

A Study of Historical Background of the Natha Sampradaya in Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

Shiva has some special characters. Kundalini's power is in a latent condition in our body. Shiva lives in our Sahassarara (head), and joining Kundalini with Sahassarara is considered salvation in the Natha Sampradaya. The detachment and union of two philosophies or energy is elicited through the philosophy, of yoga. Trimbakeshwara is the sacred place of Nathas found on the foothill of Kaulageri (hill). Here both Kaula monks and yogeni live together. The above evidence proves how the Natha, Kaula, and Shaktha fusion occurred. The use of Panchamakara is the endeavour and salient feature of tantric sects.

Keywords: *sampradaya; kundalini; kaula; endeavor; kapalika; bhairava; shaktha; Matsyendranatha; Gorakhanatha; siddha; trishula; sharana; Shaiva; vajrayan*

INTRODUCTION

Among the Hindu Gods Shiva only loves his wife deeply, detaches from her, and searches time and again. Shakthi (power) means woman. The word Shakta is related to Shakti or Nature. Woman power (Stri Shakti) is creative and found behind all the movements of this world. Kaula means lady or Shakti. Akul means Shiva. The union of Kaula and Akula is salvation. The use of Panchamakara is the endeavor and salient feature of tantric sects. In this matter, Kaula keeps one step forward. They don't make any difference in food. They eat vegetables, raw meat, intoxicating drinks, and stool. The woman used by Kaulas for endeavor may belong to any caste or parastri, and they prefer low-caste women. In the tantric sect, a woman is not only a tool to attain salvation; she gives providential experience at the end of the endeavor.

BACKGROUND

Kapalikas is one of the ancient Shaiva sects of India. This sect was more ancient than Natha Sampradaya. The prominent Kapalikacentre's in India are Srisaila (A.P); Kashi, Kanchi, and Ujjain. In Karnataka Kapalikacenters are Lunkamale, Adichunchanagiri, Hulehondi, and Sethibette. In the 7th century and 8th century A.D., the Kapalika sect was very popular in Karnataka. They worshipped Bhairava from the Shaiva Sect. In Sankara Vijaya, many stories are found about the defects of Kapalikas. Madhwa, Ramanuja, Sharana, Jaina, Vaishnava, and Virasaiva texts criticize Kapalikas. It had a very strong philosophic foundation. A large number of Kapalika monks had sound knowledge. They were ardent followers of their philosophy. They were kayavadis, and indreyavadi and led a worldly life. They were called as Pakhandi. They opposed the Vedas and caste system.

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In all religions, sects, faiths, and sampradaya, we find a great difference between the philosophy and its practice. As time passes, new matters will be included in the original philosophy. The new historical episode will force the original philosophy to change. This inclusion and changing phenomenon will bring alteration in the original theme.

Dharshana is a bunch of many philosophies. Those who founded this philosophy; belonged to different social backgrounds. So in Natha Sampradaya, we find Kapalika and Vajraynist philosophy. Yoga was the foundation of the Natha Sampradaya. Philosophy, Darshana, and practices of the Vajrayana, Shaktha, Kaula, and Kapalika became its physical structure. Sometimes they maintained some traces of their original sect. That is why we find traces like Bhairava, Trishula worship of Shakti, and Vajra in Natha Sampradaya. Gorakhanath followed a few practices of other sects and abandoned some practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Traditional History tends to be less documented than other types, with fewer books and artifacts than that of a country or continent. Many traditional histories are recorded as oral tales or stories and so are more vulnerable than more well-known issues.

The present work enlightens everyone about the culture of one of the important sects of India, and also its drawbacks. The reference works now available for understanding Natha Sampradaya in Karnataka are very meagre. Therefore, it is very evident that the present work carried out by me can fill the lacuna in the historical aspect of the different sects in Karnataka.

DISCUSSION

The followers of Natha Sampradaya believe that the Kapalika sect was launched by Adinath. A few monks held bottle guards; so they were called Kapalika. Lord Vishnu's incarnations created problems for Kapalikas. To punish him Srinatha (Shiva) raised his head. In the frequent war, Srinath held the head of Vishnu's incarnation; that is why they were called Kapalikas. Briggs says that Natha Sampradaya is the changed system of Kapalika. But David N Corenzen opposed this opinion.

There is a clear-cut difference between the Natha Sampradaya and Kapalika sect. Natha yogis are called yogi or jogi. They are vegetarian and giving prey was prominent. They would not stay at the crematory. They stay at a mutt. Even though they were wanderers; they attached to some organizational discipline. They were followers of Matsyendra Natha and Gorakhanath.

In Karnataka Lunkemale, Adichunchagiri, Hulegoni, were the Kapalika centres. Later on, changed into Natha centres. Throughout India, this type of amalgamation and change of forms occurred.

In Karnataka, no difference existed between the Nathas and Kapalikas. Prabhulingalile calls GorakhanathKapalika. Shankara Dasimayya's Purana calls Natha yogi 'Kapalistoma'. Natha Mutt is found at Lunkemale; here in the official document we get a reference about 'Maha Kapalamutt'. The usage of Navanathstotra Kapala in Adichunchanagiri Mahatme' shows the popularity of the Kapalika sect in Adichunchagiri. Even today, a branch of Natha Sampradaya is called Kapalika.

In the 12th century, Sharanas criticized and repudiated Kapalikas. In society, they lost the sympathy and support of the common man. Kapalika took the form of Natha Sampradaya and gave rebirth and Kapalika philosophy. Some traditional rituals of Kapalikas were carried on by Natha Sampradaya. Adichunchanagiri and Lunkemale were the Kapalikacenters; which turned into Natha centers. In both places; the Kapalika tradition of worship of Bhairava (incarnation of Shiva) was carried on by Natha Sampradaya. Adichunchagiri Mutt and Lunkemale Mutt, as a mark of the Kapalika tradition of human prey, Runda sculptures are found.

Due to internal indiscipline and aggression from outside led to the downfall of Kapalikas. Through Natha Sampradaya, it retained some of its original rituals. Natha Mutts were built in the name of Matsyendranath, Gorakhnath if not

Bhairava. The Natha's imbibed Bhairava from Kapalikas. Like Kapalikas Nathas also worship Shiva along with Shakti. Along with the worship of Bhairava, Nathas imbibed the symbol of kapala and dog from Kapalika. Yogappa (a group among the Nathas) use bottle guards and Nathas use Karpar as are mark of Kapala. Dog was the vahana (vehicle) of Bhairava; was a sacred animal for Nathas.

Bhairava is a Balidevate, who appears like a soldier who returned from the battlefield, sat in a yogic posture became a God of the Nathas. This shows that the Kapalika sect entered Natha Sampradaya. That is why, yogi, Natha, Kapalika, and Bhairava lived together. In Yoganahalli (Periapattana) both the Natha group and Kapalika group are found. In Bhairavapura of Shikaripura taluk, a hill is found; the worship of Bhairava is practiced. Below the hill; a village called Haleyoga is found where Kennari yogis (Natha people) are lived. Among the Natha's names Bhairavanath and Kapalinath are common. Sometimes Nathas were also called Bhairava. Among the 84 Siddhas of Natha Sampradaya; one is called a Bhairava. Perhaps the Bhairava shrine and Natha are the same if not they are found together. Often Natha Deksha (initiation) is given in the Bhairavacenter. Among the sixty-four forms of Bhairava, one is called yogi (Natha siddha). Bhairava, Siddha, and Nathas are the same concepts.

As a part of the worship of Bhairava, Nathas retained Trishula. This is a Weapon, a symbol of Shakta; and considered a trace of integration of Natha Sampradaya and Shakta sects. It is surprising to note that; Natha monks were ascetics and yogis, how they used this weapon. The Natha monks were great wanderers, so this weapon might have offered them protection. The folklore of Natha Sampradaya gave importance to yoga, samadhi, and an ascetic life. They gave prominence to Bhairava worship, prey, and meat eating. After the integration of the Kapalikas and Natha Sampradaya, they created their philosophy.

The existence of a large number of Bhairava idols is evidence of the popularity of the Kapalikas in the ancient medieval period. The wrecked Bhairava idols show that Kapalikas faced serious opposition. This affected Bhairava idols. As rulers and ruling families changed; fluctuations occurred in the religious sects; During the Vijayanagar period, the rulers gave patronage to the Vaishnava faith. So in the Northern Karnataka in the Shiva temple Vaishnava idols entered. In Hampi, in the Bhairava temple, Hanumantha can be seen. In Kudali, a holy Shiva center where many Bhairava idols were wrecked.

The Kapalikas faced a serious threat from the Sharanas in the 12th century A.D., Originally the Kapalikas and Sharanas belonged Shaiva sect. But Sharanas did not like Shaiva tantric sects like Kapalika, Kalamuka, and Shaktha. They prohibited both Kapalika and the worship of Bhairava.

CONCLUSION

In Natha Sampradaya, we find Kapalika and Vajrayana philosophy. But Gorakanath (founder of Natha Sampradaya) did not imbibe all phenomena. He opposed tantra, and worldly life and preached Brahmacharya (an ascetic life). A Sadhaka (attainer) of the Kaula sect, used a woman of a low caste as Mudra for attainment. In the name of attainment, the Sadhaka was involved in lust. They practiced Panchamakara and he was responsible for the decline of morality in the society. Vajrayana has also practiced the same system. Gorakhanath preached against physical pleasure. He struggled a lot to bring changes (yogamarga) in those sadhakas who came from Kaula, Kapalika, and Vajrayana. Natha Sampradaya imbibed many philosophies from Kaula, Shakta, and Vajrayana. Yoga was the foundation of the Natha Sampradaya. Philosophy, Darshana, and practices of the Vajrayana, Shakta, Kaula, and Kapalika became its physical structure. Sometimes they maintained some traces of their original sect. That is why we find traces like Bhairava, Trishula worship of Shakti, and Vajra in Natha Sampradaya. Gorakhanath followed a few practices of other sects and abandoned some practices. Gorakhanath cultivated alignment with some contemporary sects, and preachers and also faced opposition from them. Due to their magnanimity and leadership quality, Gorakhanath's name is included in Vajrayana, Kaula, Kapalika, and Siddha. In the same way, in Tulunadu, we find a fusion of Bhutharadhane, Nagaradhane, and Daivaradhane.

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