

THE TEARS OF SIVA *RUDRAKSHA*

*Written by Gautam Chatterjee
Photographed by Sanjoy Chatterjee*



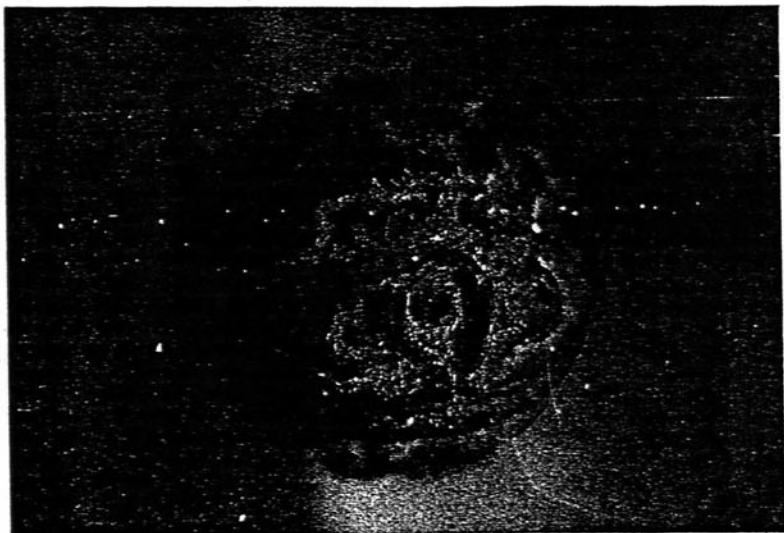
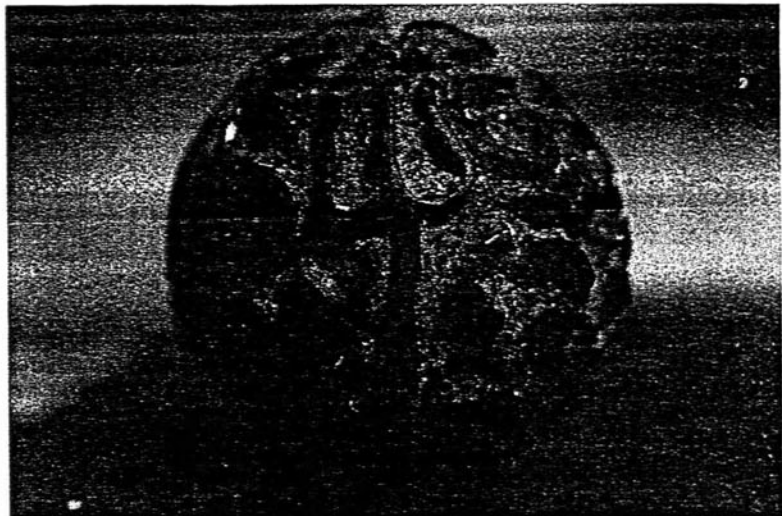
Opposite page: *The face of the rare one mukhee rudraksha personifying Siva himself*

This page:
Above: *The natural engraving of Siva's trishul on the one mukhee rudraksha*

Centre: *The snake in Siva's knot of hair on another side of the same one mukhee rudraksha*

Below: *A curved linga naturally engraved on the one mukhee rudraksha*

The most powerful deity in the Trinity is Rudra whose aura spreads an enigmatic spell over Hindu mythology. The first reference to Rudra is found in the *Rgveda*. This culminated into a full-fledged character, Siva, in the later days of the *Puranas*. The word Rudra originated from the Sanskrit *rud* or *rodden* which means to cry or crying, thus Rudra is one who cries. According to *Devi Bhagavata Skandha 7*, Rudra was born from the fury of Brahma. The story of Rudra's birth can be traced from the Pauranic encyclopaedia where it says that even before the creation of the Prajapatis, Brahma created Sanandana, Sanaka, Sanatana and Sanatkumara. Unfortunately these four beings were uninterested in progeny. This made Brahma furious and he was prepared to destroy the three worlds, swarga, marta and patal. The three worlds shone in the radiance that emanated from the fire of Brahma's fury. From his shining eyebrows, curved with anger, a figure of unbearable radiance appeared. This was the birth of Rudra who had three eyes, a blue complexion and cried continuously. Brahma asked him, 'Why are you crying?' and the boy replied: 'I must be named', and he was given seven other names, Bhava, Sarava, Isana, Pashupati, Bhima, Ugra and Mahadeva. Rudra is thus called by eight names.



Rudraksha means the tears and eyes of Rudra. In the last century John Garrett traced that 'the meaning of the word is Rudra's (Siva's) eye (akshu) and then also tears (rud)'. One school of thought believes that Siva, during a war with the asura, having burned three cities, wept at the loss of lives. The tears that fell on the ground sprang up as shrubs, producing berries which were called rudraksha.

The rudraksha has always been an important symbol in the Hindu way of life. Interpreting the *Shastras* Swami Prabhanandgiri said that 'whosoever wears the rudraksha mala, after death he never goes to yonilok, circle of rebirth, rather he gets shivalok.'

An incident in the *Devi Bhagavata Skandha 11* explains how the rudraksha came to be honoured in the Hindu way of life. Once there lived an asura chief who was mighty and valiant. His name was Tripura. He defeated the devas and deva chiefs and became emperor of the asuras. The devas were very grieved and went to Siva. Siva thought for a while on how to kill Tripura. With open eyes, he sat for a thousand divine years or thirty six lakh human years. After this prolonged length of time, Siva winked his eyes and tears fell from them. The rudraksha tree grew from these tears. Twelve types of rudraksha came into being from the sun, while from the moon emerged sixteen kinds and from the fire came ten. Those which originated from the sun are the colour of blood, those from the moon are white and those from the fire are black.

The rudraksha tree is one of the many species of flora which belong to the *Elaeocarpus* family, which according to *The Wealth of India*, 1952, is 'a large genus of trees distributed from south and east Asia through Malaysia to Australia and the Pacific Island.' In the Indian subcontinent these trees are found primarily in Nepal. Other sources record that the trees from the

Nepal, Bihar, Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Bombay. Amongst the various types some twenty five species are found in India, these are mainly the *Elaeocarpus ferrugineus*, *Elaeocarpus lanceafolius roxb*, *Elaeocarpus serratus linn*, *Elaeocarpus tuberculatus roxb* and others. However, the rudraksha is specifically identified as the *Elaeocarpus ganitrus roxb*. In 1906 Dietrich Brandis wrote that the rudraksha tree grows to a height of sixty feet. It has white flowers which are shorter than its leaves. According to the CSIR *Dictionary of Flora* the tree has oblong leaves and the flowers emerge from the old leaf axils, the fruits are 'drupes deep or bluish purple, globose or obovoid enclosing a hard, longitudinally grooved, tubercled, normally five celled, mukhee, stone.' Consequently Dietrich Brandis recorded in the *Indian Tree* that the fruits are spherical and hard and have varied sizes which range from three quarter to an inch in diameter. The *Tantra Shastra* claim that the smaller rudraksha has less beneficial powers.

In 1864, Lt Col Kerber Drvry recorded that the flowering time is in February. However, sadhu lore claims that in Nepal, in an annual cycle, one or two rare one mukhee rudraksha are found and the tree often goes without fruit for years. The rudraksha is cleaned, polished and used as beads and rosaries. According to Kerber Drvry 'the hard grooved seeds are frequently worn as beads by Brahmins and fakirs and when set in gold are sold as ornaments in England.'

Every rudraksha has cells or mukhees which differ in number. This is what distinguishes each from the other. After consulting various sources we can conclude that twenty one varieties exist. Those with five cells are the most abundant and sell very cheaply while the rarest are the one mukhee, eleven mukhee, fourteen mukhee and twenty one mukhee. Imitation rudrakshas are very common and flood the market. Many

religious centres like Haridwar and Varanasi have flora similar to the rudraksha which belong to the *Elaeocarpus* family and are called bhadrakshas.

Dr Narayandatt Shrimali, an expert in this field, said that the authenticity of a rudraksha, can be checked by two tests. One is that if a rudraksha, kept between two copper coins or coils, swings, it is genuine. If not, it is a fake. In the second test a true rudraksha is one which will not sink when placed in water or milk whereas the seed of shrubs like the bhadraksha subsides to the bottom. According to Sabyasachi Sen, who owns a one mukhee rudraksha, if a rudraksha is kept in unboiled milk for many days, the milk will not spoil. Another school of thought claims that if one places a rudraksha in water it will begin to emanate heat after twenty or twenty five minutes. However, despite all these tests only experts can identify the true rudraksha.

Rudrakshas are in three colours, red and black are the most common while white is rarely seen. But as Dr Shrimali says there are yellow rudraksha as well. Every rudraksha differs from the other by the number of vein like faces or mukhees. Various types of malas are made from rudrakshas of different mukhees which gives them their name. A mala made up of all the twenty one mukhees is called the Indra mala. This is the rarest of all and only five people own them; out of which four are from India. It is said that nothing in this world is unattainable for the person who wears the Indra mala, as it gives him all the wealth he wants as well as fulfills all his desires.

Special mantras accompany the wearing of the rudraksha mala. The *Sivapurana* states the mantras for the purification or *shudhikaran* of rudrakshas of one to fourteen mukhees. The mantra for the one mukhee is *om hiring namaha*, two mukhee, *om namaha*, three mukhee, *om kling namaha*, four mukhee, *om hiring namaha*, five mukhee, *om*

hiring namaha, six mukhee, *om hiring huang namaha*, seven mukhee, *om huang namaha*, eight mukhee, *om hurang namaha*, nine mukhee, *om hiranng huang namaha*, ten mukhee, *om hiring namaha*, eleven mukhee, *om hingh huang namaha*, twelve mukhee, *om krong shrong roo namaha*, thirteen mukhee, *om hing namaha* and finally for the fourteen mukhee, *om nanaha*. However, it is said that even without the chanting of mantras cosmic vibrations envelope the wearer. The *Jabolok Upanishad* further elaborates the mode of wearing the rudraksha. It says that he who wears ten rudraksha on the neck, twenty two on the head, six in each ear, twelve on each hand, sixteen on each of the upper arms, one on each eye, one on the lock of hair and a hundred and eight on the chest is in reality Sri Nilakantha Paramsiva himself.

The *Bhagavata*, *Sivapurana* and *Smritis* elucidate the individual interpretation of the rudraksha and the significance of each number of mukhee. For example it mentions how one can absolve oneself of the sin of a particular crime by wearing a rudraksha of a certain number of mukhees. It also explains the ayurvedic, theosophic and materialistic utility of the rudraksha.

The one mukhee rudraksha represents Siva himself and is the rarest. I have seen a one mukhee rudraksha, whose owner, Sabyasachi Sen, claims is an original. As he says he placed the rudraksha for seven days in a non metal pot containing non pasteurised, unboiled milk for seven days and the milk did not spoil. This rudraksha has the three symbols of Lord Siva, the trishul, linga and swarpa naturally engraved on it. The one who wears the one mukhee rudraksha gets remission from Brahmin hatya, which is considered the gravest sin. According to the *Tantra Shastra* only the Mahabhogi of Shankar can own this rudraksha. The person who owns the one mukhee rudraksha will not lack for anything. It enhances the positive thought level and helps to unfold the

dimensions of human personality. With this the person is elevated and can become the richest in the land.

The two mukhee rudraksha is called Gaurisankara which according to the *Shastras* represents ardha narishwara. This is generally meant for all Saivites and it is believed that the one who wears this is absolved from all sins committed intentionally or unintentionally. It controls sexual desire, develops a smooth concentration, mental peace and enhances the growth of a philosophic personality which awakens the kundalini. Its hypnotic effect is widely acknowledged.

The three mukhee rudraksha represents Agni and Agni represents purification. It is believed that this washes away the sin of stree hatya. According to the *Shastras* it cures fever and gives strength to the weak as it makes the wearer active and free from disease. Its powers are such that it can help the unemployed find jobs.

The four faced rudraksha symbolises Brahma. It washes away the sin of nara hatya or the murder of a man. It is believed that this benefits students as it sharpens the mind and increases the ability to absorb and memorise. It also has medicinal qualities and can cure if boiled in milk and given to a mentally retarded person for twenty days.

Kalagni or the fire of death is represented by the five mukhee rudraksha. According to a Pauranic source 'one gets remission from sins incurred by eating food which ought not to have been eaten and enjoying a woman who ought not to have been enjoyed.' The *Shastras* say that this is suitable for a person with heart disease and reduces the fear of poisonous snakes. This rudraksha is also prescribed for people with disturbed minds as it facilitates peace of mind. It is also believed that with this rudraksha a person can win over his enemy. The six mukhee rudraksha stands for Kartikeya, the six faced god. By wearing this on the right hand one can get rid of all sins

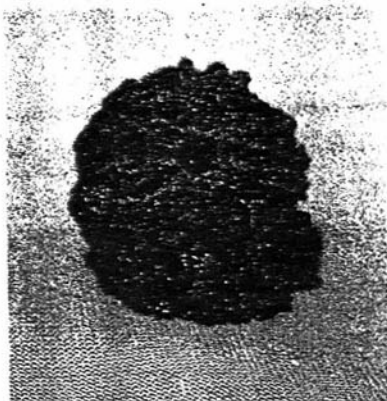
including that of Brahmin hatya. The *Tantra Shastra* says that it helps in developing siddhi in any work. It also shows amazing results in the development of trade. Whoever wears this suffers from no materialistic desires. It cures diseases like hysteria, fainting, blood pressure and feminine problems.

The seven mukhee rudraksha represents Kamadeva and has the power to absolve the wearer from sins like the theft of gold. According to the *Jyotish Shastra* it counteracts a child's bad planetary position. Dr Shrimali says that whoever wears this rudraksha will not die a violent or premature death. One also gets rid of the trauma of *mrigi* or *petimal*.

Vinayaka, the general of the great army, is symbolised by the eight mukhee rudraksha. Pauranic sources claim that it has the power to erase deceit such as passing off poor quality rice as genuine, keeping false weights and measures and such forth. The tantrik school of thought says that it helps acquire concentration and mental peace especially if one wants to awaken the kundalini. The eight mukhee rudraksha suits the businessman especially if he wants to acquire wealth. It also cures paralytic strokes.

The nine mukhee rudraksha represents Bhairava and is worn on the left hand. It has the power to make the wearer as mighty as a god which in turn leads to salvation. This is a rare rudraksha as it is the embodiment of the nine powers of the gods. It especially suits the devotees of Durga. Pauranic sources claim that it rids a person of the sins 'incurred by killing a child in the womb a thousand times and killing Brahmins a hundred times.' It is also a cure for all diseases related to the heart.

The rare ten mukhee rudraksha represents the figure of Janardana and protects the wearer from evil spirits and brahma rakshas. It also acts as a protection against snake bite. According to tantrik interpretations, the ten mukhee



This page:
Above: A top view of the five mukhee rudraksha which represents Kalagni, the Fire God of Death

Below: A six mukhee rudraksha, symbolising the God Kartikeya

Opposite page:
Rasanand Brahmachari wearing malas of rudraksha beads, meditating in the serene setting of his ashram

rudraksha represents Yama and protects the wearer against the ill effects of tantrik power. It also has great medicinal qualities and can cure a patient of whooping cough if he drinks the milk in which this rudraksha has been stirred thrice.

The eleven forms of Rudra are symbolised by the eleven mukhee rudraksha. Worn on the head, it bestows upon the wearer the benefits of performing the horse sacrifice. Women generally wear the eleven mukhee rudraksha as it not only improves their ability to bear children but also increases their husband's longevity. It controls the spread of contagious diseases.

The twelve faced rudraksha is the dwelling place of the twelve Adityas. It is worn on the ear to appease the Sun God. It guards the wearer against any injury incurred from the horns and teeth of animals, various diseases and anxiety. The wearer assumes a god like aura and is respected by all. According to the *Shastras* the twelve mukhee rudraksha also represents Vishnu and is worn by those who aspire to be brahmacharis. It is believed that the wearer will radiate with brightness and resist the lure of his *indriyas*.

The one who wears the thirteen faced rudraksha will be equal to Kartikeya. The *Shastras* say that it also represents Kamadeva. Only the very fortunate can wear this rudraksha as it has the ability to fulfill every wish and earns the wearer respect and stability. For those who desire beauty, it should be stirred in milk which is then drunk regularly. The person who wears the fourteen mukhee rudraksha is transformed into the real Paramsiva. It also represents Tripurari. According to the *Jabotok Upanishad* this is the eye of Siva. It is a protection against disease.

The fifteen mukhee rudraksha represents Pashupati and benefits those who want spiritual enhancement of mind and body. The sixteen mukhee rudraksha on the

other hand represents Kalbimay (sic). Its supernatural power guards its owner against theft. The seventeen mukhee rudraksha represents the god Vishvakarma. It is believed that the one who wears a mala of this rudraksha will achieve not only sudden wealth but also spiritual power. The earth is symbolised by the eighteen mukhee rudraksha. It is specially meant for women and children as it protects the former against premature delivery and the latter against disease.

The nineteen mukhee rudraksha embodies Narayana himself. It fulfills all materialistic desires as it sharpens the business acumen. The twenty mukhee rudraksha represents Brahma. It enhances knowledge as well as bestows mental peace. It also improves the visual power.

Finally, the twenty one mukhee rudraksha, the rarest of them all, and the embodiment of Kuber. This is worn by the one who wants to acquire worldly pleasure, happiness and luxury. It makes the wearer rich and negates any kind of adversity.

The *Devi Bhagavata* says that one is benefitted by simply looking at or touching a rudraksha. Many examples prove the splendour or *mahima* of the rudraksha. Swami Sachidanandan said that when the world realises the totality of the rudraksha's *mahima*, nothing will be impossible. In England, Paul Hume, in his celebrated study, concluded that nothing is impossible with the rudraksha, it can make one rich, change one's fate as well as hypnotise or influence people. Elsewhere in the world, its therapeutic effect has been positive as it is known to cure diseases like cancer and ease personal traumas.

The rudraksha is thus more than a mere bead or shrub which is found in abundance in the Himalayan region. It has existed through the ages in this ancient land as not only a spiritual symbol but also as a medicinal remedy, a source of materialistic as well as spiritual attainment.