

= Sharabha =

Sharabha ( Sanskrit : शरभ , Sharabha , Kannada : ಶರಭ ) or Sarabha is a part @-@ lion and part @-@ bird beast in Hindu mythology , who , according to Sanskrit literature , is eight @-@ legged and more powerful than a lion or an elephant , possessing the ability to clear a valley in one jump . In later literature , Sharabha is described as an eight @-@ legged deer .

Shaiva scriptures narrate that god Shiva assumed the Avatar ( incarnation ) of Sharabha to pacify Narasimha - the fierce man @-@ lion avatar of Vishnu worshipped by Vaishnava sect . This form is popularly known as Sharabeshwara ( " Lord Sharabha " ) or Sharabeshwaramurti . The Vaishnavas refute the portrayal of Narasimha as being destroyed by Shiva @-@ Sharabha and regard Sharabha as a name of Vishnu . Another tale narrates that Vishnu assumed the form of the ferocious Gandaberunda bird @-@ animal to combat Sharabha . In Buddhism , Sharabha appears in Jataka Tales as a previous birth of the Buddha .

Sharabha also appears in the emblem of State government of the Indian state of Karnataka , University of Mysore and the Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited .

= = Development of character and iconography = =

In Sanskrit literature , Sharabha is initially described as an animal that roared and scared other animals in the hills and forest areas . Similies compare warriors to Sharabha . In the later epic Mahabharata , this form of Sharabha was exaggerated as a lion @-@ slaying monster with eight legs , eyes on the top ; living in the forest and which ate raw flesh . It is also mentioned as residing on Mount Krauncha but not as a monster but as an ordinary beast along with lions and tigers on mount Gandhamandana . The epic also includes Sharabha in the list of edible animals - the mrigajatis- the animal group of antelope , deer , hare , bear , ruru deer , sambar , gayal , boar , and buffalo - which was offered as part of food at dinner to guests . Sharabha also appears as a name of a monkey @-@ king in the epic Ramayana , also as a proper name of heroes , apes , demons ( danavas ) and serpent N?gas and one of the names of god Vishnu as well as Buddha . In defining the ecological theme in Hindu medicine related to jungle and the aroma of meats , Sharabha has also been listed among the deer natives of Kashmir , Nepal , and Sikkim . However , the features explained are of an eight legged animal of the size of a camel with huge horns and conjectured as a large Himalayan goat .

= = = Shiva 's incarnation = = =

In Puranic literature , Sharabha is associated with god Shiva , who incarnates to subdue fierce manifestations of Vishnu . The legend of Sharabha fighting Narasimha - the man @-@ lion form of Vishnu - brings to fore the overt rivalry between the devotees of Vishnu ( Vaishnavite sect ) and those of Shiva ( Shaivite sect ) , which exposes the gory blood @-@ letting aspect . According to Roy , the Narasimha @-@ Sharabha encounter may be a Shiava version of Vedic tale of Vishnu piercing the boar . Shiva Purana describes Sharabha as thousand @-@ armed , lion @-@ faced and with matted hair , wings and eight feet . Sharabha Upanishad portrays Sharabha with two heads , two wings , eight legs of the lion with sharp claws and a long tail . Kalika Purana describes Sharabha as black in colour , with four feet downwards and four feet uplifted , with an enormous body . It also has a long face and nose , nails , eight legs , eight tusks , a cluster of manes , and a long tail . It jumps high repeatedly making a loud cry .

The iconography of Sharabeshwaramurti ( Shiva as Sharabha ) is specifically defined in texts such as Khamikagama and Sritattvanidhi . In Khamikagama , Sharabha is described in the form of a bird with golden colour , with two uplifted wings , two red eyes , four legs in the form of a lion touching the ground , four legs with claws upwards , and with an animal tail . The top part of the body is shown as human but with the face of a lion with an ornamented crown ; side tusks are also depicted giving an overall frightening sight . It also shows the Narasimha beneath Sharabha ? s legs as a lion @-@ faced human with anjali ( hands folded prayer gesture ) . ( See Infobox image )

In the Sritattvanidhi , the depiction prescribed for Sharabeshwaramurti is of thirty arms ; arms on the right are to hold thunderbolt , mushti , abhaya , chakra ( discus ) , sakti , staff , goad , sword , Khatvanga , axe , akshamala , a bone , bow , musala , and fire ; and the left hands to display noose , varada , mace , arrow , flag , and another type of sword , a snake , a lotus flower , skull @-@ cup , pustaka , plough , and mrdanga with one hand encircling Durga in a hug . This form is extolled to usher good luck , cure all diseases and destroy all enemies .

The Chola dynasty in Tamil Nadu was particularly favourable to the beliefs of Shaiva sect . It is said that the sectarian aspect got highlighted during their reign . This is evident from the four Sharabha images , the earliest at the Vikramsolishwaram temple near Kumbakonam built by Vikrama Chola ( 1118 ? 35 ) . The other images are at Darasuram and Kampahareshvarar temple , Thirubuvanam built by a Chola ruler , Kulottunga Chola III where Sharabha 's image is housed in a separate shrine .

A sculpture of Sharabeshwaramurti in the Tribhuvanam temple , a Shiva temple in Tanjore district , in Tamil Nadu is seen with three legs , with body and face of a lion and a tail . It has four human arms , the right upper hand holds axe , noose is held in the lower right hand , the deer in the upper left hand and fire in the lower left hand . Narasimha is shown with eight armsIn the Airavatesvara Temple at Darasuram , a rare image of the Chola period , in black basalt , depicts Shiva as Sharabha . It is deified in an exclusive small shrine , as part man , beast and bird , destroying the man @-@ lion incarnation of Vishnu , Narasimha . This highlights the hostility between the Shaivite and Vaishnavite sects . In the Chennakeshava temple of Belur ( 1113 ) , Karnataka , Gandaberunda ( 2 @-@ faced bird identified with Vishnu ) depiction is a carved scene of " chain of destruction " . Initially , a deer is prey to a large python , followed by being lifted by an elephant and a lion attacking the elephant , and the lion shown as devoured by Sharabha .

In iconographic representations of the myth of Shiva vis @-@ à @-@ vis Vishnu , Sharabha form has been built around Narasimha but substantially embellished with wings to represent Kali and Durga to denote the female powers ( shaktis ) of Shiva ; Sharabha is also shown with a bird head and a serpent in his beak head .

= = In Hindu scriptures = =

= = = In Mahabharata = = =

The Mahabharata , the great Hindu epic , narrates : a dog , with the help of a Rishi ( sage ) assumes various animal forms - starting from a dog to a tiger then to an elephant followed by a lion and a sharabha - terrorized every one in the hermitage of the Rishi . Eventually , Sharabha assumed a further fiercer form . In this fierce form he wanted to devour the Rishi . The Rishi then narrating the process of change in Sharabha ? s development , as a result of his benevolence , cursed Sharabha to go back to his original form of a dog . The epic does not relate Shiva to Sharabha .

= = = Shaivite views = = =

The legend of Sharabha as an incarnation of Shiva is narrated in many Hindu scriptures and each presents a different version to suit one ? s religious beliefs . But one common refrain in all these depictions is that Sharabha is a combination of a huge animal @-@ bird beast with enormous strength manifested with the purpose of pacifying similar ferocious avatars of Vishnu such as Narasimha ( man @-@ lion ) or Varaha ( the boar ) .

The Narasimha @-@ Sharabha legend is linked to gods assuming mythical animal forms to slay or subdue as the case may be . First , Vishnu assumed the form of Narasimha to slay Hiranyakashipu , an asura ( demon ) king , who was terrorizing the universe and devotee of Shiva . The Shiva Purana mentions : After slaying Hiranyakashipu , Narasimha ? s wrath was not appeased . The world trembled , fearing what he might do . The Devas ( the gods ) requested Shiva to tackle Narasimha .

Initially , Shiva brings forth Virabhadra , one of his terrifying forms , in order to calm Narasimha . When that failed , Shiva manifested as the human @-@ lion @-@ bird Sharabha . Shiva then assumed the Sharabha form . Sharabha then attacked Narasimha and seized him up until he was immobilized . He thus quelled Narasimha ? s terrifying rage . Narasimha became a devotee of Shiva after being bound by Sharabha . Sharabha then decapitated and de @-@ skinned Narasimha so Shiva could wear the hide and lion @-@ head as a garment . The Linga Purana and Sharabha Upanishad also mention this mutilation and murder of Narasimha . After the mutilation , Vishnu assumed his normal form and retired to his abode , after duly praising Shiva . It was from here on that Shiva came to be known as " Sharabeshamurti " or " Simhagnamurti " .

The Skanda Purana considers Narasimha as a mere irritation and not a threat to the world , contrary to what was brought out in the Shiva and Linga Puranas . The perception was that Vishnu may permanently adopt the fierce form of Narasimha , which would be detrimental to his role of doing good deeds . Hence , the purpose of Shiva assuming the form of Sharabha was to ensure that the lion body of Vishnu was discarded and he got united with his original divine form . Narasimha struck Sharabha with his body , it was Vishnu who groaned in pain and not Sharabha who was in an " adamantine body " . It was then that Vishnu realised that Sharabha was none other than Shiva and bowed and praised Sharabha . Shiva then blesses Vishnu and gives him a boon to kill demons . A Purana ends the story with gods fearing that Sharabha may not be able to control his rage and thus urging Shiva to give up his Sharabha form . Thereafter , Shiva dismembered Sharabha ? s form ; his limbs were given away and his torso became a Kapalika . The Vamana Purana too discusses the tale , ending with Narasimha becoming the calm Vishnu again and Sharabha becoming a lingam , the symbol of Shiva .

In the Kalika Purana , Varaha - Vishnu ? s boar avatar - had amorous dalliance with the earth goddess . He and his three boar sons then created mayhem in the world , which necessitated Shiva to take the form of Sharabha , to kill the Varaha form . Even , Vishnu requests Shiva to destroy Varaha , unable to control his own form . Here , Narasimha appears to aid Varaha . Sharabha kills Narasimha first and then kills Varaha , allowing Vishnu to reabsorb the energies of both his fierce forms . Finally , Vishnu defeats Sharabha .

= = = Vaishnava and Smartha views = = =

Vaishnava followers including Dvaita scholars , such as Vijayendra Tirtha ( 1539 ? 95 ) refute the portrayal of Narasimha as being destroyed by Sharabha as they consider the Shaivite Puranas as tamasic - and thus not authoritative - based on their reading of Sattvic Puranas and Shruti texts . The refutation of the Sharabha legend along with ten other Shaivite legends is discussed in a text by Vijayindra Tirtha called Shaivasarvasvakhandanam .

Some regional South @-@ Indian scriptures narrate that Narasimha took the form of Gandaberunda ( literally " the mighty two @-@ headed " ) , a more ferocious two @-@ headed bird @-@ animal , who combats and destroys Shiva @-@ Sharabha .

The Sharabha Upanishad mentions that shara means jiva ( " soul " ) and Hari ( Vishnu ) is gleaming in the form of Sharabha , and that Hari has manifested as Sharabha who is capable of granting moksha ( salvation ) . There is a reference to Sharabha in the Vishnu sahasranama , the 1000 names of Vishnu , and the literal meaning seems to suggest the praise of Sharabha ( the lion @-@ killing animal ) .

Narasimhan Krishnamachari , a scholar on Vishishtadvaita philosophy , states that the name " Sharabha " has been interpreted in two ways namely ; the first interpretation means " the Destroyer ( of those who transgress the bounds of ethics ) , " as given by the Sri Vaishnavite commentator , Parasara Bhattar and the second interpretation as given by Adi Sankara , among others . The former is based on the Sanskrit verb SR , which means " to injure to destroy " . According to C. V. Radhakrishna Sastri , " Sara " also refers to an arrow , and the perishable body shines if it is aimed at Bhagavan , because He shines in that body . "

Adi Shankaracharya , as with the reference in the Sharabha Upanishad , refers to this 356th name of Vishnu sahasranama as not mentioning the lion @-@ killing animal at all and instead interprets

the name to mean , " As the Lord shines in the body as the indwelling Self , He is called Sharabha , while the body is sara ( perishable ) . " As these commentaries on the Vishnu sahasranama suggest , none of them refer to the avatar of Shiva .

= = In Buddhist scriptures = =

In the Jataka tales of the Buddha 's previous lives , there is narration related to his birth as Boddhisattva in a forest as a Sharabha , the eight @-@ legged deer . This story is of one compassion of the deer shown towards the King who wanted to hunt the deer . The King , while trying to hunt the deer , fell into a precipice with his horse . The deer instead of abandoning the king to his fate rescued him . The King was deeply touched by the compassion shown by the deer and thereafter promulgated a decree stating that hunting was an illegal activity in his country .

In Tibetan Buddhism , sharabha is represented as a beast with a goat 's head and horns , a lion 's mane and horse 's body and legs . It symbolizes determination , strength and speed . Sometimes , it is represented additionally with horns of an antelope and claws of an eagle . Sometimes , the goat head is replaced by a lion 's , horse 's feet by a lion 's and horns can be of a ram . A common feature of all representations is the horse 's body . It is often depicted as mounts of young Devas or dwarfs in a Torana ? a six @-@ level archway behind an enlightenment throne of a Buddha or Boddhisattva . Together with the devas , they symbolize the perfection of effort ( virya ) .

= = As emblem = =

The Government of Karnataka , the University of Mysore and the Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited ( KSDL @-@ an industrial unit owned by the Government of Karnataka ) have adopted Sharabha , with modifications and also appropriate justifications , as their emblem or logo .

In Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited logo , Sharabha is depicted in the form of a body of a lion with the head of an elephant to represent the virtues of wisdom , courage and strength . The Royal Emblem of Mysore has also been adopted by the University of Mysore as their logo too . This logo displays Gandabherunda flanked on either side by the lion @-@ elephant Sharabha - stronger than the lion and the elephant and defender of uprightness , surmounted by a lion .