



Renuka Devi Temple, Mahur

Mahur is amongst the four places of pilgrimage having the abodes of the three and a half goddesses that are of major significance in the state of Maharashtra. The other three are Kolhapur, Tuljapur, and Saptashrungi and Mahur is half, because it is only the head of the goddess that is visible. Mahur is the abode of the goddess Renuka, mother of Parshuram, an incarnation of Vishnu. The place is in Kinwat about 130 km away from Nanded. It is believed that the temple has been constructed by a Yadava king of Devgiri about eight or nine hundred years ago. The temple of Renukadevi is located on a hill top. There are carved caves in the hills around Mahur.

Mahur - A pilgrim Centre of great significance, It is considered to be one of the Shaktipith of Maharashtra. The temple of Goddess Renuka Devi is situated on a hillock abounding in natural beauty at a distance of about 2.415 km. from the village of Mahur. On the day of Dasara every year a very big fair is held in honour of Renukadevi. The nine-day Navaratri festival at the temple is famous for its unique rituals. Thousands of people arrive to celebrate Navratri at the abode of Renuka Devi.

Goddess Renuka is associated with the Goddess Yellamma worship in Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Goddess Renuka is believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga and is popular in rural culture as the Mother Goddess and is worshipped as Amma, Yellamma, Duggavva, Dyaamavva and Marikamba. Her name and attributes changes from region to region.

Legend has it that Renuka was the wife of Sage Jamadagni and he suspected her of infidelity and ordered Parashurama to behead her. Lord Parashurama obeyed his father and when Sage Jamadagni wanted to reward his son, Lord Parashurama asked him to bring back his mother. Thus Renuka, the mother of Lord Parashurama, was brought back to life.

This story found numerous interpretations in rural culture and Renuka is believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga and in this incarnation she represented the fate of many rural women who were falsely accused of infidelity or other crimes.

Goddess Renuka performs the role of Mother Goddess and is responsible for the welfare of her devotees, for curing diseases and protecting the cattle. A large number of Goddesses worshipped in rural culture are forms of Goddess Durga. She is given different rural names and characteristics but her role remains the same that of the Mother Goddess

About the goddess Renuka the following anecdote is told. Renuka was the daughter of the king Renu of Kubaj country and the wife of the sage Jamadagni. When the king Sahastrarjuna paid a visit to Jamadagni in his abode, he was taken by surprise by the hospitality of the sage. When asked about the same, the sage told him that it is all because of the Kamadhenu, i.e., cow that fulfils the desires of the owner given to him by Indra, the king of the Gods.

Thinking that if the Kamadhenu was in his possession he would be able to maintain his vast army easily, the king Sahastrarjuna tried to seize the Kamadhenu from the sage by force when his request to hand over the Kamadhenu to him was turned down by the sage. In the scuffle that ensued the sage died and his wife Renuka was injured due to 21 wounds she had received at the hands of the king. At this juncture many soldiers appeared on the scene from the body of the Kamadhenu by divine magic and forced the king to retreat.

On coming to know of the above incident Parasuram, the son of Jamadagni who rushed there vowed to defeat and punish the king 21 times. His mother asked him to cremate his father. He carried his father and mother to Mahur and cremated his father there. His mother became a sati. The religious rites were conducted on this occasion by the God Sri Dattatreya himself. However, after everything was over Parasuram was stricken by grief and at this time a voice from the heavens told him that his mother would come out from the earth but he should not look behind. Being eager to see his mother, Parasuram just saw behind for a fraction of a second to find the mother's face over the earth. The upper facet is the present upper facet of the Renukadevi. Renukadevi is adorned with various gold ornaments such as the golden flowers to be used as earrings, gold garlands (putal mal candrahar, jaymal, etc.), nose-ring (nath), etc