

# Pāśupata Śaivism in Karnāṭaka and Cambodia

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The original name of Pāśupata Śaivism is Lākulaśaivism and Śiva-Lakuliśa is believed to be its founder. According to legend, Śiva came to the earth, making the four Veda-s his Laguḍa (that is a stick), and holding it in his hand, gave the new doctrine of Śaivism to the earth. Because he holds a stick he is called “Lakuḍa” and the Āgama-s through which he indoctrinated his followers bear the same name. According to this legend, his first four disciples were Kuśika, Garga, Maitreya and Kauruṣa<sup>1</sup>.

Another story and another list of disciples and ascetics occur in the Vāmanapurāṇa. It is told in this Purāṇa: “The Lord initiated the four varṇa-s in the worship of Śiva and formulated the principal scriptures well-known for their various discourses”.

According to this Purāṇa, there were four teachers, one for each varṇa : “Vasiṣṭha’s son was Śakti. His disciple was Gopāyana. Bhāradvāja was a Mahāpāśupata ascetic. His disciple was king Somaśekhara. Lord Kālāśya was the ascetic Bhāradvāja. His disciple was Krātheśvara. Dhanada was Mahāvratin and his disciple was Arṇodara<sup>2</sup>.” Whatever may be the names of the disciples according to various sources, the aim of this paper is to examine the contribution of the Pāśupata-s to the culture of Karnāṭaka and their influence, if any, in Cambodia.

There were four groups amongst Lākulaśaiva-s namely Kālāmukha, Pāśupata, Kāpālīka and Kaula. The first two were followers of the Dakṣiṇamārga or right-hand path, while the latter followed the Vāmācāra or left-hand path. To the adherents of the right-hand path, Śiva was the main God and the principles laid down in the Veda-s were pre-eminent. Their studies were concentrated on the Veda, Vyākaraṇa, the art of theatre -nāṭyaśāstra, and yoga. In contrast, the followers of the left-hand path had Śakti as their principle deity, and followed tantric traditions such as eating meat, drinking wine from human skulls and making all kinds of sacrifice.

However for all of them Lākulāgama, that is the Āgama-s given by Śiva-Lakuliśa, were important. Both Kālāmukha-s and Pāśupata-s acquired a perfect knowledge of the Śaivāgama-s. Originally, there were twenty-eight

Śaivāgama-s and thanks to the efforts of Pandit N.R. Bhatt, now living in Chennai (Madras), and his ex-director, the late Professor Jean Filliozat of the French Institute of Indology in Pondichery, who collected the manuscripts, a few of them have come to light, while many Upāgama-s (i.e. secondary āgama-s based on the main series) are also available. It is generally believed that when Lākulaśaivism disappeared from society its āgama-s also suffered the same fate. However, a careful study of the “upāgama-s” suggests that some of them had probably played the role of “Lākulāgama-s” in former times. As the problem is complex it is not possible to elucidate it further in this short article. Instead we will examine the history of the Kālāmukha-s and Pāśupata-s in Karnāṭaka.

There are no historical documents to tell us when the Pāśupata-s began to influence the culture of Karnāṭaka. From the epigraphic evidence we can say, quoting an article by Dr. G.S. Dikshit, that: “there is a reference to an inscription from Paṭṭadakal dated 755 A.D. which mentions an Ācārya named Jñānaśiva who had come to that place from Mrigathanikāhāraṇiśaya on the north bank of the Ganges and who was honoured by the Cālukya queen Trailokya Mahādevi<sup>3</sup>”. Further, the professor writes: “Since Jñānaśiva is a name common to Kālāmukha-s, he might be one of the first amongst the Kālāmukha-s, or followers of the Lākulaśaiva cult, to come to Karnāṭaka<sup>4</sup>”. This can probably be considered as the starting point of Kālāmukha activities in Karnāṭaka.

Trailokya Mahādevi was the queen of King Vikramāditya II of Bādāmi Cālukya lineage. In the eighth century, Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings became the overlords of Karnāṭaka by overthrowing the last Bādāmi Cālukya king. In their turn, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa-s were overthrown by one of the surviving members of the Bādāmi Cālukya dynasty who re-occupied the throne of Karnāṭaka. This event became the starting point for the rise of the Kālāmukha-s and Pāśupata-s who went on to occupy temporal, preceptorial and pontifical seats.

To distinguish the two Cālukya families that ruled over Karnāṭaka, modern historians have named the first dynasty “Bādāmi Cālukya” and the latter, “the Cālukya-s of Kalyāṇa” or sometimes “Kalyāṇi Cālukya”. The latter is a modern appellation and modern scholars have used it for



the sake of convenience. When the Cālukya-s of Kalyāṇa were ruling over the Karnāṭaka empire, which extended from Godāvārī in the north to Kāverī in the south, the Pāśupata and Kālāmukha Śaivites were at the apogée of their glory and Karnāṭaka experienced a proliferation of temple construction with lengthy inscriptions. These inscriptions are like small kāvya or poetical works par excellence. To retrace the history of these two lost communities, their temples and related inscriptions furnish invaluable information.

The following architectural elements strike the visitor's eye, when looking at the temples built either by Kālāmukha-s or Pāśupata-s. These elements are : Śiva in the main sanctum, either in the form of a liṅga or in anthropomorphic form; other gods such as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Sūrya come in secondary position, again either in anthropomorphic or liṅga form. On entering the temple one also has to render homage to the mother goddesses. Therefore, a panel dedicated to the Saptamātṛkā-s or seven mother goddesses is installed in the south-west corner of the raṅgamaṇḍapa or stage pavillion. On either side of the main entrance to the sanctum, Gaṇeśa and Durgā are shown engaged in killing the demon Mahiśāsura. A huge couchant bull adorns the central part of the raṅgamaṇḍapa. Of course, a life-size image of the goddess Jñānasarasvatī holding a palm leaf book and an akṣamālā is also another special feature of these temples.

Images of Śiva, Brahmā and Viṣṇu, with Śiva in the centre, have been carved on the lintel above the entrance between the śukanāsi and raṅgamaṇḍapa. In some temples this three-god panel is bedecked with Gaṇeśa and Durgā at either end. This decorative element is actually prescribed in the Śaivāgama-s. However, the followers of Lākulāgama have also adopted it in their monuments. In the course of our study we have noticed that much of the iconography prescribed in the Śaivāgama-s has also found its place in Lākulaśaiva temples. This leads us to the opinion that the Lākulaśaiva-s had a thorough knowledge of Lākulāgama as well as the Śaivāgama-s and followed both of them.

This is the general layout of the temple. In some cases, temples have three, four or five sanctums. Usually temples with five sanctums go by the name of "Pañcaliṅgeśvara". Till the middle of the twelfth century it was customary to install a Śivaliṅga in the central cella with either Brahma, Viṣṇu in anthropomorphic form or Sūrya (the Sun god). When Śaivism received a boost during the rule of Vikramāditya VI, (1075-1125), there came a change in the mode of thinking: "Everything emerged from Śiva and is re-absorbed in Him at the end" - consequently everything is Śiva. This idea received such an impetus that the practice of installing Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Sūrya was replaced by the installation of Liṅgas called Brahmeśvara, Keśaveśvara and

so on. Often, a dwarf pillar at the entrance of the temple courtyard was used to represent the Sun god and was called "Kiraṇada kallu" (stone of sun-rays).

As Lākulaśaiva-s attached more importance to Yoga, consequently Sūryanamaskāra comes in the first place; obeisance to the Sun god being a preliminary ritual before entering the temple. So the dwarf pillar representing the Sun god was posted at the entrance of the temple and the worship used to start here. By and large, the monuments were built of stone and had one or three cellas along with a vimāna or tower above each of them. The towers were decorated with images relating to the various aspects of the gods that were housed in their respective sanctums. As the Purāṇa-s inform us, when Śiva stood on one foot as Ekapādamūrti, Brahmā and Viṣṇu emanated from his right and left shoulders respectively. A single temple with triple cella transfigures this idea.

Generally, images of the Goddess Pārvatī, the consort of Śiva, are placed on the northern façade of the central shrine. Of the twenty-five aspects of Śiva, "Ardhanārīśvara", in which he gives half his body to his consort, is one. She occupies the left portion of Śiva's body and is represented on the northern façade of the central tower, because He is housed in the central sanctum. Though there came a change in the conception of the temple, with the installation of one liṅga in each sanctum of the triple-celled shrines, judging from the surviving monuments, it is probable that the practice of carving images of Viṣṇu, Sūrya etc. on the outer façades of the other two towers continued.

With regard to the inscriptions that are found in each temple, it is not an exaggeration to say that the researcher is copiously served with all kinds of information. First of all, we would like to point out that these inscriptions are not mere charts recording facts and figures, but furnish invaluable information in a highly poetic style matching that of the great literary works of Kalidāsa, Bāṇa or Bhavabhūti. The language of the inscriptions is Kannaḍa, but the inermingling of Sanskrit words gives a special charm to the composition. Sanskrit metres or akṣaravṛtta go along with kanda verses. It was very much in vogue in Karnāṭaka, up to the fourteenth century, to compose verses in *kanda*. This is a kind of verse with four *pāda*-s where the first and the third have twelve *mātrā*-s and the second and fourth have twenty, with each group of syllables or letters having only four *mātrā*-s. In addition, the poetry is often interlaced with a kind of prose called "vacana" which led to the "vacana literature" of the twelfth century and has now become a genre littéraire par excellence in Kannaḍa.

Not only did the whole of Karnāṭaka come under the influence of the Kālāmukha-s and Pāśupata-s, but also

neighbouring kingdoms such as Cola, Sevuṇa-s etc. and even kingdoms in South East Asia (K. Bhattacharya, *Journal Asiatique*, CCXLIII, 1955, pp. 479-n51).

From the available texts of inscriptions in Kannaḍa, we gather that the names of Kālāmukha ascetics ended with *śakti*, such as Jñānaśakti, Kriyāśakti, Vāmaśakti, Kedāraśakti and so on, whereas *paṇḍita* or *rāsi* was affixed to the names of Pāśupata-s, e.g. Someśvarapaṇḍita, Brahmasiṅgipaṇḍita or Jñānarāsi etc. These may perhaps be indications showing their affiliation to groups called Śakti and Siṃha after the goddess and her vehicle, respectively. Kālāmukha-s attached more importance to the Śakti of Śiva i.e. the Goddess, whereas Pāśupata-s emphasised Siṃha the Lion, which is her vehicle. Though both forms of Śaivism were adepts of the Lākūlāgama-s, their mode of worshipping Śiva varied. We have dealt with this topic in our book published by The Kuppusvamy Research Institute, Chennai (Madras), in 2001.

To our astonishment, we have not come across any names of ascetics ending with Śakti in Cambodian inscriptions, but names ending in Paṇḍita are numerous. These were Pāśupata. The striking influence of the Pāśupata-s is felt on seeing their monuments and when going through the texts of their inscriptions.

As we have mentioned above, the God Śiva in the centre, and other images of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, Gaṇeśa and the Goddesses, namely Durgā, Bhagavatī and Sarasvatī, were installed in the temples built either by Kālāmukha-s or Pāśupata-s in Karnāṭaka between the tenth and twelfth centuries. It is remarkable to note that these same elements are found in temples dedicated to Śiva in Cambodia.

Cambodia is rich in monuments and epigraphy. Images of Viṣṇu, Sūrya and other gods were installed in temples mainly dedicated to Śiva. Also in the inscriptions of Cambodia many similarities with Kannaḍa can be found. Many Cambodian inscriptions begin with a eulogy of Śiva which evokes one of his twenty-five aspects or manifestations whereas in Karnāṭaka almost all start with Bāṇa's stanza "Namas tuṅgaśiraścumbi..." and a few with "Vāgarthāhiva..." from Kālidāsa's work. The next verse always invokes Śiva, making an allusion to one of his aspects and praying to protect the donor of the grant.

We were also attracted by a few words in Cambodian inscriptions which show some affiliation with the Kannaḍa language and the culture of Karnāṭaka.

The word "Canlyāk jñā", which occurs in an inscription from Vāt Bāset (K. 205-207 = Corpus XCIV à XCVI)<sup>5</sup>. Prof. Cœdès thinks that it must have been a kind

of cloth which covered the legs from thigh to knee, or could be worn like a "sampot" or a kind of "caleçon". In Kannaḍa there is a word "Callaṇa" which is an equivalent of "ardhoruka" in Sanskrit. This is a "caleçon" which covers the thighs down to the knees. This is a very ancient word in Kannaḍa and it is used even today under the forms callaṇa, caṇṇa, ceṇṇa or coṇṇa.

Another example is the word "Candrahāsa" which occurs in an inscription from Kòh Ker (*Inscriptions du Cambodge*, Vol. I, p. 62-67, verse no. XXVII).

Candrahāsaḥ priyo yasya prakāśo bhuvaneṣv aho  
tathā hi haste hṛdaye kīrttyāṃ sannihito mukhe | |

Concerning this word, Prof. Cœdès writes in his notes: "Quadruple jeu de mot sur Candrahāsa. Sa main tient une épée...; sa gloire (sans tache) se moque de la lune; son visage a la blancheur de la lune. Il y a peut-être une allusion supplémentaire à Candrahāsa, nom d'un prince légendaire; mais les textes où il se trouve cité manquent à Hanoi, je ne puis rien affirmer à ce sujet." (p. 67, n. 2)

The story of Candrahāsa is very well known and popular in Karnāṭaka and the story is first told in the Jaiminī Bhārata in Sanskrit. The story of Candrahāsa goes like this. Candrahāsa, the son of a royal couple, was born in mūlā nakṣatra. However, his parents were killed and the child became an orphan. He was brought up by one of the loyal servants of the deceased royal couple. As the child was growing up, Duṣṭabuddhi, the minister of the kingdom, learnt that the prince was still alive. So he planned to have him killed so that he could become the legitimate ruler of the realm. But the young prince was too handsome to be killed. The assassins took pity on the young lad and merely cut off his small finger to show to the minister as proof of his death.

Many years passed and the evil minister came to know that the child had not been killed and was now a young man. Enraged by this treachery, he wove another plan. He sent Candrahāsa with a letter to his son, who was the ruler of a neighbouring kingdom. The main theme of the epistle was to tell his son to give *vīṣa*, that is poison, to the prince.

While on his way to the royal palace the prince felt tired and with a view to take rest entered the royal park. Luck would have it that Duṣṭabuddhi's daughter Viṣayā happened to be there in the park with her friends. The young prince was tired and fell fast asleep. The young girl fell in love with him at first sight and by curiosity took the letter which was lying by his side. She was shocked to see the contents and she made an amendment to the text. In the letter where it was written "give him *vīṣa*" she corrected it to read "give

him *viṣayā*”, her own name. Seeing the handsome prince at his gate, at once Duṣṭabuddhi’s son, without any second thought, celebrated his sister’s marriage with the charming prince Candrahāsa.

Duṣṭabuddhi’s anger knew no limits when he saw that his second plan had also been futile. So he tried a third time. In the guise of a well wisher he told Candrahāsa to go to the Cāṇḍālikā temple to be blessed, where the minister had already posted his men to kill the bride groom as soon as he entered the temple. But on the way, Candrahāsa met Duṣṭabuddhi’s son who was unaware of his father’s plans. He proposed to go to the temple in the place of Candrahāsa and to pray for him. So he went there and fell prey to his father’s ignoble plan. Duṣṭabuddhi, disgusted and dejected on seeing his plans failing one after another, killed himself. Then the young prince Candrahāsa lived happily with his beloved queen Viṣayā. At the present state of research, the literary works that are available to us in Kannaḍa belong to the 16th century. Probably, the story of Candrahāsa was popularly known in folk literature much earlier.

We cannot end this article without saying a few words about the temple at Banteay Srei and its builder. It is a jewel of Khmer art and the person who was instrumental in getting it realised was Yajñavarāha who was a great scholar and a royal preceptor of Jayavarman V. Dr. Madeleine Giteau, quoting the inscription of Sek Ta Tuy, describes him as “ce brahmane-kṣatriya, nommé Yajñavarāha, qui a vu l’autre rive des sciences, lui qui porte les titres de professeur de çivaïsme et de premier guru du roi du Cambodge...”<sup>6</sup>.

It is interesting to note that the minister’s name is Yajñavarāha and that he was a Brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya. This community was very active and held high posts in the kingdoms of Kalyāṇa Cālukya and Sevuṇas till the fall of the great Karnāṭaka (i.e. Vijayanagara) empire in the latter half of the sixteenth century. In 1406, Viṭhappa, a Brahma-kṣatriya, had the temple of Viṭhala built at Vijayanagara, the capital city of the Karnāṭaka empire.

In regard to the Brahma-kṣatriya community, R. Narsimhachar writes<sup>7</sup>: The Brahmakṣatriyas are believed to be the

descendants of King Ratnasena who once sought shelter in the hermitage of Dadhīci fearing an attack from Paraśurāma. Five sons were born to him in the hermitage, Jayasena, Bindumān, Viśāla, Candraśāla and Bharata. The king himself was killed by Paraśurāma while he had gone on hunting expedition, away from the hermitage, and his queens, five in number, followed him as satī. The children were brought up like Brahman boys and once when Paraśurāma visited the hermitage, they recited the Vedas perfectly before him. The eldest boy then became the disciple of Paraśurāma in archery but the sage soon found out his descent and the name Brahma-kṣatriya was applied to the prince “brahmakṣatriya-nāmnā hi vichārasva yathā-sukhaṃ”. Narasimhachar further writes: “The community of the Brahmakṣatriya at present believed to be found in Gujaratha, Nasik, Poona etc. (See Jātibhāskara published in Bombay 1917, p.109. The account of Brahmakṣatriya or Brahmakṣatra is stated there to be based on the work Brahmaṇa Uṭapatti Mārtāṇḍa). We know that famous Gaṅgā minister Chamuṇḍarāya was a Brahma-kṣatriya”.

Yajñavarāha had a Viṣṇuite name, but had a temple built for Śiva in the main sanctum. This was possible in his case because his guru was a Pāśupata, and as we have said earlier, Pāśupata-s did not make any distinction between Śiva and other gods. The temple of Banteay Srei has three cellas like most of the Kālāmukha and Pāśupata temples in Karnāṭaka. In fact, when we see the Banteay Srei temple complex we are reminded of Paṭṭadakal in Karnāṭaka. It was one of the capitals the Bādāmi Cālukya-s. There are also similarities with the Kedāreśvara in Balligāve and other temples.

In conclusion, we would like to say that perhaps there were cultural exchanges between Cambodia and the rich empires of Karnāṭaka viz. the Cālukya of both Bādāmi and Kalyāṇa, Rāṣṭrakūṭa, Hoysala and Sevuṇa. Perhaps, there were also contacts with other kingdoms of India too but, with my meagre knowledge, I will not make any statement with regard to other regions. I restrict myself to Karnāṭaka where I have done and am still doing some work, and where I believe that there were probably cultural exchanges between Karnāṭaka and Cambodia.



1. David N. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukha*, Thomson Press (India) Limited, New-Delhi, 1972. p. 181.  
 2. *Vāmanapurāṇa*, All India Kashiraj Trust, Varanasi, 1968. p. 33. verses 86 onwards in the 6th Adhyāya.  
 3. Dr. G. S Dikshit, *Social and Religious Condition of Karnāṭaka before Basava*, p. 121.

4. Ibid.  
 5. *Inscriptions du Cambodge*, Vol. III, p. 20, note no. 3.  
 6. Madeleine Giteau, *Histoire d’Angkor*, Que Sais-je 1580, 1974, p. 31.  
 7. R. Narasimhachar, *Annual Report of the Mysore Archaeological Department*, 1931, p. 203.