



Historiographical Traditions and Restoration of Religious Identity in Jammu Region (A Case Study of Shaivism)

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ABSTRACT

Religious rituals can be seen as "the rules of conduct which prescribe how a man should confront himself in the presence of sacred objects with the aim to uphold the community and renew the sense of belongingness to the group" (Durkheim, 1915). The religious and cultural milieu of Jammu is far from uniform. The major parts of Jammu are dominated by Hindu population and the flourishing Dogra culture. Shaiva monasticism has been a major ideological force of the religious and intellectual discourse in this region even today. The development discourse too points to the fact that the parts of the Jammu region are underdeveloped because of the immature historical writings. Having said that, historiography in the narrower sense of intentional attempts to recover knowledge of and represent in writing true descriptions or narratives of past events. The historical and archaeological research was going on in this region when de-facto transfers of monuments of national importance from state to central government in 1958. The Budhe Amarnath shrine at Poonj and the Shiva temple at Sudh Mahadev near Chenani are dedicated to Lord Shiva and these are one among the oldest shrines in Jammu region. More or less the philosophy of shaiva siddhanta is present in different forms. The research on archaeology and culture

has started even though; Jammu University does not have any archaeology department till date. There is an increasing demand of study on culture, monuments and tourism amongst the students of this region.

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INTRODUCTION:

The mountainous tract of Jammu which reaches down to the plain land of Punjab from the south of Kashmir Valley is inhabited by Dogra who confess both Hinduism and Islam (Sharma 1995). It is also about this time that the earliest references to 'Durga Desha' (from which the term 'Duggar' and Dogra' are derived and refers to Jammu region) in the form of two inscriptions on copper plates of the 11th century having been found. However, the legend says differently (Wakhlu 1998). Raychandhari (1972) described that culturally Jammu region appears to have made its first contact with brahmanic culture with the arrival of Madra people in the region. The Madra was a segment of the Anu tribe that dwelt in central Punjab and its adjoining northern region. With the coming of the Madra, brahmanical culture was introduced in Jammu. Since then the culture appears to have penetrated into all the geographical sub-regions of Jammu region depending on its acceptability.

One of the major factors which have contributed to the strengthening of the regional identity of Jammu is the local style of religious architecture which is found in the large number of temples. A number of scholars have studied in detail the Shaiva temples of Jammu, their art, architecture, iconography and philosophy. Should the historical significance of such studies be under emphasized just because the professional background of the scholars making these studies has been archaeology? Hence, in the present paper, the extent to which the studies on Shiva Temples of this region have contributed towards strengthening the regional identity of the region has been assessed. It is interesting to view the ever green sociological interpretation of religion in contemporary world. The structural-functional approach represents the understanding of the role of religion in sustaining social solidarity and the presence in the minds of members of the society of certain sentiments which control the behaviour of the individuals. Further, the phenomenological approach looks upon religion as that special human activity through which a comprehensive, meaningful, sacred cosmos is constructed. Religion helps to build, maintain and legitimate universes of meaning.

METHODOLOGY:

An attempt is made to give an extensive evaluation of existing historical and archaeological writings that deals with Shaivism in Jammu region. The assessment is done to know what sort of important information are available on Shaivism and then to identify the gaps in order to carry out future research. The sources including inscriptions, coins,

monuments and other antiquities are of immense value in the reconstruction of religious identity, particularly Shaivism.

Religion is verily a universal feature of human culture, not because all societies foster a belief in spirit, but because all recognize it in some form or other. It is the awe-inspiring extraordinary manifestation of reality. At the root of all religions in the world, there has been a belief in an unseen power, which rules the universe. This fact played an important role in the development of religion in the form of worship. Religion is viewed primarily as a part of the ideological system which itself emerged on the basis of the material conditions that exist in a particular situation. The religions are also supposed to reform themselves from time to time. Shaivism, one of the ancient religions of the orient, is known as the chief religious cult of India as well in Jammu region. The creed, which centered round the worship of Shiva, is of great antiquity. Shiva is a complex product and Shaivism is not a single cult but a conglomeration of cults. The Shaiva sects carried on their religious activities on an organizational basis, and the kings patronized them. The Shaivite ascetics took up shelter in their temple and imparted theological instructions to the devotees. They were gradually provided with separate residences which served as monasteries attached to the temples. The monasteries were not merely places for meditation but also promoted philosophical and social welfare theories.

The development of religion is an important phenomenon in relation to societal development. The region of

Jammu is no exception in this regard. Consequently, the archaeological and literary data provide evidences to suggest that religion played an important role in Jammu region right from the Harappan days, the earliest known civilization of India). The first systematic attempt on historical writing of Jammu archeology was carried out by Mridu Rai.² One of the chapters of her work has focused on the archaeological enterprise of preserving historical monuments imposed by the colonial state on the Dogra rulers. It explores the way how Kashmiri Muslims earn a struggle against the Dogra state in the name of denial of rights. The Discovery of Ancient India gives some early reference of religious sites of Jammu and Punjab hill states region. However, it has given the reference of Alexander Cunningham's exploration on Jammu.³ The other two British officials provided the detailed exploration report⁴ in 1911, on Chamba hill states and some important Shaiva pithas.

The important comprehensive research in history and culture of Jammu and Himachal Pradesh was shaped by Sukhdev Sing Charak.⁵ Throughout his writings, one can find more details on history and mythology; related to Shaiva religious establishment.

Explorations of ASI in 2012 mentioned about various monuments which are taken over for maintenance and upkeep from the State Government. There are fifty six centrally protected monuments under the jurisdiction in which fifteen centrally protected monuments are in Jammu region. Most of these monuments belong to Udhampur district while few are in Kathua and

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The Budhe Amarnath shrine is dedicated to the Lord Shiva and it is one of the oldest shrines in Jammu region. The people worship a type of irregular stone (chattan) which represents the image of Shiva. It is believed that Baba resides there in snow crystal form. There is strong belief among the devotees that the pilgrimage of Baba Amarnath Kashmir is incomplete without visiting Budhe Amarnath located at Poonch. If we see the work of Shiv Chander Sharma⁷, he has thrown light on the important shrines of Shaivism and of all faith and sects in the region. The Shaiva sites such as Pir Khoh, Shiv Khori cave,

Sudh Mahadev, Kameswar Temple, Babor Temple, Hari-Hara Temple, Mahewar Temple, Erwan, Nilakantha, Visvevara cave and some other Pithas related to Sakti. The above mentioned inclusive study of Shaiva shrines reflects the composite culture of Jammu region.

Table-i: List of Shaiva Shrine in Jammu Region

Sl.No.	Name of site	Location	Assemblage
01.	Pir Khoh	Jammu	Cave Shrine
02.	Shiv Khouri	Reasi	Cave Shrine
03.	Sudh Mahadev	Mantalai	Temple
04.	Budhe Amarnath	Poonj	Temple
05.	Kameshwar	Akhnoor	Temple
06.	Purmandal	Jammu	Temple
07.	Krimchi	Uddampur	Temple
08.	Hari Hara	Billawar	Temple
09.	Maheswar	Samba	Temple
10.	Erwan	Kathua	Temple
11.	Nilakanth	Basoli	Temple
12.	Visveswar	Basoli	Temple
13.	Ranbireswara	Jammu	Temple
14.	Panchvaktar	Jammu	Temple

Shaiva Establishment and Dogra Rule:

During the period, a number of religious monuments were erected in Jammu region. Raja Malgar Dev constructed the Panchbhaktar Shiva temple near Kanak Mandi. The Ranbireswar temple which is comparatively a recent construction was constructed by Maharaja Ranbir Singh. The temples of Purmandal and Uttarbehni, was constructed by the Dogra rulers.⁸ There are large number of Shaiva deities found in this region but unfortunately no systematic study of monumental remain has been done. There is influence of Kashmir architecture on Jammu region, but if you see the monuments of Jammu, Basoli and Udhampur area one can find that, the construction is based on

local architecture which has been called as Durgars. However, the situation of Dogra Art Gallery is currently in vulnerable condition in Jammu.

Has Kashmir Shaivism Influenced Jammu Region?

Shaivism of Kashmir⁹ has developed between the eight and the twelfth centuries A.D. This comparatively younger philosophy has tried to explain all such ambiguities which the ancient philosophers have failed to resolve. Like Advaitavedanta it is monistic, like Vaishnavism it is theistic, like yoga it is practical, like

Nyaya it is logical as also appealing like Buddhism. Kashmir Shaivism is, therefore, idealistic and realistic in essence, strongly advocating a pragmatic approach to life. Despite many renowned gurus, geographic isolation in the Kashmir Valley and later Muslim domination kept the following relatively small.

Today various organizations promulgate the esoteric teachings to some extent worldwide. While the number of Kashmir Shaivite formal followers is uncertain, the school remains an important influence in India. Many Kashmir Shaivites have migrated from the presently war-torn Valley of Kashmir to settle in Jammu, New Delhi and elsewhere in North India. This diaspora of devout Shaivites may serve to spread the teachings into new areas. For nearly all of the millions of Shiva's devotees, Saivism is not, therefore, a school or philosophy; it is life itself. To them Shaivism means love of Shiva, and they simply follow the venerable traditions of their family and community. Due to migration of

Kashmiri pundits to Jammu, one can find the traces of Shaiva rituals and philosophy and there is a major role of Shiv Sena in this region.

Shaiva Shrine and Rural Tourism:

Even at regional level, the states have realized that tourism can give a boost to the development of the states and thus the states like Gujarat, Rajasthan etc. are running successful campaigns which are attracting tourists in large number.⁹⁰ Therefore for sustainable development of such regions having archaeological resources or monuments, due care and respect is needed, as these are regarded as important assets not only for the illustration of previous civilization or culture but also for the understanding of the future and for the augmentation of tourism. Now, there is a law governing these assets which is known as “The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act” 1958¹¹ In comparison to Kashmir, Jammu region is still an underdeveloped region from tourism point of view. The Shaiva sites are not properly utilized by tourism department to attract tourist attention.

CONCLUSION:

Consequently, the writings on religion in Jammu region have recently been explored by various historians based on their own aim and objective. Historically and Archaeologically, this region has a high potential that can help to explore and re-construct the past, which in turn would help to gain information that will help us in understanding the present scenario. This region is important because of its hilly tract areas, providing scope for investigating the unexplored monuments. The sporadic studies

carried out in the recent past and the reports of some of the British officers (mentioned earlier) indicate that, the region has been surrounded with numerous religious monuments. But so far no systematic work has been carried out. Reason behind can be devoted to either Article 370 of Indian constitution preventing detailed explorations or lack of interest among intellectuals or the politics of choosing the monuments. The ritual and practices of Kashmir Shaivism was different from practices of Jammu which was not accepted by people. In the light of the above findings, it is quite clear that, for reconstruction of religious identity.

Jammu region one has to take into account the pivotal role played by the temples particularly related to Shaivism. Hence, this leaves ample scope for the historians and archaeologists to work together and draw from each other’s findings and exhibit their scholarship in a manner which would not only enrich their respective disciplines but also would strengthen the regional identity of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

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