It seems a lot of people are dying or being killed. I hear a mournful cry. Please find out Brahmaji what is wrong.

Brahma spoke. Lord, I'll tell you what the problem is. Shivji is in great difficulty and is very unhappy. [Brahma narrated the entire episode with Bhasmasur to Indra and Vishnu/Krishna.] That Mahadev has been trapped and fooled by Bhasmasur. Mahadev was calling out for help. O Brother. O Vishnu. You are the protector of the universe. You are an Omkari. ??? Help me out of this cave. So this is it Brahmaji said. I have understood. Let's go and help. Bhasmasur was still sitting on the dhurri waiting for Parvati.

Vishnu transformed himself into a beautiful woman. He became a bride, wore an anklet, dangles in his ears, full make up and looked extremely attractive in all the finery, jewelry and makeup. She crossed the jungle and went to the Shiva's hermitage. The demon was sitting and repeating Parvati's name, not god's name. "When will she come? When will I fulfill my desire?" So Vishnu in the form of a Mohini [a kamini--both words for a beautiful woman] went there and tapped her foot [so the anklet trinkets would jingle and awaken the demon to catch his attention]. The anklet broke and the balls and beads fell all over. The demon opened his eyes and she said, "Child help me retrieve my jingles." Bhasmasur said O no. Forget them. Come with me now. I have been sitting here waiting for you only. I have suffered and endured. Don't waste time on your anklets. Let's go."

Mohini cried, You are mistaking me for someone else. Some other woman. See who I am? Can you recognize me? Bhasmasur said, but of course you are Parvati. I can see that. "No" she said. "I am a Bhil woman. [Bhilani] "Never mind that said Bhasmasur. I was meditating here. Now we'll go to the cave. Come with me."

Mohini said "Don't touch me. Stay away. First recognize me. See me carefully. You have taken meditation and all your efforts and your devotion will be futile. Your Bhakti will go to waste." Bhasmasur said "Forget the Bhakti. I have work with you now."

Mohini said, listen to me. I am a Bhil woman. I have something to tell you. Shall I sing it or say it?" "Do what you wish" said Bhasmasur. But remember you will be my wife. I will have you."

"All right" she said. But first hear me. So she sang: [hindi bottom p. 21]

I am the daughter of Hema Bhil and the wife of Sewaliya Bhil. My Bhil husband is a straightforward and honest man. We are very religious and law abiding and we acknowledge our integrity."

Bhasmasur said, "Forget all this honesty and integrity and religious mindedness. It is all nonsense. Your Bhil husband is not watching you. There is no one in the forest. Let's go into the cave."

"Wait Lord" she replied. Let me explain. You say that nobody is watching in the forest, but Lord Almighty is and the Sun and Moon will be witness. Lord Almighty is the Lord of this Creation and nothing is hidden from him."

Bhasmasur said, "He is high up there What can he see? What will he do? Even if he sees. Let's do our job."

"You will not listen Maharaj. You are bent on having me. What sort of devotion were you doing?"

"I desire to marry you. My devotion was only for you. I have been waiting for you. So much of my precious time has been spent for your sake. Now come on."

"All right Lord. I will come. But first give me your word that you will do what I say."

"I accept. I will. Now I am happy. I will have you. I will keep you."

So she sang again: "Bring me a jackal from the sea. Only then will I marry you."

Bhasmasur said what are you saying. You are lying. How can I get a jackal from the sea? They are from the forests and mountains."

"Allright then. If you cant do it you can' have me she said. Now listen carefully again. She sings, "bring me fish from the hills. Only then will I come with you."

"Are you mad? What are you talking? I can't understand you. What a lot of lies. Have you seen fish on the hills?"

"Well then if you can't fulfill my wishes don't touch me. Move away from me."

(tape 5 ends here.)

8/8/95 Bagrunda Bhura-ji (Kesu-ji's elder brother) Prabhu ji, Maxine, Bhanwarlal
Tape #6 (2 of 2)

[Mohini continues with Bhasmasur:]

First you have to fulfill my words You have to do what I say. Only then will I come with you."
Again she sang two lines: (see p. 24 this was not translated from Hindi...

Now if you do this for me I will come with you.

Bhasmasur said, "Bhil queen [Bhilu Ram] you are asking the impossible. You are lying and concocting lies. I cannot understand what you are trying to do."

"O Bhasmasur, you have meditated for 12 years and now your devotion, your penance is going to be futile. You are being immoral and corrupt."

"Bhilu Ram, I have been attracted by your beauty and overcome with the desire to have you as my wife. I am so happy to see you here and now I am taking you to the cave."

Again she resists and asks for another favor. She says her Bhil husband would play musical instruments for her and entertain her. He immediately prepared these things to make a musical sound. "Now he said, let's go."

But again she declined and resisted and set for him another task which she said her husband did for her because he loved her. "Use the grindstone and make flour for me like he does. Then I will go with you."

He did, but then she said. "Now wash my clothes before my eyes then I will come." He washes her clothes and dries them. She still refuses. "We are religious people. Our integrity cannot be doubted. I am devoted to my husband. But I'll come if you make chapattis in front of my eyes as my husband does." He did this task. Then she says, bring cow dung in a basket. He does. He says I have done everything you have asked. Now come with me to the cave.

Not yet she says. Carry me on your shoulder as my husband does. He carries her as she wishes.

Then she says, "My husband kept me very well and gave me a lot of independence too. Now dance for me the way my husband does." She demonstrated to him raising her arms over head and making large movements with her arms over her head.

Bhasmasur kept the one arm with the Chad stiff and straight and would not use it. "Why are you keeping one hand so stiff? she said. Are you hurt? She makes him dance and when he is thoroughly enraptured without realizing it he raises his other arm with the bracelet over his head. She [vishnu] utters: basam ho: be reduced to ashes. And instantly Bhasmasur was burnt to ashes and finished. But his face was saved That did not get destroyed.

A Bhil boy, Gwalpalm, found the face and head and took it. In some Brahmins fields were sown maize and wheat. But a monkey was troubling them. It would eat the seeds and destroy the crop. So these people decided to use that head, tie it on a stick and scare away the monkey. [he use it as a scarecrow.] So they tied the head there. Some Bhil cattle herds came that way. They saw the head which the Brahmins had tied in their fields and removed it and took it to play. They tried to scare one another with it.

So that is the story of Shakti and Vishnu's manifestation as a Bhil queen to destroy Bhasmasur. Parvati/Amia's incarnation as Himaljal's daughter. Shiv and Parvati wanted to perpetuate their name on earth.

The gavri play begins with an offering to the gods. The play commences only after that. But there are many episodes which are played in gavri.

One depicts the origin of gavri, creation of the earth and how Shiv shakti wanted to be immortalized among the mortals. It is believed that there are 9 lakh 33 crore Devi Devyas in Gavri. Devi Ambav for 57 years and said to herself that she must also immortalize herself on earth. [Amba, Amia, Durga, Chandika, ambika, Shakti are all manifestations of Om Devi, are all one.] The 2 main deities are Shiv and Parvati. So Amba said to herself what shall I create? How shall I immortalize myself on earth. So Shakti Amba decided she would do something creative. So she created Heera. Heera was the Dasi of the deities (9 IL 33 c).

Amba called Heera and told her "Child, we have to immortalize our name on earth. So do what I tell you. Let us make (sculpt) the deities Deval in Mala (place name). So Heera went to Khana Ratadia (place name) and get mud which had saffron (kesar) and Kanku (red powder used for tilak in ceremonies) and dumped the mud in Manak chowk (a courtyard). Bheruji came and kneaded the mud and made 9 lakh 33 crore Devi Devata. Then they cleaned up the place. Then Amba told Heera, Child, this is done. Go to the potter's house and tell him to give you a Kalash (urn). Go quickly. Don't waste time. So she went to the Kumhar's house and told him that she wanted a Kalash [used to store holy water for ceremonies or water used to bathe the deities]. So the potter said, I accept that it is Devi Amba's request but I can't go out and bring the mud to my chak (potter's wheel) because there are spirits sleeping there and I'll get possessed by one if I disturb them. There are ghosts here and I can't disturb them.

So Heera returned to Amba and gave her the potter's message. So Amba said, take these pearls (pearls without holes, very rare whole pearls) and offer them to the potter. Touch his feet and tell him it is Devi Ambika's command. She orders you to do it.

Heera did as told. So the potter took the precious pearls and said let's go and bring the mud. He took his spade and [tools for digging] and went out to bring mud to make the kalash. So he started to dig. He hit the ground the first time and out burst a fountain of water. The second place he hit out burst a fountain of milk. The third place he hit out came a fountain of blood and the fourth time he lifted his spade and struck the ground he fell down and his spade was flung far and he was unable to move.

Before he began his work of digging he had turned in all four directions and done namaskar to the deities in all directions. Now he called out to Devi and started abusing and cursing her. "Who is Ambika? Who are the 9 lakh devis and devatas. What blame? I don't care because of you I am in this situation today. May your lineage never grow. My wife will be a widow now. My little children, who will look after them? What sort of work have you set me to do?"

Now his cry was heard at Mala Deval. When Ambika heard his cry she immediately called Bheru and told him to fetch a drum and beat it so that all the devis and devatas would gather together. Now these Devi Devtas were spread in all directions, some were sleeping. They were all in different places indifferent directions. [Ambika said] now a great tragedy has occurred. Some terribly unfortunate thing has happened. She became worried about his curse. Here she had come for 57 years to leave her name forever. So Bheruji struck and drum hard, 1,2,3,4,5 times. and the Devis and Devatas awoke at the sound of the drum.

What has happened they asked. Surely something terrible has come to pass. Let's hurry and go so they all rushed to Mall Delve. There the potter was still cursing. You, Madame, you die young.

What sort of devise are you? All the 9 lakh 33 crore devis reached Khana Ratadiya [place where the potter was living] and immediately got one and quarter ton of cereal [jawar maize] and Mandira [alcoholic drink] from 12 cellars and black skinned goats and offered them to the spirits and ghosts and cajoled and pampered them and tried to explain to them to let the potter free and to have the things made that were requested of him.

They relented and let him go. The potter gained consciousness and sense and then took the mud he required, put it through the sieve, added an adhesive substance and made a kalash, shaped it on the wheel and prayed to the sun. "Suraj mama [maternal uncle] please bake this kalash for me and Surja mama baked it for him and he gave the kalash to Heera and she went running back to Ambika.

Then Ambika had another chore for him. She told Heera to go to the Baniya and ring Jawar [millet]. So she goes quickly but she lost her way so she asked some children playing around there to guide her and promised to bring them toys and goodies. So they guided her and told her to follow one route which would lead her to Dhar Patna. There by the shade of a creeper is a Bhil's house first, then there is a pond next to which lives a Chamar, then comes the Potter's house and a yellow house is the Baniya's house. She reached there and called out to the Baniya to get up quickly and weight one quarter ton jwar for her. She took it, tied it in her sari and also took some small playthings for the children who had guided her and some chanas for them to eat and gave it to them on her way back and asked them to share everything.

When she reached there she found all the Devis were busy at work pounding, sieving and working fast. Then Ambika prepared Patwari (a dish). She put jwar and jaggery together and prepared it nicely. Then she said that there are 9 lakh 33 crore devis devatas. Let us celebrate nine days of Navrati and Desshera on the 10th day and Divali for 20 days. But how will we pass our time during the 9 days of navratri. Heera child, go to Dhar Patna and bring the Bhil with you. He will keep us happy and entertained for 9 days.

She went running and found the Bhil's wife working on the grindstone. Heera asked her to call the bhil. His wife told Heera that the Bhil was working in the fields and looking after the crops. So Heera took the direction for the fields and headed straight there. She told the Bhil to leave all his work and follow her and that Devi Amba was calling him. He declined, saying that the jwar and moong had ripened and bajra was ready to be cropped and cut. I cannot come.

Heera returned to Mala Deval as fast as she could. Meanwhile parrots attacked the Bhil's crop. Devi created them. They flew from ranch to branch, end to end crying and destroying the crop and brought it home. Amba, on hearing what the Bhil had said to Heera, decided to go and fetch him herself.

So she became a squirrel like creature (heli) and left her place in the evening slowly heading for the Bhil's house. Now the Bhil's family was asleep and they had sticks and other weapons with them which they always kept for defense in the jungle. The cut bajra crop was lying in the chowk (square). So the squirrel Devi creature wanted to wake the Bhil without disturbing the rest of the family. She went to his bedside and pulled a box lying there which fell and immediately woke the Bhil.

He got up and when he saw a squirrel like animal he immediately picked up a sickle to strike it dead. These animals cause a lot of destruction to the crop. I must kill it immediately. The squirrel moved away quickly and he followed. He would strike it down and again it would get up and run. This went on for some time till the squirrel led the Bhil inside the Deval [where the deities have their altar] and shut the door and he got shut inside. The Bhil began to cry. So Amebic said to him, "Child, why do you weep. This is an altar of the devise. What are you thinking about. I shall not

kill you. Why don't you just chant some [prayers] and sing some Bhajans and here I have the cymbals, drums, etc. so sing for the devis.

But the Bhil said he didn't know any prayers. So she picked up the drum struck it hard and gave on drum beat. She started to sing. They did Navratri for 9 days and celebrated Dussehra on the 10th day.

Now Ambika sent Heera to a carpenter this time to ask him to chop wood and make a vehicle because they would all go to take a dip in the Mansarowar. Heera went quickly and the carpenter was asked to make a beautiful vehicle which would have the sun, moon Peacock Papiha snake carved all over it.

Now the vehicle was ready and they were all set to go to Mansarovar. Now the devis did not want to take the devatas because it meant asking Ganeshji along and he with his fat tummy and trunk like nose would not look nice accompanying them. So the devis all planned to leave the Devtas and proceed all by themselves. So Ambika requested Heera to make sleeping arrangements for all the devis and devtas in the courtyard square, and to keep watch till they fell asleep. Thereafter she should wake the devis quietly and they would proceed towards Manasarovar while the devtas slept. So all the devis pretended to sleep and the moment Ganeshji was snoring they got out of bed, mounted themselves in the carriage and sped away.

When the devtas awoke they found the devis missing and they worried Then Ganeshji climbed up on the top of the Deval [altar room] and searched in all directions and he noticed the carriages speeding off in one direction throwing up clouds of dust and the devis merrily riding away. Ganeshji wanted to teach them a lesson. So he used his powers on them and the carriage fell apart and so did the devis. Some broke their bones. Others were injured in the eyes. [he closed his fist and cast a magic spell.] Poor things,.

Ambika requested Heera to go to Dar Patna and approached the Bhil to find out what has gone amiss. Why has this tragedy struck them. Here went as fast as she could. Meanwhile Ganesh who was observing the scene not realizing that Heera was being sent to the Bhil he went there himself and asked the Bhil to convey to Heera that I (Ganesh) was responsible for the accident. I caused it all and if the Bhil did not convey his message Ganesh would take him to ask too.

Heera came and asked the Bhil to see her palm and tell her why this accident occurred. The Bhil has been taught by Ganesh to do what he had to say and he told Heera that the Devta had done this, Ganesh Devta. He was annoyed and sleeping at Mala Deval and she should make a offering of sweets to please him.

Heera returned to Amba and conveyed the Bhil's message. Amba asked Heera to go to Ganesh and try to please him. Heera ran to mala Deval and called out to Ganeshji. But he ignored her totally and refused to respond. He would keep turning face in the other direction when she called out to him. Heera sat in Manak Square and began crying. On hearing her cry Ganesh devata came and asked why was she howling? She explained everything to him and told him that Ambika was calling him. Refused to go. Instead he said he would go to his Mamaji's [maternal uncle] house and have laddoo and puris and that Heera had better return and allow him to go.

Heera blocked his path and would not allow him to go. She offered him sweets. He accepted and relented and all the other devtas also tried to please him and insisted that he should go. So Ganesh finally went and repaired their carriage and the devis apologized and asked him to guide the carriage and lead the way. As fat as he was he sat right in front and spurred on the horses.

Now there were no proper roads and the carriage got stuck in a gully and it was difficult to pull it out because of the weight of Ganeshji. They cursed him. Now what was to be done. So Ambika

thought and decided that the 9 lakh devis should get together and construct a proper path. So they set to work and lay a proper path. They moved on and reached Mansarovar. There they pegged 9 lac tents to camp there. Heera was directed to go to the Chamars house and bring 9 lac Sarkandas made from cowdung. Mansarovar has to be awakened. Mansarovar is asleep. Heera ran to Dhar Patna and requested the Chamar for the same. He gave it to her altogether because he couldn't find a basket. She tied the cowdung in her saree and returned to Ambika. Ambika asked her to make 9 lac gofan (small weapon). They would use these to awaken Mansarovar.

The prepared the Gofan and distributed them to the devis and they struck with their gofans. There were 2 demons sleeping inside Mansarovar. They got up and came out. And simultaneously these 9 lac devis dived inside together. They rocked the seabed and all the fish and crocodile and water creatures died and the Gadul creeper was destroyed. The water was not fit for drinking any more. The demons became very anxious. When their slave girls who fetched water came to Mansarovar they were shocked and worried and went back to the demons complaining that Devi Ambika and her 9 lac devis are reigning and Mansarovar what they are doing is unjust and unfair. Water creatures are dying. Water is not fit to drink. Where will we fetch water from? Where will the creatures of our kingdom drink water from? That Amba has come for 57 years to make a name for herself.

So Mechada Demon decided to go and see for himself. And he found 9 lac tents had been fixed there. When Devi Amba realized that the demon had come she pulled her bow and shot an arrow straight through him and killed him. Bichanda Demon was waiting for this demon to return with the news of the devis. When Michadh did not return he went to Arendya demon to find out about Michada and the devis. When he reached the Mansarovar lake he found it was all true but Amba came to know and killed him with an arrow. Bichanda waited for both then he become worried. Wondering what to do he decided to dress up and riding on strong horses he headed for Mansovar.

Amba came to know and thought we have killed the 2 demons and now this demon is coming. He is going to disturb us and be a nuisance for us. So they quickly planned and the 9 lac devis jumped into Mansarovar and turned into fish, crocodile and marine plants and disappeared. Bichanda came looking for Amba. He noticed a flame in the middle of Mansarovar. That was Shakti [Amba is a manifestation of Shakt.] He guessed it must be Amba and his horses galloped across the lake and he reached Amba, caught her saree and said "Where are you going? I am going to marry you."

So Amba replied that yes we are going to be married. But she was Shakti. Where was she going to marry him? She said you must send peacocks and peahens with my wedding gifts. We will go to Chittor for Chavren (a wedding ceremony), Abu for Teran and Teej (a big festival) is just around the corner and we will marry on Teej. You come to me quickly on Teej day. So saying she dove into the water and disappeared.

Birhenda accepted and went and sent the Peacocks and peahens with her wedding presents. She (Amba) made a well and pond, filled them with water so that the peacock and peahen would get attracted and come and rest there. And so they did. Then the peacock and peahen sat there, rested a while and decided to open the box and see what jewelry and cloths were being sent for Amba. The peacock pulled out a green saree and dressed in it and the peacock wore a bhor [round decorative jewelry worn in middle of women's forehead] and they danced and pranced around.

Amba was creating this whole situation. She was a devi. When they were busy enjoying themselves they forgot about the wedding gifts and got distracted. Then the demon arrived to marry Amba. He called out to the devis to come out, he would marry lest they came. Amba made 66 Joganiyas devis and one Gauri and they started dancing and playing. Bihanda kept calling, where are the lac devis? Where are the devtas? Speak. You have to come. He made promises to them.

Amba disappeared into the forest and manifested herself in the form of Pavan (wind). She blew into Bichanda Demon and knocked him off. He was struck down into several pieces and finished. Even today whenever she manifests herself in this way the people feel scared. They do Namaskar and if they are playing gavri or anything they stop awhile until the Devi goes. That is the story of Amba.

Another story in this fali (part) is that of Kaloo Keer. When Amba Devi went to bathe in Mansarovar, Rohu fish took away her gold ring. It slipped and fell into the water and the fish Rohu took it away to Bhamar Kund (whirlpool). Devi called to Kaloo Keer saying that he is brave and he can dive deep down into the sea and fetch her ring. So she requested him to go to the Bhamar Kund. When Kaloo Keer's sister in law (babhi) heard about this and that he had promised to drive inside for Devi amba she said to her Devar (brother in law, younger than her husband): For whose sake are you risking your life? Who have you vested so much faith in? The Devis who you are depending upon to help you in case the need arises they are fast sleep in some other place. Bheru is also in the woods of Kashi. Who will hear you?

But he insists that when he makes a pledge that he has to come. So he tried to console his distraught sister in law and leaves for Mansarovar. He dives inside and when he surfaces again he brings the root of a water fruit. Then he brings a water plant. Each time he dives he brings up different things, other than the ring. He is soon too tired and goes to ABM and says he is too tired and unable to get the ring. Then Ambika thinks for a moment and decides what is to be done. She goes to the Kund (Bhamar Kund) and calls the Devtas and Bheriji. They all arrive at her call and dive into the Kund. Rohu jumps up and immediately they pull out the ring from Rohu and give it back to Amba. This is another episode, the episode of Kaloo Keer, in this part.

All of these episodes go on to say that Shakti is very powerful, all powerful, and manifests herself in different forms.

Notes: Bheruji is the guard of the Devi Lok. Worshipped all over Northern India. His image is worn by pregnant women.

Tape #7:

August 16: interview with Bhagwati, UVM Office

Since when has gavri been presented? Some information about the origin of gavri.

We believe that gavri is being played and presented since the beginning of creation, ever since man has been created. Once men were created on the earth the problems arose. They suddenly had to confront difficulties and calamities. Like famine, disease, which brought death and destruction. So in despair all the people gathered together and prayed to God and sought divine assistance to re-establish peace and happiness in their village. So this happened many many years ago. There is no definite date that can be given. But it relates to the origin of the earth and the creation of man. So even today the popular belief and apprehension behind accepting and performing gavri is that their cattle will not be struck by disease or any other calamity which expresses the wrath of God.

In fact we could actually connect the origin of gavri to the story of Bhasmasur and Shankar Parvati. Once all three of them were sitting on Mount Kailash. Bhasmasur, being a Rakshas that he was in his mind had a wicked idea. He wanted to acquire Parvati by deceiving Lord Shankar. He wanted to marry Parvati. Why did he want to marry her? Because she was beautiful and also because it was said that the man who married Parvati would become immortal. He would never die. So Bhasmasur hit upon an idea to deceive Lord Shankar. He did Tapsya of Lord Shankar for 12 years. He served him with total devotion and won his heart. Shivji was pleased with Bhasmasur and asked him what he would like to take as a boon from Shiv. Why had he done his Tapsya for 12 years? Lord Shankar said ask me whatever you want and it shall be granted.

So Bhasmasur grabbed the opportunity and said Lord, I am fascinated by your bracelet and that is just what I want. Give it to me please. Shankar had no other option but to part with that kada bracelet. The Kada had a shakti that if it was circled over someone's head the person would be reduced to ashes. Now Shankar realized that the bracelet was invaluable and he had given it and he too was in grave danger. So immediately he went to Lord Vishnu and apprised him of the situation.

Lord Vishnu chided Bhole Shankar that this bracelet is so powerful that it can destroy us, the Devata. So we are all in great danger from him. He will defeat us and destroy us if we try to fight him. So we have to retrieve this bracelet from Bhasmasur. Bhasmasur has been deceptive and whatever has happened is most unfair.

So Shivji confronted Bhasmasur who was insisting on claiming Parvati as his wife. So finally they settled for a bet. There was a water pitcher lying there and it was decided that whoever of the two (Shiv or Bhasmasur) managed to enter inside the pitcher could claim Parvati. Shankar was a devata and so he could transform himself into a smaller size and enter the pitcher, whereas Bhasmasur couldn't, because he was a demon. Shankar realized that if Bhasmasur was not destroyed he would make the devatas miserable. But when Bhasmasur was dying he begged that his name should not be wiped out from the earth. That his name should be remembered in times to come. Shankar granted that wish. That every year for a month and a quarter you will get this opportunity when in different villages they will make you lay and your name will be known and remembered. Since then gavri is taken from village to village and also played in different villages.

Which jati present gavri?

Adivasis present gavri.

Do all Adivasis present gavri?

Yes, all present it.

Bhils, Menas and all other Adivasi present gavri?

Yes, Bhils, Meena and all Adivasi present gavri.

In the Hindu caste system it is structured like this. There are 4 main caste: Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Only the Adivasis take gavri. The word Adivasi means from the

oldest times, from the beginning. This was the first caste. It was called "Adu Jati" and later called Adivasis. The Adivasis take gavri. It is their tradition. Maybe God was very pleased with these people and told them that they should take gavri.

As legends go, we have not read or it is not recorded as such but according to legends that in very early times the Shravan Jati also used to take Gavri but we have not seen in our times. This must have happened thousands of years ago. But from whatever we know and have seen in our lifetime only the Adivasis take gavri and none of the others do. At least in the last 200-400 years only the Adivasis have been taking gavri.

It has become part of the Adivasi tradition. It has become customary that only Adivasis can take gavri because it is their karma and only they will perform and play gavri. So only they do it. It is part of their duty. It is a job assigned only to them. For instance in India the rituals and ceremonies of a marriage are performed only by a Brahmin and none other. Similarly like the Brahmins have been conducting and performing marriage rules so have the Adivasis been doing gavri. It has become a family tradition. The ancestors have been doing it for generations and even in future this tradition must be upheld. So this is the basis of their belief and the reason why they do it.

But do others watch gavri? People of other castes?

Yes people of other castes watch and they watch with a lot of respect. Everyone shows respect for gavri.

Is gavri performed only in Mewar or in other provinces too?

Gavri is very famous and popular in Mewar but it is also performed in other parts of Rajasthan. I do not know about other states but in Rajasthan gavri is taken in a number of places and presented and played.

Who is gavri all about? Is it about Bhasmasur?

Yes, Bhasmasur.

What are the names of the different characters played in gavri and what is their role?

Rai, Budhiya, Kutakdiya, Khela. First you have a rai and there are two rai in every gavri. They are both manifestations of Parvati. One is in the form of Gauri (buri rai) and one is Amia (choti rai). Then there is Bhasmasur and he is called Budhiya. Then there are two Khelas. One is big Khela and the other is small Khela. They are the main or chief Pujaris in Gavri. They dress in gavri clothes and they dance and they wear the same clothes for a month and a quarter until the time gavri is played but they don't play in gavri. Like they do not perform. They are nicely dressed for the show and they wear long gowns called Jhagea (or Jhabka). Then there is the Kutakdiya. He is the narrator. He conducts the whole show, He is the chief coordinator in gavri. These are the main characters in gavri.

There are several episodes and stories. Like you have some more players or characters according to the different stories. Like in the Banjara and Banjari episode. There is a Banjara and 2 Banjaris, husband and two wives.

Gavri is founded on their belief in devis and devatas. The base is that of the devis and devtas. And it is continuing on the basis of vows and boons. Even today gavri is played, the tradition is maintained. But in today's gavri the depiction's are different. There is a difference. We should understand the duality that exists in the present times.

One side is the stories of Devis and Devatas, and the other side are several new versions and stories that have been woven into the main line of performance. What is the actual thing from the very beginning is the different stories but they all center around the devis and devtas. Devi Ambav, Bheruji, Bhawani, Kalka, 66 Johaniyas etc.

The story of Kalu Keer and Devi Ambav, when her ring slips and falls into Bhamar Kund and is swallowed by the fish Rohu. And she requests Kalu Keer to go into Bhamar Kund and fetch it from Rohu and he takes a vow from her that she will protect him if he gets into trouble in the deep water and she gives her word. Then he dives and finally manages to bring the ring and

returns it to Devi Ambav. These are old stories from the early times. They have been connected with gavri. If we analyze it all serially, in a serial order from the time when gavri begins, like suppose it starts at 8 am then first offerings are made to the devi and devata and they are all remembered and namaskar made Then the stories or episodes begin and generally you will find that in every episode the story revolves around devi devata or there must be, has to be, some connection, some relation with devi devata in gavri.

Tape #7

August 17: Interview with women in Vaniyon ka Khera opening day of gavri
Interview with bhopa in temple Vaniyon ka Khera

Vaniyon ka Khera opening day of gavri. August 17, 1995 12:00 noon

Interview with Eji Bai wife of Bhuraji
Rodi bai wife of Roop ji. Other women join in.

Note: stories, episodes: सात, सात nine main: (Rai, Budhia, etc.): सात सात

Tell us about the origin of gavri. Why do you take gavri?

We take gavri because she is a devi and she comes as guest to our village. [literally annadata bread giver.] She comes as our guest. It is not true that we take gavri. Mataji (Goraja), 9 lakh devis and devatas. They make us take gavri. Devatas make us take gavri. We people don't take gavri of our own accord.

When does Gavri begin?

Gavri begins after Rakhi. On the day of Raksha bandhan we tie a rakhi to the mask of the Rai Budhiya. And the it is decided that gavri will be played. Everything is decided on that day.

What is your name?

Egi bai.

What is your age? Approximately.

I don't know ad it is difficult to say. I remember it was said that when I was born the maize crop grew to this height and the crop dried up and there was no rain. I was born that year. Maybe 50-60 years ago.

what is your peehar? (parent's place)?

My peehar is in Chhali.

What is your name? Where is your peehar?

My name is Radi bai. My peehar is in Bagrunda.

How old are you?

Maybe around 35-40 years.

When did you get married?

I can't tell like that. I really don't know when I got married.

Who is the oldest of your children?

I have a daughter who is married and has children.

Which jati do you belong to?

My gotra is Gorana. Jati is Gameti.

Can we refer to your jati with any other name other than Gameti?

All the women respond together: Yes you may call us Bhils besides Gameti.

You too?

Yes me too. I am a Bhil.

You mentioned just now that there are two names by which we refer to your jati. One is Bhil and the other is Gameti. So when do you use Bhil and when do you use Gameti?

Sardar refers to us as Gameti. Like where is the Gameti. Amongst ourselves also we all each other by the name Gameti but the other people call us Bhils.

Which name do you prefer? Bhil or Gameti?

We always prefer the name Gameti. Somehow, in fact we don't like it when people call us Bhils. Somehow we don't feel good.

Which is your "adi" name (beginning, first name)--Bhil or Gameti?

Meena is a gotra. Bhil is our old name. Originally we are Bhils we guess. We do not know very much about the past. Yes we have heard of the famous warrior Bhilu Rama.

So is gavri played in your village only by the Gameti or do the people of the other jati also play gavri?

No only the Gameti play Gavri and not people of other jati.

Is gavri played only in your area or also further away in other places?

Gavri is of course played in our area but it is also played in other areas. [the term for area or other areas used here specifies around their village.] As far as we know that gavri is played in Mewar and in Udaipur. But we do not know anything about other places (dusray desh)

What is gavri all about?

It is about the devis and devatas.

The episodes, the stories, the plays--what are they about?

They are about Dharma Mata [mother earth] and the sky and Mataji [Goraja and devi devata]. It is right from there, the origin of the earth.

What do you know about the different characters of gavri? The roles, the parts that are played?

They are about Rai Budhiya, Bada Khela, Buda Parvati, and No Negati. We have to give something as an offering even to these people. It is a rule. Flowers, fruits, etc. It is tradition. It must be done.

Why are there no women in gavri? Why don't women play in gavri?

The Devatas are called. The women don't go. If the women play gavri they will be fighting amongst themselves and they'll go in all different directions [said jokingly by the women...they laughed when they said this.] Gavri is played because of the devatas. It goes from place to place and what will people say that women are playing. [and also going from place to place????] And besides the altar has to be looked after. The devi-devatas have to be worshipped. Prayers have to be offered. We have to look after these things.

The episodes or stories depicted or presented in gavri. Are they old and have been passed down from generation to generation without any change? or are there new ones being added?

The old ones are still continuing. Where are the new ones? We think they are all old. Maybe a few songs have been added.

Is gavri being played in any place near your village?

It is being played in Rakediya ka khera. Their clothes were all ready since last year but...

How did your villagers decide to take gavri? Was it of your accord that you just felt like?

No it is nothing like that. It is not something which is done out of sheer desire. Goraja came to our village [came from up above] on the day of Rakhi.

If she had not come, descended, on the day of Rakshabandhan you would not have taken Gavri or played gavri, just if you felt like it?

Had she not arrived we would not have taken her nor played gavri simply because we felt like it. She fixed the time for our village.

Is there any particular time or a cycle of years when she arrives?

Goraja arrived in our village this time after 20 years. When I was young she came last and now after so many years she has arrived as our guest.

It couldn't be twenty years because your _____ has gone to Bagrunda to play and they sang a song last night....

Anyway it has been a long time since. Maybe 18 years and not twenty but it's more less the same. It's been a long time.

Where all will your gavri play, which other villages?

It will go all the way to Saira. It won't go to Kurnkaya They invite gavri to play at Kurnakaya only when there is a good monsoon. It will go to Soraas and it may go to Udaipur also.

How far will it travel in one day?

Suppose today they are playing in Varundia, then tomorrow they will go to Majaam or Majal. They can even go as far as Udaipur.

For how many days will they play Gavri?

For a month and a quarter.

जडावन - मनावन

When does it end? When do you do the closing ceremony of "garavan-bhalavan"? [could be gadavan, may mean immersion, and bhalavan, handing over, seeing her off...she comes as a guest for a month and a quarter.]

We generally have it around the middle of the month of Asoj. Then comes the Kartik month and the Navratris, after which gavri is over. So around Bras or Heras (12th or 13th) of Asoj. Today they have worn satam (7th day) clothes. So yes around the middle of Asoj on Baras or Teras we have Godavan and Bhalavan.

For how many hours in one day do they play? What time do they start in the morning and what time do they generally wind up in the evening?

Around the time we have lunch and start playing after that. Around 10 or 11 in the morning they start playing and generally they finish off for the day around 5 o'clock in the evening. Sometimes they play up to six o'clock if the distance is not much. But suppose they are in a village which is quite far from theirs then they windup by 5 o'clock because they have to travel back and generally it is foot march.

Who decides the allotment of the different roles that people will play...Budhia and if they will play Khela or Rai etc.

These are the play parts, roles. They are all set. Suppose you are playing the role of Budhia, then your son will take over from you and it goes on like this. The role is adopted by the family. It is not like each time gavri is played different roles are assigned to different people. No A particular role is assigned to a family and passed down the generations to the male members. In case there are no sons to take over the role may be passed on to someone else.

Can you give us an estimate of the expenses incurred by the village during gavri.

around 500 to 1,000. Yes if you take into account the whole village it comes to around 50-60 thousand. [these numbers have to be verified. but see below...it could be accurate]

What are your personal expenses? How much does each family spend during gavri.

My own family spends about 2-3 thousand rupees. It all depends on the size of the family. If it is larger family then it costs a little more, around 3-4 thousand. If it is a smaller family then it may be slightly less.

When your gavri goes to another village what would be the expenses of the other village?

They must spend 500-1,000 rupees. It all depends. If they are very hospitable and they feed well and nicely and take care of the gavri players then they may spend more. But each village spends within its resources...as much as it can afford.

Do your children like gavri? What is their reaction to gavri?

Yes they all like it.

Do you play gavri only for your caste or also for other castes?

We play for the other caste people as well. We play for the **whole village**. We play for all jati.

When your gavri goes to another village what is the general **behavior of the people** of the other village like? What is the mutual attitude of your gavri players **and the other** village people?

It's all right. It's good.

Suppose your gavri goes to Majaam, how do they treat your **gavri players**? Do they behave nicely towards you?

Well, it is all right.

If they do not behave properly or well you wouldn't go?

Yes, the our gavri wouldn't go.

Do you have matrimonial relations between people of **other villages**?

Yes we do.

[Prabu ji says, but they have told us that the decision to **take gavri** to another village has nothing to do with the matrimonial relationships. It is according to **the village** or caste or their mutual behavior or the attitude of the other village folk.

Gavri has been played since ages ago, but do you feel **any difference** in the gavri played in the olden days and the gavri played today?

We feel there is no difference. It's all one **and the same**. The old time were very good and you can see times are like today.

No, we are not talking about how times have **changed**. Do you find any change since then and now in gavri?

No we don't.

The stories, the episodes, and jhamta of gavri, are **they old** or new ones have been added to these?

No, nothing s added. It's all old.

But if you see today you will find Devar-Bhabhi episodes, Terma episode these are not based on devi devata stories, these are all new and have been added later.

Yes, these are new dramas. But no new Jhamta are added.

Do you feel that anything new has been added in gavri today from television and cinema. Do you feel there are imitations today?

Yes there are some [gavri stories] like these. Today they watch all this cinema and TV and there is bound to be some influence. We find that the songs are copied.

How do you do the Gadavan Balavan? How do you finish gavri? What happens?

First of all we make mud elephants. Then we really play gavri with great gusto for 7 days. One day we keep Ratri Jagaran" [play at night and keep up all through the night] and on the seventh day we see her off. The elephant is immersed and there and that is what makes the end of playing gavri. We sow wheat and when the stalks are big then the mud elephant we make we offer it to the elephant. Then we put these stalks in an earthen vessel and immerse it also in water on the day of immersion.

We worship then and on the day of Gadawari we immerse them. The custom is that all the men go out while the women stay at home. The men stand in a circle outside the village, then the sacred flame Agi is lit in the center and then the nine Negatis: Budhia, Kertakdiya, both the Rai, Big Khela, etc. have to put their face, elbow and knee over the flame and circle it over that flame. If anyone gets burnt it is believed that he or his wife have not strictly followed the rules and restrictions laid down for gavri. They have broken the rules. Then the person is beaten.

Only the men do this, putting their face elbow and knee over the flame, not the women. But if the woman has not followed the taboos and rules then her man will get burnt. This is also the belief. If she has strictly followed the restrictions and customs then the man is not burnt. So it becomes all the more important to keep the rules and customs. [no green vegetables, no alcohol, no meat, no sleeping at home, no bathing, bare feet, etc. The only bath allowed is on gyaras.]

Are they allowed to take ganga?

Prabhuji: they are not supposed to take alcohol but ganga is allowed.

After how many years usually do you take gavri in your village?

This time gavri has come after 18 years.

Are there any people in your village who do not like or appreciate gavri?

No everyone likes it. Well maybe there are some people who do not like it heart of hearts but till now the village as unit takes the decisions regarding gavri and it is binding on everyone. So nobody really shows any dislike or lack of appreciation. If they don't like it then generally they have to sit at a distance from the scene of play.

Do you see gavri at other villages?

Yes we see gavri at the other villages but we do not see our own gavri.

Do you find any difference between the gavri of your village and the other villages?

We don't find any difference. Yes, if they play well we like it. The only difference we find is in the presentations. We generally talk amongst ourselves that they are playing or not playing nicely and well.

Does gavri come in five years or 10 years?

No, not any longer These days it comes after long intervals.

Who decides or how is it decided that who will play the Banjara or Banjari or Meena or bullock driver etc.

This depends on individual interest and talent. If someone wants to play a part or is interested in a particular role, plays it well or the dress really suits him and he is keen then we select. See, gavri goes to other villages, the other people see, the world sees, then if a person is not good or not suitable or is not playing nicely what will the other people think and say? So we keep these things in mind when roles are decided. But the main roles, the nine roles [no nogati] are fixed according to family tradition.

When people go out to play gavri what difficulties do they have to face?

They must be facing difficulties. They have to walk barefoot for long distances.

Do they face any difficulties regarding food or water?

As far as food is concerned in certain villages they have saroti ??? so they have no problem. [probably refers to relatives of their daughters or sisters who have married into these villages] In fact they are well fed and looked after. In other villages [i.e. if they are called to perform by patrons, in Udaipur etc.] there is no such thing then they manage with whatsoever is given and available. They don't complain or ask for or say anything. They have to simply manage.

What about for sleeping?

They spread only [cloth or burlap sacks] and they cover with a [thick kadi cloth]. They have to manage thus whether it rains or it is cold or whatever the circumstances.

When you watch gavri played what do you feel, what do you think?

When we watch we find it good. Whatever problems or difficulties there are cannot be helped. This is something which is a unique, a different kind of experience. It is something which is one of its own kind. When they leave in a jogi's dress or as an ascetic then they don't see whether they are happy or unhappy and neither do they come home and relate to us whether or what problems they faced. Whether they had to go hungry and thirsty. That in such and such a village they had this problem. They don't complain. But before the immersion on the day of the Raj Joga [Ratri Jagaran] then they speak aloud that in such and such a village we had this problem or we were happy.

When gavri is played and you sit and watch, for example the Banjara Banjari episode, what thoughts come into your mind?

Of course many thoughts come in our mind. That those poor things have left their village to go from one village to another. Its a hard tough life for that period. But then they have to uphold the customs and traditions or they have to face the consequences. There is great danger in not following the customs and traditions or refusing gavri.

Is gavri necessary for you? Is it beneficial or is it important to you?

There is nothing which is beneficial as such in gavri. Yes it is necessary because the devatas make us play gavri. If the men folk earn some money it is balanced off by the expenses incurred in the clothes and then for the closing ceremony we have guests. So the income is set off by the expenditure.

Is it necessary for the women?

Yes it is.

Is gavri necessary for the youngsters and old people?

Yes it is necessary for everyone.

Why?

It has been going on because of the devatas. It is based on devi devata and they make us take gavri. It has been passed down to us as a tradition. It is necessary because of the involvement of the deities.

Why do only Bhils play gavri? Why not people of other jati?

Only we Bhils, Gameti play gavri because Goraja devi comes as a guest only amongst the Bhils, only amongst our Jati. She does not go to the other jati so they don't play. She comes to us of her will and so only we play gavri. Gavri comes as guest to the Bhils.

Talking to the Bhopa inside the temple Thursday August 17 1-2:00 PM

What do the women in the village do during gavri?

Thrice in a day they worship Goraja Matte and remember her and sing songs, devotional songs for Goraja Matte and in her name they sing songs (gee). They sing to her saying that you have given them the Bahaman vaster [saffron robes, the life of an ascetic, with all the taboos that they are expected to follow during gavri] and they are taking you [from one village to another] to protect them and protect us. If they are confronted on the way by any evil spirits you are their savior. Our cattle are also under your care and so are our crops. So neither the crop nor the cattle become diseased. She takes care of everyone--Goraja Matte.

From the day that gavri comes, from that day and for a month and a quarter the flame will continuously be burning in the temple altar. Day and night. The person who performs the prayer ceremonies at the temple does not go home. He stays there for that period He keeps a fast of his own free will and tea and other snacks or generally light food are brought by the villagers for him at the temple itself.

What was the "Muharat" time [auspicious time] for gavri to come?

Everyone gathered here before 3 o'clock. It's between 3 and 5 o'clock. They'll wear the clothes [put on the new costumes for gavri] around 5 o'clock. The learned people took out the Muharat for 9 o'clock. But their time is of no use to us. After all what am I here for or what are the bhopas for?

Tape #8 August 30, 1995 UVM Office Bhurha-ji and Prabhu-ji, Maxine

We want to know how the Banjara and Meena come to fight. What happens?

They fought in the form of devis. The devis intervened. Both fought and both were killed. The Meena killed the Banjara and the Meena also dies They fought at the instance of the devis.

The commotion reached Amapur (heaven) and who came? Shiv and Parvati devi. They passed that way when Amia Devi saw the sight she brought it to Shivji's notice. She told him that, see, I'll tell you something. This man (the Banjara) seems to be from a good family and he is lying dead here. What must be the condition of his family. Just think of that. How they must be feeling and how will they even manage without him.

Shivji says O Amia. This is Mrityu lok and here hundreds and born and hundreds die everyday. This is a routine affair. How many people can be rejuvenated like this. How many people shall I show concern for? You must follow me quietly. Don't unnecessarily argue with me and insist.

They moved ahead and met the Banjari who was weeping and wailing. When the Banjari saw Shiv and Parvati she did Namesake. So Shivji blessed her, "may you always wear yellow and be well fed and looked after" [meaning may you never be widowed.] She replied, Lord from where, to wear and from where to eat? Then she touched Amia's feet and Amia blessed her saying, May your bangles [especially worn during marriage, so they are symbolic as well as auspicious. Never removed until one is widowed, then they have to be broken and removed.] So again the Banjari said that is not possible any longer because Banjara has been killed.

Shivji called Parvati and said, O Amia, let us go. This is Mrityulok, the mortal world. People are born and they die. But she was adamant. She consigned the body to flames, collected the ash (Bhabuti) and tied it in her sari and knotted it on her pallau. Shivji told her that she was asking for the impossible and he kept talking and walking ahead. Parvati got inside a jhanta???? and suddenly Shivji realized that she had disappeared. He called out to her and said, "See, I am immortal. I am neither born nor do I die." So Parvati said, What are you saying. You are immortal, but what about this girl? (Banjari). She is one of our children. Think of her. So Shivji relented and agreed that he would do something.

He rained Amia, thinking that the ash would get wet and washed away. Then he told Parvati, all right, I will bring him back to life but give me the Bhabuti. So Parvati said, from where to bring it, it has washed away. She was a devi and she knew what was going on in his mind. He was trying to trick her. So Shivji said, "but you have to give me that. Only then can I bring him back to life." She immediately took it from her sari where she had it knotted up. So Shivji remarked, "You are very smart. I thought I was the clever one. You are one up on me," Then Shivji poured ami over the Banjara and the Meena and brought them both back to life. And both were [became] Devatas.

Shiv ji came after Amia. Amia was Devi and Om Shakti or Mother Shakti was the first to appear, if you recall the history of creation. [this seems to be the explanation of why Amia can trick and outsmart Shiv ji. She was created first, before him.]