The complexity of religious phenomena and their reflection in so many other aspects of life have attracted scholars from many disciplines, historians, philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists have analysed religion each with its own methods, with an already extensive body of literature dealing with various aspects of religion.¹

The historical account of Baidyanathdham was little known prior to the travel account of the Chinese pilgrim Hieun-Tsiang who visited India about A.D. 645. There is mention of the land and people of this tract and of the shrine of Lord Baidyanath at Deoghar in the Bhavishyat Puran which was compiled in the 15th or 16th century.² Malik Ikhtiaruddhin Bin Bukkhtiar Khilji made Deoghar his capital in A.D. 1201 which was then known as Deoghar.³ Baidyanathdham is also known as Deogarh which is being treated as a town since 1901 and now is a sub-divisional (and later District Headquarters) town.

According to the Shiva Puran,⁴ it was in the Tretayug and according to Hindu belief that the demon Ravan, the king of Lanka, convinced that his capital could not be perfect without the presence of Mahadeva, went to Kailash and requested Him to make Lanka his permanent home. Mahadeva did not grant this prayer but told Ravan that one of the twelve emblems of this divinity (Jyotirlingams) would quite serve the purpose and that he might take one but on condition that the transfer should be effected without a break in the journey, since should the Lingam be deposited anywhere on the earth in the course of the journey it would remain fixed on that spot forever. Ravan, thereupon, took the Lingam and began his journey back to Lanka. The gods dreaded the effect of the Lingam being established in the kingdom of their most powerful enemy, for, if Mahadeva were to be the protector of the demon’s metropolis they could never overthow him. They, accordingly, sat in a solemn conclave and devised a plan for outwitting Ravan. Varuna in the regent of water, entered the bladder of Ravan, with the result that the demon had to descend to earth to relieve himself. Then Vishnu in the garb of an old Brahman appeared before Ravan and began to converse with him. Unconscious of the plot, Ravan begged of the Brahman to help him by holding the sacred emblem for a few minutes, a request which was readily acceded to. Ravan then handed over the Lingam to him and retired to ease himself. On return he fond the Brahman had disappeared and the Lingam was lying on the ground at a considerable distance from the place where he had descended on earth. Ravan tried hard to lift the Lingam but in vain. Growing desperate he used force and succeeded only in breaking a piece of the top of the Lingam. Realising his folly, he prostrated himself before the Lingam and begged for pardon. Further, to atone for his sacrilege he came back to the place and worshipped the divinity with libations of sacred water brought from the source of the Ganges. (This was afterwards rendered superfluous by the digging of a well, in which the water of all the sacred rivers were stored). The spot where Ravan came is believed to be the present Harlajori and the place where the Lingam was deposited is believed to be the present Baidyanatheshwar’s temple.⁵

According to the Padma Puran the Brahman with whom Ravan entrusted the Lingam deposited it in due form, consecrated it with waer from a neighbouring tank, offered his prayers and then departed. A Bhil who was an eyewitness to this received instruction from the Brahman as to how the worship of emblem should be conducted but, having no utensil at hand, brought the water required for the libation in his mouth. When Ravan finally returned to spot the Bhil narrated all that had happened and pointed out that the Brahman was none other than Vishnu Himself. Ravan by virtue of his powers, then bore a well with an arrow and brought into it the waters of all the sacred pools on earth for a fitting worship of the God Mahadeva.⁶

According to another tradition (myth) not referred to in any Puran, the Lingam lay neglected after the death of Ravan until it was noticed by a rude hunter, Baiju by name, who accepted it as his God and worshipped the deity daily proclaiming it to the world as the Lord of Baiju (Baidyanath). Earlier the Lingam was known by its original name of Jyotirlingam (the Lingam of light) or by the name it derived from its transfer, namely, Ravaneshwar.⁷

Sir William Hunter in the Annals of Rural Bengal relates the Santhal tradition of Baidyanathdham as follows: “In olden times a band of Brahms settled on the banks of the beautiful highland lake beside which the holy city stands. Around there was only forest an’d mountains, in which dwelt the black races. The Brahms placed the symbol of their God Siva near the lake and did sacrifice to it, but came as before to the three great stones which their fathers had worshipped, and which are to be seen at the western entrance of the holy city to this day. The Brahms moreover ploughed the land and brought water from the lake to nourish the soil, but the hillmen hunted and fished as of old or tended their herds… But in process of time the Brahms, finding the land good, the land good, became slothful giving themselves up to lust and seldom calling on their God Shiva Thus the black tribes, who come to worship the great stones, saw and wondered at it more and
more, till at last one of them by name Baiju, a man of mighty arm and rich in all sort of cattle, became wrathful at the lies and wantonness of the Brahmans and vowed he would beat the symbol of their god, Shiva with his club every day before touching any food. This he did but one morning his cattle strayed into the forest and after seeking them all day he came home hungry and weary and having hastily bathed in the lake sat down to his supper. Just as he stretched out his hand to take the food he called to mind his vow and warned out as he was, he got up, limped painfully to the Brahmans, idol on the margin of the lake and beat it with his club. Then suddenly a splendid form sparking with jewels rose from the water and said "Behold the man who forgets his hunger and his weariness to beat me while my priests sleep with their concubines at home and neither give me to eat nor to drink. Let him ask of me what he will and it shall be given," then Baiju answered, "I am strong of arm and rich of cattle. I am leader of my people, what want I more? Thou art called Nath (Lord) and let me be called Nath and let thy temple go by this name. "Amen," replied the deity. Henceforth the temple was known as Baidyanath temple. 8

There are other stories also in the Purans explaining the origin and MAHATAM of the deity enshrined at Deoghar. It has been said in the Shiva Puran that unable to bear the disrespect shown to her husband Shiva by her father Daksha. Sati committed suicide. This pained the Lord in great grief and, in a fit of frenzy. He plunged His Trident into the body of Sati and began roaming with Her body till Vishnu cut the body with his discus (Chakra) into fifty two parts, one of which, the heart, feel at Deoghar and thus it is also known as Hridyapeeth (Land of the heart) or Chitabhumi (Burial Place). 9

Site and situation
Site, which may be defined as the ground upon which a town stands, the area of the earth it actually occupies. 10 Certain physical feature, for one reason or another, have been favoured for the siting of towns, and provide a basis for classification of towns according to site types. The site is enlarged in the process of urban growth. Situation of a town is its position in relation to its surroundings. 11 Some elements of this wider setting are altered in the course of time, and others, while remaining permanent features of the scene, change in their significance for the life and development of the town. 12 For its subsequent growth in size and for the enhancement of its function the wider setting or situation usually has greater importance. Among site considerations that have played a part in fixing the scene of urban development ease of defence has often been paramount. The site of a town is invariably an influence fashioning its development that is clearly discernable throughout is history. 13

Deoghar, Though located on a plain land, is surrounded of different hills in its environs. Such hills which exist are isolated peaks in the middle of the plains. The most striking are (i) Phulijori (2,312 feet), 18 miles east of Madhupur Railway Station, (ii) Degaria (1,716 feet), 3 miles east of Baidyanath Railway Junction, (iii) Patharda (1,603 feet), 8 miles east of Madhupur Railway Station, (iv) Tirkut Parvat, commonly known as Tiur (or Teor), 10 miles east of Baidyanath. Deoghar on the Dumka-Deoghar road, which is 1,505 feet above the plains and 2,470 feet above the sea-level. Less important, though picturesque in appearance, are the peaks known a Jalwa midway between Madhupur and Baidyanath near Mathurapur block hut, Belmi near Phuljori, Paboi 6 miles south-east of Tiur, and Makro 8 miles south-east of Paboi. With the exception of Phuljori, Tiur, Patharda, Degaria and Jalwa which contain Sal and bamboo jungle, these hills are more rocky excrescences. 14

References
1. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Chaturth Koti Rudra Sanhita of the SHIVA PURANA
7. Ref. 19, OP. Cit, PP. 5-6.
8. Ibid., P.6.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., PP.6-7.
11. Ibid. P.7.
13. Ibid., P.41.
14. Ibid., P.43.