

Research Paper

The History of Lord Shiva: Myth, Veda, and Tantra

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ABSTRACT

If someone wants to know about Hindu religion and mythology, he/she must know about this brunch's deities. In Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva is one of the three main deities (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva). He greatly impacts the Hindu tantra; that's why he is well-known as a famous tantric God in the Hindu tantric cult. Simultaneously, lord Shiva has an important place in Vedic literature too. Many studies say that since Lord Shiva is a non-Aryan deity, he has no importance in Vedic literature. But this statement is not correct in all cases. Many mantras (hymens) of *Samveda* and *Yajurveda* are used as prostration mantras (hymens) of Lord Shiva. Another name of Lord Shiva is known to us as *Rudra*. However, *Rudra* is another deity in Vedic literature. Yet the importance of Lord Shiva is very high in Hindu mythology. To know about the ancient history of lord Shiva according to Hindu mythology or Veda or Tantra this paper has been written to find out what is needed at present. Not only it this paper also illustrates the origin and development of Lord Shiva and how the research about lord Shiva is scientific still in this modern time. The tantra has a major philosophy and the Veda is also the major sacred text in the Hindu Sanatan religion; it has also some scientific aspects. The aim of this paper is the concept of lord Shiva and his scientific and philosophical aspects in the Hindu tradition this research paper has been prepared. The main paper has been discussed extensively.

Keywords: Saivism, Myth, Tantra, Agama, Veda, Phallic cult, Religion, Literature

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1. Introduction

Lord Shiva is an ancient god in India. According to Hindu mythology, three major gods created our cosmos; *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Maheshwar*. According to Hindu mythology, Brahma has created the universe but Lord Shiva is considered to be the god of creation and deluge. There is much ambiguity about the origins of Shaivism. Still today the origins of Shaivism remain shrouded in obscurity. If we want to discuss the origin and history of Saivism it has two lines of development; one is the Aryan or Vedic and the other hand is pre-Aryan civilization. Lord Shiva is well known as a 'Yogi'. "... it has exhibited a close alliance with yoga and *thaumaturgy*, and a constant tendency to run into the extremes of ascetic fervor. It is not a single cult, but a federation of allied cults, whose practices range from the

serenest form of personal life in the faith to the most repulsive excesses that alienate one's sympathy for the cult"¹. The concept of Saivism not only over the whole of India, from the Indus Valley to Pundra (Bengal), but it enhanced the sea to the Indian peninsula, which we call greater India, and beyond the northern mountains of central Asia². It will be assiduity the genesis of this Shiva cult and its growth with brief evidence from the literature and epigraphy of the range and extent of its influence. There is

¹. 'Kulkarni Jagmohan and Raj Kumar, *'Religion and Culture of Ancient India'*, Commonwealth Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi: 1st Publication, page - 101

² <https://www.academia.edu>

so much research about lord Shiva but most of them are vindicated. To about Lord Shiva and his history, we need a good discussion on his origin and development in Hindu myth and religion. This paper has shown the criticism about our most important trinity God lord Shiva by his historical, religious, philosophical, and scientific background.

1.1. Aims and Objectives

This research paper depicted how the Shaivism theory or Saiva cult has spread all over India and the history and the concept of lord Shiva according to Hindu mythology, Veda, and Tantra. Most scholars believe that lord Shiva is a non-Aryan god and he has no place in Veda. But if we see our *Samveda* and *Yajurveda* we can see some hymns that are dedicated to lord Shiva. So, he has a great place in Veda also. Simultaneously he is also a most popular tantric god. To know the concept of lord Shiva and his role in Hindu tradition This research paper has been prepared. The main motives of this research article are to show the mythological and historical background of lord Shiva and his acceptance in modern Hindu society.

1.2. Research Gap or Literature Review

To prepare a research article literature review is the most important part. The word 'research' indicates the 'invention' of a new thing idea or the rethinking of an old one. In the selection of the research area, Major research work regarding the said 'History of the Tantric Religion' by N. N. Bhattacharyya, 'Shiva to Shankara' written by Devdutt Pattanaik, 'An Introduction to the Philosophy of Trika Saivism' by Motilal Pandit, 'History of the Sakta Religion' by N. N. Bhattacharyya. all books elucidate the theory of lord Shiva's tantric side, mythology or the incarnation of lord Shiva either the theory of Kashmiri Saivism. But there is no combined discussion about the History of Lord Shiva by mythology, Veda, or Tantra. This research paper has tried to show the combined history of lord Shiva through myth, Veda, and Tantra.

2. Research Methodology

This research article follows descriptive, analytical, and explanatory methods. Side by side some of the fieldwork, interviews, and primary source has been taken to prepare this article. For the bibliography, the MLA 8th edition has been taken.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Main theme

According to 'Svetasvatara Upanishad' Lord Shiva is eternal and absolute; he has no form (Chapter 14.19), and he is the God of all gods (Devadev) who has potential for good and

evil. There are so many names, formations, and characters of lord Shiva. According to Hindu mythology, he is with his five faces 'Sadyajata', 'Bamadeva', 'Aghora', 'Tatpurusha', and 'Ishan'. For his five faces, he is known as 'Panchanana'. He is also known as 'Girisha' who holds the arrow in his hand and is ready to shoot the evils. In the 'Rig Veda' we can hardly find the Name of lord Shiva. Though there is the concept of 'Rudras' and they are twelve by number, 'Rudra' is one of the formations of lord Shiva. This formation is terrible. "The name Shiva hardly occurs in the 'Rig-Veda' as a proper noun. It is often applied to many gods of the pantheon in the sense of 'propitious', and once indeed to Rudra himself. The name came to be applied euphemistically to the god of terrors, for Rudra, the prototype of Shiva in the 'Rig-Veda' is a terrible god, and many supplications were needed to humor him into a good temper"³.

We can also introduce stories regarding Rudra- shiva the killing of demons, giants, and monsters (Asuras), and the destruction of their three kingdoms or cities called Tripura. Though the iconography of lord Shiva has flourished from an earlier period, it has elaborate as a legendary narration in the time of Puranas and Upanishads viz – 'Shiva Puranas'. Some scholar thinks that Lord Shiva is Pre- Vedic God. There is a controversy as to whether lord Shiva is an Aryan or non - Aryan deity. Saivism was not mentioned in the Rig Vedic period and was an unknown topic. But there is a description of phallus worship (*linga Puja*) and a god as terrifying as Shiva. On the following considerations "Shiva as the name of a deity is unknown to the ancient Vedic hymns, though they mention a tribe of Shivas. The characteristics of Shiva are those of a fearful deity worshipped with propitiatory rites by primitive folk. Worshippers of the *linga* (phallus), the chief emblem of Saivism, are condemned in the Rig-Veda, and Indra's intercession is sought against them"⁴. In Mohenjo-Daro and Harappan civilizations we can find the worship of phallus (*linga puja*), at the same time we can find the idol of the male Yogi who is sitting with his pursuit, some of the beasts surrounding him in their coins and other documents and clay pots. This type of male yogi is known as 'Pashupatinath' some historians think that it's similar to lord Shiva. According to R.P. Chanda one of the great historians - "Lastly, the discovery of several prehistoric relics of a phallic character from various parts of India, including the chalcolithic sites of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, Shows that the phallic cult with which Saivism is closely connected was widespread in pre-Vedic India. In the warrior clans the Rig-Veda, the *Braratas*, *Purus*, *Yadus*, and others the representatives of the ruling class of the indigenous chalcolithic population in whose service the Aryan seer (*Rishi*) clans came to seek their fortune, more or less as

³ Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Page – 77, Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol – 2 Page – 141

⁴ Archeological Survey of India, *Memories* 41. Page - 3

missionaries of the cults of Indra, Varuna, Agni, and other nature gods"⁵.

3.2. Healing and Phallic Symbol

We have some curiosity about why we worship 'Shivalinga' or a phallic symbol to worship lord Shiva. "The discovery of phallic cult objects here and there, bearing evidence of worship of phallus among prehistoric tribes, has led to the easy assumption that the 'Shivalinga' was phallic in its origin"⁶. On the other hand, according to our Hindu myth, Lord Shiva is called the protector and destroyer of the world. So he is the father of the whole world. He is believed to look after and protect the entire world with his wife Goddess Parvati. The union of Shiva and Shakti creates and preserves the universe. Linga worship may have been popularized to present the explanation of creation simply and beautifully among the common people. Because people who are fond of religion are eager to accept all theories under the guise of religion. So most of the time 'yoni' (Vagina) is also worshiped as 'Gauripatta' below Shivalinga. Lord Shiva on the other hand is also a tantric deity. The Sadhana of the Tantric 'fifth Mo kar' or 'Pancha mo kar' is the Sadhana of 'Maithunya' (to control the sex). Which is called the sexual pursuit of men and women. So maybe phallus (linga) worship has been practiced as a tantric symbol for the worship of Lord Shiva.

According to some historians "But *linga* may have been in origin no more than just a symbol of Shiva, as the *salagram* stone is of Vishnu"⁷. In some such way, we can explain the passages – not many after all, and rather late in the *Mahabharata* and other works -, which lend color to the phallic interpretation of the *Shivalinga*"⁸. Of all the representations of the deity which India has imagined observes birth these (*Lingas*) are the least offensive to look at"⁹. The Pallava king Mahendravarman, set up a linga in Tiruchirapalli, centuries before Basava's time, giving unmistakable expression to the very same idea. The history of Tantra practice is very old in India. Artifacts from the Mohenjo Daro and Harappan civilizations show various tantric instruments (Yantra), ingredients (*upacharas*), and depictions of Pashupatinath, the archetype of Lord Shiva. So it may be considered that Linga worships (*linga Puja*) as a symbol of Tantric *Maithunya* (worship with sex) Upasana came into vogue when Lord Shiva was worshiped as a Tantric deity.

⁵ Archeological Survey of India, *Memories* 41. Page - 25

⁶ Kulkarni Jagmohan and Raj Kumar, '*Religion and Culture of Ancient India*', Commonwealth Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi: 1st Publication, page – 106

⁷ Kulkarni Jagmohan and Raj Kumar, '*Religion and Culture of Ancient India*', Commonwealth Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi: 1st Publication, page – 106

⁸ Bhandarkar (*op. cit.* pp. 114-15) thinks that the cult of the *linga* borrowed from aboriginal tribes, the *Sisnadevas of the Rig Veda*

⁹ Max Weber, '*Religions of India*', Page - 262

3.3. Lord Shiva in the Veda

Most people believe that lord Shiva is pre – Vedic God or non-Aryan God. He is one of the most important tantric Gods. The 'Atharvasira Upanisada' raised the wearing of the holy ashes (*bhasma*) into a *pasupatavrata* (vow), calculated to release the *pasu* from the *pasa*. Likewise, the 'Kaivalya Upanisad' has a famous passage prescribing Shiva Yoga as the means of release. "A life of asceticism, leading to the development of powers that raise a man to equality with Rudra, is already hinted at in a late hymn of the *Rig-Veda*"¹⁰. Shiva theory or the concept of Saivism can be found in several passages of *Mahabharata*.

The several sagas of *Mahabharata* are also proof of how Saivism developed in society at that time. The story of Upamanyu found in the *Mahabharata* reveals that Lord Krishna was also a devotee of Shiva. He learned Shiva Yoga with Upamanyu as his Guru. "Equipped with a staff, shaved, clothed with rags, anointed with ghee, and provided with the girdle, living for one month on fruits, for four months on the water, standing on one foot, with his, arms aloft, he, at length, obtained a glorious vision of Mahadeva and his wife, whom all the Gods were worshipping, and among them Indra, Visnu (the delight of his mother, Aditi), and Brahma, all uttering the *rathantra saman*"¹¹. Upamanyu was the worshiper of the formation of lord Shiva which we came to be known as *Dakshinamurti*. According to Srikantha in his '*bhasya*' declares that there is no difference between the Veda and Shiva Agamas; that the Vedas can also be with propriety called Shiva Agamas because Shiva is their author; and that consequently, Shiva Agamas are twofold: those meant for 'the three varnas (castes), and those for general acceptance (*sarvavisaya*).

In ancient India, there were some schools related to Saivism but they were not related to Vedas. The maximum of them were non-Vedic or non-Aryan. The Varaha Purana is even more trenchant in its condemnation of the Non-Vedic *Pasupata* schools. Kulluka Bhatta the commentator of *Manu Samhita* quotes a statement of Harita that Sruti is twofold: Vaidika and Tantrika. "The attitude of the South Indian saint Appar on this question is no less remarkable. He says, for instance, in the most matter-of-fact way that just as the Vedas and their six Angas (branches) were the precious jewels to the Brahmanas, so were 'Namah Shivaya' himself and followers"¹². The concept of Saivism in Vedas was less, but in *Puranas*, *Samhitas*, and *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* the flourishing of Saivism was noticeable. Though lord Shiva was a non-Aryan God, the common people of the society at that time were eager to accept Lord Shiva at the heart's core.

¹⁰ *Rig Veda*, 10, 136; Muri, *op. cit.*, 4 Page – 318

¹¹ *Rig Veda*, 10, 136; Muri, *op. cit.*, 4 Page - 194

¹² Appar -2.5

3.4. Lord Shiva in tantra

According to Hindu mythology Lord Shiva and his wife Vgagabati Parvati (sakti) are the protectors of this cosmopolitan. Without them the creation of this universe is incomplete. The concept of lord Shiva was pre-Vedic; that’s why most historians believe that lord Shiva is a non-Aryan god. The earliest reference to the Shiva Worshipers is found in ‘Mahabhasya’ which is written by sage Patanjali, Panini commenting it on his other sutra¹³. In the Mahabharata, we see the school of ‘Pasupat’ which is related to Saivism. It is one of the tantric schools. “from about the 3rd century B.C. Saivism appeared in India as a distinct sectarian religion. By nature Saivism was a religion of the masses, especially of the lower orders of society; hence it had the greatest potential to absorb the tantric elements and, in Saivism, tantric ideas found a ground most favorable for their expansion”¹⁴.

In South India, we can find the society of ‘Nata’ (those who are dancers by profession) or ‘Rudra’ who believe that lord Shiva is from their community. According to ‘Mahabharata’, Daksha the father-in-law of lord Shiva arranged Yagna of ‘Ashwamedha’ for a horse sacrifice which all gods attended. The sage Dadhici suddenly noticed that Mahesvara (Rudra – Shiva) peer with Parvati was not present in the coven. When sage Dadhici asked Daksha about the reason for lord Shiva’s absence, he replied that there were eleven Rudras, but he did not know who was ‘Mahesvara’ among them. Such type of insult made Parvati angry. At this time to please Devi Parvati Lord Shiva Created Virabhadra (one of his formations). At the same time, Devi Parvati’s Anger Mahakali, or Bhadrakali was created to destroy the yagna of King Daksha. Mahakali and Virabhadra sentenced Daksha for his sin. Lord Shiva is known as Bhairava and has a great impact on the Hindu tantra and tantric cult. Most of the tantric texts describe lord Shiva as a tantric God. Even Sakta shrines Bhairava is symbolized by a Shiva phallus, in famous thought that he is no other than Shiva. Maximum tantric texts try to prove that there are sixty-four Bhairavas in tantric scriptures. These texts are divided into eight books each. The groups are Bhairava, Yamala, Mata, Mangala, Chakra, Sikha, Bahurupa, and Vagisa”¹⁵. tantric texts also bear the Pauranic and mythological aspects of lord Shiva. We also know lord Shiva as Mahakala. According to Hindu mythology Kalitantra where Kalihriday Stotra was composed by Mahakala explains to Devi that he composed this hymen to rid himself of the sin of Brahminicide. This hymen is in billow.

¹³ Com.on Panini 4 .1.112 and 5.2.76 **Ayashuladandajinabhyam thakthanau**

¹⁴ Bhattacharyya N. N ‘History of the Tantric Religion, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi: Second Revised Edition 2018, Page - 188

¹⁵ Mark S.G. Dyczkowski, ‘The Canon of the Saivagama and the Kubjika Tantras of the Western Kaula Tradition’ State University of New York Press 1st Edition, Albany, 1988, Page- 121-123

पुरा प्रजापतेः शीर्षच्छेदनं कृतवानहम्।

ब्रह्महत्याकृतेः पापै र्भैरवत्वं ममागतम्॥

ब्रह्महत्याविनाशाय कृति स्तोत्रं मया प्रिये।

कृत्याविनाशकं स्तोत्रं ब्रह्महत्यापहारकम्॥

Tantric Saivism or Saiva cult has various paths viz *Kapalikas* those who belong to the left school of tantrism. They carry a human skull, i.e. Kapala as a begging bowl. They use some amulets and jewelry made from human bones and hair. They also engage in human sacrifice, consumption of flesh and blood, smearing the ashes of the funeral pyre, and reside in the crematorium ground. Kalamukhas is also one of the tantric Saiva cults that are quite similar to *Kapalikas*. They take their food out of human skulls, and consumption of liquor. Sometimes they use black color masks on their mouth that’s why might be in this case they are called Kalamukhas.

Another tantric Saiva cult is *Mundarnkhalikas*; a group of leftist *Pasupatas* who like to wear the human skull as garland. In an inscription from 608CE, *Bhairav* is depicted as the leader of this cult¹⁶. Kanaphata Yogis are the worshipers of *Bhairavanatha*, *Baladundari*, and *Kalabhairava*; and reside around the *Kalabhairava* temple in Varanasi¹⁷. While talking about this group under the Shiva umbrella, George Weston Briggs explains ‘Some Yogis put on the forehead a mark consisting of a black, horizontal line with a black dot above it, representing *Bhairom*; and below it a red circle representing Hanuman (Mahabir)¹⁸. So without lord Shiva, one of the parts of the Hindu tantra is incomplete.

3.5. Kashmiri Saivism

It is a different path of Saivism. It is one of the Saiva schools that believes that our world is bondage or *Pasas* in which the *Pasus* or souls are bounded. Pati or the Divine release them from these shackles. According to Abhinavagupta Bhairava is the Pati or the Parama Shiva. He states-

“Devo hyanvarthasastroktaih sabdaih samipadisyate.
Mahabhairavadevo’yam patiryah paramah Shiva..”¹⁹

On the other hand, Siva sutras proclaim ‘udyamo bhairava’. An abrupt glimpse of transcendental consciousness is Bhairava and lord Shiva. One of the quotes from the

¹⁶ Shaky Milan Ratan, ‘The cult of Bhairava in Nepal’ Rupa and Co, New Delhi 1st edition, 2008, Page - 55

¹⁷ Shaky Milan Ratan, ‘The cult of Bhairava in Nepal’ Rupa and Co, New Delhi 1st edition, 2008, Page – 243-244

¹⁸ Georg Weston Briggs, ‘Gorakhnath and Kanaphata Yogis’, Motilal Banarasisdass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, Reprint 2009, (Kolkata- 1938) Page - 17

¹⁹ *Tantraloka* 1 95

‘Vijnanabhairava tantra’ shows that lord Shiva and his formation of Bhairava is the Ultimate.

“Sarvajnah sarvakarta ca vyapakah paramesvara
Sa evaham saivadharmā iti dardhyadabhavecchivah”²⁰

Or

“Sarvatra bhairavo bhavah samanyesvapi gocarah
Na ca tadvyatirekena paro stityadvaya gatih”²¹

7. Conclusions

Lord Shiva is the god of creation and destruction. Hence both his fierce and calm forms are worshipped. He creates and preserves the world when he is calm. But when he is angry the world is unlikely to be destroyed. There is no end to human interest as well as research to know Lord Shiva and his theory from ancient times till today. Even scientific research is going on about the theory of lord Shiva. The Pralaya or Tandava (destruction) idol of Lord Shiva is known as Nataraja. Also, the drum in his hand is seen to be connected with the sound waves. That is why the Nataraja statue or idol of Lord Shiva is kept in NASA. From Vedic literature to scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharata, Puranas, and Upapuranas, Lord Shiva has a place of dignity everywhere. He is the ultimate reality. He is not even limited to Nada Bindu and Chakra. The power of the essence of lord Shiva cannot be measured in terms of time, space, or direction. Nor can it be indicated by any attribute or designation. It can only be experienced for oneself when the mind is free from thought patterns²². The theory of lord Shiva is scientific that’s why it has great acceptance in modern society. To know the theory of lord Shiva according to Indian Hindu mythology or Veda or Tantra this research work can be a harbinger or pioneer of the people.

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²⁰ Vijnanabhairava, Page - 109

²¹ Vijnanabhairava, Page - 124

²² तत्त्वो न नवात्मासौ शब्दराशिर्न भैरवः ।
न चासौ त्रिशिरा देवो न च शक्तित्रयात्मकः ॥
नादबिन्दुमयो वापि न चन्द्रार्धनिरोधिकाः ।
न चक्रक्रमसम्भिन्नो न च शक्तिस्वरूपकः ॥
दिक्कालकलनोन्मुक्ता देशोद्देशविशेषिणी ।
व्यपदेष्टुमशक्यासावकथ्या परमार्थतः ॥
अतः स्वानुभवानन्दा विकल्पोन्मुक्तगोचरा ।
यावस्था भरिताकारा भैरवी भैरवात्मनः ॥