



An Insight into Nath Panth shrines and perpetual Tradition in West Bengal

Partha Sarathi Nath

Ph. D. Scholar

Bengali Dept. Jadavapur University, Kolkata

Abstract :

Nath tradition is a very ancient tradition in West Bengal. During the 9th - 10th century CE in West Bengal Nath monasteries and Temples were built under the influence of the Yoga and supernatural yoga power of Yogi Matsyendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath and many other enlightened Nath Siddhas. There are numerous monasteries and temples in West Bengal today. The monasteries and temples retained the Culture and tradition of Nath Panth.

Keyword : Nath Shrines in West Bengal.

Introduction :

The Nath Yogi tradition of West Bengal carries on the legacy of ancient tradition. The people of Nath Panth in West Bengal are known as Nath community, Yogi community and Nath Yogi community. The surnames— Nath, Debnath, Majumdar, Dalal, Bhowmik, Nathsharma, Devasharma, Goswami, Yogi etc. are used at the end of their names. Although the surnames Nath and Yogi were always from ancient tradition, the rest have been added to the end of the names at different times later due to socio-economic reasons. The source of Nath Yogi's self-identity cannot be scientific without diagnosis anthropology, sociology, architectural patterns. In search of that self-identity, attempts have been made to search for Nath temples and Nath traditions in West Bengal.

There is no way to get acquainted with the Shaiva Yogi Nath community without the help of *Bramha Vaivarta Purana, Matsyendra Samhita, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Goraksha Samhita* etc. There was no human race, social classification which came due to social ties. Caste has been created in each class. In Vedic society, there were two classes of people – *Munidhara* and *Rishidhara*. Muni's two branches are *Grihasthashrami* and *Muni*. The Yoga panthi *Munis* took the ideal of *Sadashiva*. Other gods did not have any children, but Shiva had two sons, he is a *grihayogi*. That so why Nath Yogis are of two types – *Sanyasi Nath yogi* and *householder Nath yogi*. Disciple Nath yogis are called '*Nadaja*' yogi and hereditary Nath yogis are called '*Binduja*' Yogi :

“Nathaddwiprakara srishtirjata nadarupa bindurupa cha.

নাথাদ্বিপ্রকারা সৃষ্টির্জাতা নাদরুপা বিন্দুরুপা চ।

Nadarupa shishyakramena bindurupa cha putrakramena.

নাদরুপা শিষ্যক্রমেণ বিন্দুরুপা চ পুত্রক্রমেণ।

Nadannabanatha jatah,bindutah Sadashiva Bhairaba jatah.”

নাদান্নবনাথা জাতঃ বিন্দুতঃ সদাশিবোভৈরবো জাতঃ।১

The three-fold theory of Vedic Nath yoga philosophy is “ Alakh Niranjan (Alakhnath) ---- Anadinath---- Adinath.”

অলখ নরিঞ্জন (অলখনাথ)... অনাদিনাথ...আদিনাথ (translation by the author)

The status of the three Nath is of one Shiva. **2** Those who follow this philosophy of Nath theory are Nath Yogis. The similarity of this Tripada theory with the mantra of Atharva veda 2/1-2 can be noticed :

“Trini padani nihita guhasya.”

ত্রীনা পাদানা নিহিতা গুহাস্য

Yogi Gorakshanath , the proponent of Nath philosophy is devoid of high and low thoughts. On the other hand, Yogi Matsyendranath is associated with the Tantra Yogini Kaul sect in the Nath -Yogi tradition. Originally described in the *Atharva Veda* as a combination of yoga culture such as Bratyshaiva worship, Upanishadic Brahmanvidya and yoga sadhana, Nath Yoga tradition emerged over time. Yoga and worship were adopted in the age of Upanishads. Upanishads like *chandogya*, *kath*, *kaushitaki* are proof of it. In this context Dr. Dol Gobinda Shastri said :

“ The Yoga system was the main system of worship in the pre-vedic Aryan era i.e. Bratyas and Dravidians. In course of time this was also accepted by the vedic Aryans.”**3**

In the age of Epics and Puranas, Yoga or Nath Yoga takes a more advanced form. Shiva as the main deity is worshipped along with Brahma and Vishnu. In this context Dr. K. C. Mishra said:

“ In the puranic age Vratya Shaiva cult or Yoga Marga attained its perfection as Natha Dharma or Nathism. Shiva was termed as Natha by the followers of shaivism.”**4**

But in the Buddhist era, the importance of Vedas and Upanishads diminished. Finally, in the seventh – eight century Buddhism, Hindu tantric practice and kaya yoga began to dominate. On the other hand, Shankaracharya was preaching against Buddhism. At that time, Yogi Matsyendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath and other Nath Siddhas were trying to coordinate. Dr Hazari Prasad Dwivedi said :

“ In the eighth and ninth centuries, Buddhism progressed rapidly towards tantric practice and Kaya yoga. Later Nath Panth, a sect of shaivites became dominant while many practices of tantric Buddhism became part of it.”**5**

As a result, Nath religion became very popular in the last years of the first millennium. At the time of the catastrophe of Buddhism, Ajibik, like Jainism people of mass religions also went to Nath Panth and survived. Naturally some features of all these religions can be noticed in Nath Panth. Dr Atul Shur said :

“ Ajibik and Jain religions were established in Bengal in considerable opposition. But most of these religions later became Buddhist or Nath Panthi.” **6**

Naturally, the majority of the Buddhist, Jain and Ajibik communities took refuge in Nath Panth and defended themselves. Discussing the architectural aspects of the Buddhist stupas at Bengal, it is thought that Buddhism was the dominant religion in Bengal from 7th to 8th century and later Nath Panth. It can be seen that the archeological finds of Yogi Matsyendranath, Yogi Gorakshanath, Yogi Kanupanath or Kanhhapa have been found along with Buddhist statues. Dr Hara Prasad Shastri said that of eight types of religions that existed in Bengal till the twelfth century, Brahmanical religion one, Nath religion one and six different religions of Buddhism. Apart from the Brahmanical religion, the rest of the population of Bengal at that time was 75 percent. **7**

We also see in *charyapada* that there were people from Buddhism without caste, people without caste discrimination and people of Nath sect. Dr. Sukumar Sen said :

“ In the literary work of the spiritual saints, the prominent style is out of the reach of the common people and is prevalent in some spiritual saintly communities. Nath Panthi yogis are the inheritors of this tradition. Through their writings, some of the objects of Charyagiti entered the common literature and unknowingly.”⁸

Nath Temples of West Bengal_:

The idea of building a *deul* or temple centered on various Shaivite deities originated in Bengal in the mythological period. Shiva, Shiva's wife Parvati (Gouri), their two sons Ganesha, Kartika and two daughters Lakshmi, Saraswati could not be accommodated in a small throne. Since then on the construction of Deul or temple started. Kirtanams and mantras began to be established by the virtue of the Vaishnavite movement introduced by Sri Chaitanyadeva. But monasteries and akharas began to be established in Bengal with the development of Nath literature. ⁹ As a result of this, Nath temples were found in different parts of West Bengal at that time and even today. Though it has lost its lustre, but the glory still remains.

Pilgrimages of Hinduism became the pilgrimages of Nath community also, especially the Hindu temples of Shiva, Bhairav and Shakti. Apart from this, the Nath community has their own temples and monasteries all over West Bengal. According to Dr. Kalyani Mallick these pilgrimages existed even before the Goraksha era. ¹⁰

Mahanad Temple and monastery : Place of Nadasadhana of Nathcult

Mahanad is the main centre of Nath religion and Nath culture in West Bengal, the largest centre of the Nath community in West Bengal. Mahanad is an ancient architectural place under Pandua and Polba police stations in Hooghly district. Dr. Binoy Ghosh thinks that Jateshwarnath shiva temple of Mahanad was one of the major cultural centres of the Nath Panth in Bengal as well as Eastern India. ¹¹ The *Nadatattva* of the Nath Yogi community got its name from Nad- *Sadhana*. The Nath Yogis turn the mind into *Nadrupa Brahma- Shakti* with the help of mantras:

“ Nadanusandhani bali Nath Yogi khyeta.

Nader sandhan pantha Nath abiskrita.” ¹² [Goraksha Podaboli, Pp.29]

He further said that the historical antiquity of the Mahanad is undoubtedly in the Pala period in the ninth and tenth centuries. ¹³ Surrounding of Jateshwar Nath Shiva temple of the Mahanad once lived Nathyogi people in the vicinity of the Shiva temple. Dr Binoy Ghosh also said

Mahanad, Dwarabasini, etc were the main centers of Shaivism throughout the region. Sadagopa, the people of the Yogi community were Shaiva Tantric worshipers. Through the mutual exchange of Buddhist , Shaiva , Dharma Puja and Nath Dharma, Shaivism was gradually established in the region during the Pala and Sena eras. ¹⁴ At present only a few families of Nath Yogi community live there. From the various war accounts of Pandua, it seems that they converted to Islam. Moreover, the reactionary form of Hindu Brahmanical religion also came down on them. There is a village called ' *Yogidanga* ' near Jateshwar Nath Math. His description is also found in the ancient land deeds of the Temple . Mahanad was the main monastery of the Nath community in South Bengal. Under him were the Goraksha Banshuli temple at Dumdum and the Siddhinath temple at Panskura. The ancient centre of Shiva- Shakti Sadhana was Mahanad. There are huge idols of *Gauripatta*, *Batuk Bhairav* , *Ekpad Bhairav* , *Kalbhairav*, Jateshwar Nath Shivalinga, Kali, Haraparvati, Goddess Annapurna. During Shivaratri, a week-long fair is held. This fair of the Mahanad is called '*Manader Jaat*'. The front part of the Jateshwarnath temple is called '*Jattala*'. The mohantas of the Mahanad temple are called '*Yogi Raja*'.

Yogi Brahmanath is the current *mohanta* of the Mahanad temple and math. To the north of the temple is a sacred reservoir called '*Basishta Ganga*'. Mahanad is also the center of Dharma Sampradaya. In West Bengal and North

Bengal, there is a mixture of the Nath community with the Dharma community. Most of the books on Dharmapuja have been found in the homes of the Nath Yogis in West Bengal. The Nath Yogis still worship the God of Dharma. Even the home deities of the Nath Yogis are Dharmaraja in many places. **15** Flowers are given to Adinath, Minanath or Matsyendranath, Gorakshanath and Chowrangi Nath in the Dharma Puja. **16** There is even in the book 'Gorkha Bijaya' :

“ Dhyenete samortho hoiya dharmma noirakar,

Anande bosila dhyene siddha kori sar.” **17**

It finds a worship mentioned in the literary tradition of the Nath Yogi Sampradaya . According to the 'Anilpurana' of Sahadev Chakraborty , on return from *Kadali*, Minanath or Matsyendranath was founded the Yogi kingdom at Mahanad:

“ Kadali hoite jata yogigon,

Mahanade giya yogi dila darashan.

Mahanade giya Mina hoila yogiraja.” **18**

The Nath Siddhas left kadali and came to Mahanad. Minanath or Matsyendranath became yogiraja at Mahanad. There he started the worshipping of lord Adinath Shiva.

The Mahanad temple and monastery is a pilgrimage site of the pre-Goraksha Nath community. **19** There were 12 *kunds* here. Among them there are many living tombs of Nath Yogis on the banks of the *kund* called *Basishta Ganga*. Several ancient idols including Bhairavnath, Haragauri, Annapurna, huge Gauripatta have been erected during the Pala period. Jateshwar Shiva was founded by the local Yogi Raja Mahendra Narayan Nath. Moghal Emperor Jahangir donated land to meet the expenses of the Mahanad Math. **20** During the reign of the Mughal emperor Jahangir, a visitor, named Jaganmohan, visited Mahanad and gave an account. Mahamohapadhyay Haraprasad Shastri has been published it in 'Rarh bibriti':

“ Jogijatigrihe jata vagyoban sarbalakshano.

Mahendranarayana nripa manat nagare pura..

Mrittikamoydurgostu marjadivi samanwita.

Sthapita benu brikshastu durgomodhye pura nripoi.

Prachina rajbati cha bartote vagnobatika.

Rajbatya parshaborti bahaba jogijataya.

Manat bikhyata Rarha deshesu..”

Manad is famous in Rarh region and there ruled a king, named Mohendranarayana, belonging to Nathyogi caste. This area was surrounded by bamboo trees. The old palace still exists, through in a dilapidated condition. [There are also references to this part: Catalogue Sanskrit Manuscripts, Govt. Collection, P.51]

During Jahangir's reign in 16th century there were people of Nath Yogi Sampradaya in Mahanad, the details are available. The Bansberia, Tribeni- confluence with the Mahanad with the sign of the bamboo bush.

Gorakshabansuli or Gorakshabasi Temple :Dumdum

Ancient temples and monasteries of the Nath community are located at Arjunpur, Dumdum, Kolkata . It is a monastery hundreds of years old. There are three temples of the Kapilani sect of the Nath community in South Bengal. Goraksha bansuli in Dumdum, Kapilmuni in Khulna and Kapilmuni ashram in Gangasagar were three temples of Kapilani panth of the Nath community located near the Sundarbans area. There are idols of Kapil muni in all the three temples. Kapilmuni was worshiped along with others Nath Siddhas at the Goraksha bansuli temple. It is said that Kapilmuni used to practice yoga here. But many could not accept that Kapilmuni, the incarnation of Vishnu, had to become Shaiva Nath Guru. So many times some people in Bengal promote Kapil as another Kapil. Ganganathi Panth is one of the twelfth panths of the Nath community. This panth is named after Ganganath, a disciple of Maharshi Kapil. This is the panth introduced by Bhagiratha who brought the Ganges to mortuary. Kapil, the proponent of Sankhya yoga, is said to have been a disciple of Yogi Gorakshanath. However, I think this Kapil who is the proponent of Sankhya Yoga and not that mythical Kapilmuni. He is the *Adi- Vidwan* Kapil of Bengal. Meanwhile, the Goraksha Bansuali temple in Dumdum is still under the control of the Nath community. Kapilmuni's ashram was in the Goraksha Bansuali temple in Dumdum. The annual festival of Gorakshanath is held in a grand procession every year on the occasion of *Makar Sankranti* under the management of the Nath community at Goraksha Bansuali Temple and monasteries . During this time many Nath Sadhus from several places of the world gather here returning from Sagarmela. A fair is also organised and lasts almost for a week. Devotees swear allegiance to Gorakshanath during this time with '*rot*' and *lengat* (red cloth). Besides, Bhairavnath is worshiped on the Shiva Chaturdashi day in the month of *Falgun*. On the occasion of Chaitra Sankranti, a five-day *Charak* fair is held.

Shiva Puja is held in the first day, *Gajan Sannyasi* ceremony in the second day, *Nilpujo* in the third day, *Charak* in the fourth day and *Hajra* puja in the last day. When this festival was celebrated it was given a lot of importance and people from all communities participated in it. The fair is held at Gorakshabansuli Math on a property of about 60 bighas which is *Debottar*. Now most of the temple land has been transferred to another hand. People from different surrounding areas had spontaneously participated in the fair. Even Jatrigan used to happen in the fair then. Legend has it that in ancient times the name of the place was *Khandab*. It is known from the Mahabharata that the third Pandava, Arjuna burned the Khandab forest and the village, renovating it. Probably the name of the area adjacent to the temple is Arjunpur from that idea. **21** The Gorakshabansuli temple has idols of Gorakshanath , Bhairavnath , Kali, Manasa, Kapilmuni, Ganganath Bhagiratha, Bhartrharinath, Gopichandranath, Mainamatinath, Rama, Lakshmana. The *Shani* temple seems to have been established later.

Gorakshanath burning Dhuni is burning all the time near the main temple. **22** On the south side of the temple there are idols of Hanuman, Kali and Manasa. To the east of the monastery is the sacred *Vishnu Sarovar*. Kalbhairavnath temple is next to Vishnu Sarovar. To the west of the monastery is the living tomb of a Mohanta Yogi and the tomb of other Nath Yogi monks. Next to main temple is the abode of the Nath Sadhus and the Mohanta Gadighar. After Yogi Brihaspati Nath, Yogi Shibanath Maharaj was elected the Mohanta of Gorakshabansuli Math. The present Mohanta of the monastery is Yogi Vijayanathji Maharaj. Note that from All India *Yogi Vek Barahpanth*, Mohanta nominations were given to all Nath Maths in India.

There are three sects of the Nath community in Bengal --- Aaipanth, Kapilani panth and Nateshwari Panth. The founder of Aaipanth is Devi Bimala Mata. In the Patnitala area of Naogaon district in the Rajshahi division of East Bengal (Bangladesh), Yogirghopa was Bimala Mata's Sadhonpith. The second is the Kapilani sect, Kapilamuni is the chief Siddha of this sect. Besides, Nath Aghori lineage is associated with the Nateshwari Panth. Yogi Ramnath Aghori is one of the Siddhas of Nateshwari Panth. There is a connection between the Kapalik view and the Shaivite sect. They pursue Shiva as Kapalik. Naturally, their pursuit is fierce. Later, the Aghoris of the Kapalik dynasty merged with the Nath sect. The Kapalik community is first mentioned in the *Maitri Upanishad*. **23** According to *Kapalik*, the role of yoga and the *samarasya* of *Shiva -Shakti* are especially important. Jalandhar Nath or Haripa, Kanupanath or

Krishna Pada who introduced their sect in Nath Panth , in that sect many features of *Kapalik* lineage can be noticed said Dr Hazari Prasad Dwivedi.²⁴

Sri Bimalendu Chakraborty says in his book “ *Dumdum,Rajarhat O Labanhrader Itihas*” page no. 54-59:

“ Dumdum is a significant place for Buddhism and Nathism in the ninth century. How far-reaching Gorakshanath's influence was in the religious culture of the 24 Parganas can be understood from the introduction of Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah's *Shunyapuran*.He wrote :

‘I think there is a type of *Satyapir Niranjan* and *Manikpir* Gorakshanath.’ The ancient people of Shatgachhi believed that Shatgachhi of Dumdum was the place of attainment of Gorakshanath's sadhana. At present a road named Nagendranath Road has gone to Baguihati through Dakshinpara. The name of the road is *Yogipara* Road. Naturally it can be said that Nathyogis were predominant in this region, otherwise the name of such a wide road could not be *Yogipara*. Arjunpur was the abode of Kapil Nath. All those who have written regional history have mentioned that Kapil moved from Arjunpur to Sagardwip for sadhana. However, the one who did sadhana in Arjunpur was Kapil Nath, who came from Khulna. The period of Kapil Nath can be from 9th to 10th century. If the memory of Kapil Nath and Gorakshanath is not recognized, then there is no reasonable reason for the establishment of Gorakshanath temple in Arjunpur.

A new temple was built on the structure of the ancient temple in the middle of the 15th century. At one time the river Basanti, a tributary of the Vidyadhari river, flowed by the side of the sadhanpeeth. According to the documents, there were 180 bighas of land in 1813, but many people said the amount of land was 60 bighas.The deed was issued in 1813 by the board of trustees formed by the Marwaris. The area was once known as Azimpur. Maharaja Sir Vijaychand Mahatap Bahadur of Burdwan built a huge pond's bathing ghat at the Gorakshanath temple and the monastery at great expense.”

Aghori Math: Balurghat

Aghori Math is an old temple and monastery of the Nateshwari sect of the Nath community in the town of Balurghat in South Dinajpur. This monastery is built by Yogi Ramnath Aghori. Yogi Ramnath Aghori was born at Pahur near Tarapith in Birbhum. He became a Kanphata Yogi or Gorakshanathi Yogi by taking yoga initiation from Yogi Gambhir Nath, a prominent Nath Siddha Yogi of Gorakhpur Gorakshanath Monastery, UP. He every year visited the Pasupatinath Shiva temple in Kathmandu, Nepal. He stayed there to celebrate the Shivaratri and got great honour by others Shaiva Sanyasis as well as Nepali devotees. He was one of the saints of the Nath Aghori sect. Nath Aghori practiced Yoga and learned 64 Vidyas. But Yogi Ramnath Aghori learned 1008 Vidya perfectly . In the beginning of his life he practiced yoga sadhana at Bakreshwar, Birbhum and also in his middle age he practiced yoga sadhana at Balurghat, South Dinajpur . He spent his later life at Khagaria in Bihar and on the bank of Bagmati river in Nepal. Yogi Ramnath Aghori introduced the Khagaria sect in Nath aghori lineage. He took mahasamadhi at Balur Ghat and in Khagaria in Bihar and in Bakreshwar, Bengal his devotee did his Jata Samadhi. The Nath Aghoris practice birachari sadhana, but yoga is the real thing. There is no place for women in Kundalini awakening in Nath Aghori lineage. Even Nath Aghori saints do not make disciples of unmarried girls. They only make disciples of householders. Their pursuit, however, is in the crematorium. However, many people ignore the traditional allegiance and use witchcraft and black magic for business interests. The Nath Aghori condemned such hypocritical saints as '*fakkars*'. Nath Aghori Guru puts the '*Nad-janeu*' around his neck while initiating the Guru disciple in the Nath Aghori lineage.

There was a mango tree in front of the present temple at Balurghat Aghori Math. One day Yogi Ramnath Aghori came there and sat under that mango tree. At that place he expressed his desire to build a temple of Nath Aghori lineage. But no one knew who owned the land. But he decided to come and start the work of the temple next year. The next year he came, many disciples gathered there. He showed one of them named Chhanu and said her , you

have to give the land. Then she called the sub-registrar and donated 7 bighas of land for the temple and monastery handed it over to Yogi Ramnath Aghori. Then the work of Balurghat Aghori Math started, gradually the Math was built. People come from different places including Assam, Nepal. Apart from the celebration of Yogi Ramnath Aghori's Advent Day, the monastery also celebrates Gurupurnima, Durga Puja, Kali Puja and New Moon. The disciples of Yogi Ramnath Aghori conducted the monastery. Special ceremonies are held on the day of Shivaratri. There are idols of Balagorakshanath and Yogi Ramnath Aghori in the monastery. Ramnath Aghori Baba's Tirodhan Day is also celebrated in the monastery. Shri Sushanta Dey informed that food is given every day. There is also a steering committee in Aghori monastery. The monastery has Kali temple, idol of Yogi Matsyendranath, Bala Gorakshanath, idol of Yogi Ramnath Aghori, and Sant-niwas. The entire monastery area is surrounded by the wall. The river Atreyee has flowed through the front of the monastery. Devotees bath in the holy Atreyee river and worship at the temple. At present there is no Nath Aghori monk in the monastery. Balurghat Nath Aghori Math is a seat place and Yogapeeth. Pujo, mantra recitation and yoga are done here throughout the year. **25**

Siddhikunda Temple and monastery : Panskura

The ancient Siddhikunda monastery and temple of the Nath community is located at Shyamsundarpur Patna village in Panskura, East Midnapore district. Earlier the name of the area was Siddhikunda Patna. Siddhakunda Monastery has been established on 52 bighas of land. The occasion of Makar Sankranti, a fair was held in this monastery of the Nath community. The fair lasts for a week. The people of the Nath community believes that Kapil Muni appeared here in the form of Siddhinath. It is a monastery of the Kapilani sect of the Nath community. There is a huge photo of Kapil Muni in the temple. Worship is done in the monastery in front of him. Later, Siddhinath temple was established on the tomb of Yogi Siddhinath. Next to Siddhinath temple there are three more reservoirs including the holy Siddhikunda reservoir. People who come from far and wide to seek children take vows at the Siddhinath temple and bath in the Siddhikunda reservoir. The main Siddhinath temple is the Panchachura or Pancharatna temple. It is at least 600-700 years old. The south-facing Siddhinath temple was built of brick terracotta work in the 14th century. Repeated renovations have ruined the architecture of the old temple. To the left of the Siddhinath temple is the west-facing *aat-chala* style Shitalananda-Shiva temple. Next to it is the south-facing one-door Pancharatna Shikhar Deul of Bishwanath Shiva. The old Siddhinath monastery and temple of the Nath community is located 15-16 km north of Panskura railway station on the east bank of the Kansai river. On January 14, 1930, at the invitation of Gandhiji, many people took part in the anti-British movement in this monastery area by burning incense and clothes. Siddhinath temple is 22 feet in length and width and 27 feet in height. Shitalananda Shiva temple is 18 feet in length and width about 27 feet in height. **26**

To the left in front is the tomb of Yogi Mohantas in front of Siddhinath temple. Tombs of Mohanta Yogi Budhanath and Yogi Rabinath are built of concrete. On the south side of the cemetery is the earthen house of Yogi Sitaram Nath, the present sebaith of the monastery. He is a Aghor saint. The saints of Nath Panth can be divided into three classes; Aghora, Darshani and Mohanta Yogi. Yogi Sitaram Nath played Gopijantra or Ektara and sang Nirguni Nath bhajans or Yogi songs. The song is about Kayasadhana of Nath yoga, I was fascinated. To the right of the entrance to the monastery is a fortified temple about the same height as the Shitalananda shiva temple. The temple seems to have been erected at some later time. Local Amar Chandra Nath said that the temple was built during the time of Mahanta Rabinath. Charchala is a temple with a gem or a pinnacle. At that time there was Banalinga Shiva in the Durga temple but now it is not there. By the grace of the great monk of the monastery Rabinath, when the son of a Marwari man recovered, he built the Durga temple. There is a legend about the origin of Siddhinath Math, said Yogi Amar Chandra Nath. He said that a Brahmin couple was childless. One day a yogi came from his kamandalu with bibhuti (Dhuni's ash) in his hand and said that by eating it they would gain a son. Yogi will come and take that child after 12 years. The boy was no longer like the other five boys, but was engaged in the worship of God. Meanwhile, one day before the age of 12, on the day before Capricorn, he contracted a high fever. The boy died on the day of Capricorn. By then his parents had forgotten that Yogi had come and told him to take his son. The yogi came as

soon as the boy's body was taken to the cheetah. In fact, that Yogi was Yogi Goraksanath. Then Yogi Goraksanath spread Duni's ash or bibhuti from Kamandalu to the boy's cheetah and sprinkled water from the nearby Siddhakunda. The boy regained his life by the grace of Yogi Gorakhnath. The boy became Yogi Siddhinath with the initiation of Yogi Gorakhnath. Such legends are also prevalent among the local people. Mohant Yogi Vijayanath of Siddhakunda Math said that Kapilmuni was born in Siddhakunda by the grace of Yogi Gorakshanath . It is a monastery of the Kapilani sect of the Nath community. Festivals and pujas are organized here on the occasion of Makar Sankranti with Kapilmuni in front.

The special attraction of Siddhinath temple is Panchamundi temple. There are rumors that there are five corpse heads or mundis in this temple. Aghori monks used to sit in front of the corpse's head and perform corpse worship. After the death of the mohanta of the monastery, the new mohanta had to perform Sadhana in front of the corpse in the Panchamundi temple. If he succeeded in Tantra Sadhana he would be inaugurated as Mohanta of the monastery. There are idols of Bhairav Nath and Hanuman in the Panchamundi temple. Dr. Kalyani Mallick said: "Although Nathism is basically Shaiva and Nath Panth is a worshiper of Shiva and Adinath, Nath panth can be called a combination of Tantra and Yoga." **27**

The Siddhinath temple hosts fairs twice a year on the occasion of *Charak* and *Makar Sankranti*. The fair of *Charak* lasts for 1 day and the fair of *Makarsankranti* lasts for 15 days. Earlier the fair used to run for 1 month. Dhunighar is next to Panchamundi temple. Dhuni is always burning here like in other Nath Monasteries. Nath Yogis practice yoga sitting in front of the Dhuni. Earlier Tantra Sadhana was in vogue. Yogi Matsyendranath, in combination with Bamachar and Shakti Sadhana, introduced Yogini Kaul tradition in Nathpanth. On the other hand, Yogi Jalandharnath and Kanupatanath or Kanhapa were kapalik and bamachari siddhas. **28**

The list of Mohantas in Siddhinath Temple is as follows....

Budhnath

Rabinath

Mangalnath

Brihaspatinath

Shibnath

Vijoyath

List of the names of Yogi Budhnath's predecessors has not been found. The local peoples believe that the Siddhinath temple is very sacred and awake. Returning from Sagar Mela , Nath Yogi saints used to come here and stay for some days. The temple is 500-600 years old. This monastery of Nath community was built during the reign of the kings of Kashijora.

There was a lot of land under Siddhikunda Monastery . Now a lot of land has been evicted. The people of the local Nath community are the disciples of the monastery by cultivating the land of the monastery. The Nath Yogis came to Midnapur during the reign of Raja Tamradhwaj, the king of Tamluk. The people of the Nath community of Midnapur still carry on the tradition of the Nath Panth. The Nath Yogis of Midnapur say that the king Tamradhwaj brought them to alleviate the drought and donated their free land. **29**

Siddhashram: Bauria, Howrah

Siddhashrama, an ancient monastery of the Nath community, is located at Jute Mill No. 4, Jamtala, 3 miles from Bauria Station on the South Eastern Railway. Bhabanath Sarkar mentioned that although most of the land of the monastery was occupied by jute mills, about fifteen bighas of land still remained. **30** Inside the monastery

decorated with trees, there are earthen Kali idols, Durga idols and Shalgram. Besides, there are 12 stone idols of Shivaling, Narayan, Saraswati and Lakshmi. To the left of the monastery is the tomb of Yogi Nityananda Goswami. He attained Siddhi by practicing yoga near about 200 years ago. There is a memorial plaque written in the monastery ----

"Nityananda Goswami Mohanta Maharaj arrived at Jamtala in 1857 (Bengali 1265). Samadhi 11th Kartik 1320 (Eng. 1913)."

Mohanta of Siddhashram Math was a Vaishnava Nath Yogi Sannyasi. The Nath Panth is closely associated with the Pashupat, Kapalik, Kaul, Aghori and Lakulish sects. It is not that it has nothing to do with Vaishnavism. 'Gherand Samhita' in Nath Panth is an authentic book on Hatha Yoga. In this text it is seen that a person named Chanda Kapalik is learning Hatha Yoga. Gherand himself was a Vaishnava of Bengal.

31 Bengal has a tradition of practicing yoga of the Vaishnava Nathyogi community.

The feature of this Nath Monastery is that Hindus and Muslims come here to worship. People of the Muslim community recite kalama and pray for relief from the problem. Nath Panth is a non-sectarian and non-caste religion. As a result, many people of the Muslim community have taken discipleship from the Nath Siddhas. Today, Hindus and Muslims worship together at the Hinglaj temple in Pakistan. Hindus call Hinglaj Mata, Muslims call Nanimata. Yogi Ratannath made disciples of many people of Muslim religion. They used to call him Haji Ratannath. Yogi Gorakshanath mentioned Muslim Pirs in his book '*Gorakh Sabadi*'. Today many Mohantas of Nath monastery are called honourary '*Pir*'. Nath literature has a deep connection with Sufi literature. Nath Guru Yogi Matsyendranath has become '*Mashalandi*' or '*Mochra Pir*' in Sufi literature. The '*Monai-Tonai*' ballads collected from Rangpur in East Bengal show a combination of Nath Yoga and Sufi ideology.....

“Takan jaler oporete aachila Hari sayan kori.

Takan aachila pitibi sunna noirakar..etc **32**

Dr. Binoy Ghosh described the integration of Hindu-Muslim culture at the Bauria Siddhashram Nath Monastery-----

“The mantras that we have collected for the old Nath woman, I will mention a couple of them without mentioning them in full here. The mantra of teaching names :

Dohai baba na'lakh Pir

Aashi hazar Pir

Lakshya sadhu solasha muni

Tetrish koti debota

Dohai Allha, dohai Khoda

Aauliya aambiya gayesh kutu

Aabedare munirishi Yoginaga

Mohanta udwahu

Sannyasi Dandi Brahmachari

Jibari mekai.” **33**

It is quite understandable that in West Bengal there is a strange combination of Hindu Nath Yogis and Muslim Pirs. Perhaps due to social injustice and persecution, many of the Nath Yogis took refuge in Islam. They could not forget the behavior of the Nath Panth.

Shiva Temple of the Yogis, Kamarpukur; Hooghly

Shiva Temple of Yogis located near the ancestral home of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva at Kamarpukur in Hooghly District. Ramananda Yogi established the temple. At present the Shivaling is worshiped in the temple by the Ramakrishna Mission. Sri Ramakrishna's father Khudiram Chattapadhyay's neighbour and friend Madhu Yogi was very gentle and righteous. He loved the boy Ramkrishna i.e. Gadadhar very much. Madhu Yogi's father Ramananda Yogi realized the relapse of the family and went out of the pilgrimage. He came back and established a Shiva Mandir. Shiva's name is *Shantinath*. This temple is famous for the name of "Shiva temple of the Yogis". This ancient Shiva temple is near the shrine of Ramakrishna's birth place, Kamarpukur, Hooghly. Many knew about the strange visions and feelings of Ramkrishna's mother Chandramani Devi. One day, while standing in front of the temple, while talking to the rich kamarini (wife of Carpenter), she saw that a light came from the temple and entered her body. She got frustrated and later realized that she was pregnant, Sri Ramakrishna's birth. **34** Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was later influenced by Tantra and Yoga. He taught Tantra to Yogeshwari Bhairavi. Even in the Kamarpukur region there was not only the influence of Tantra, but also the influence of the Nath Yogi community. Pabitra Kumar Ghosh says-- "When I explore the religious heritage in the Kamarpukur region, I see that this region was not only famous for the practice of Tantra. There was also the influence of the Nathyogi community." **35**

Dharmaraj Temple : Baharu, South 24 Parganas

Baharu is an ancient settlement in South 24 Parganas. The ancient Dharmaraj temple of the Nath community is located here. This temple has a huge Dharmaraj idol of 5 feet 6 inches height and a Shivling near it. The priests of this Dharmaraja temple belongs to the Nath Yogi community. The Nath Yogi priests live next to the Dharmaraj temple. Dr. Panchanan Mandal thinks that the worship of Dharma Thakur was first introduced in the Mahanad. Mahanad is still a pilgrimage site of the Nath community. Dharmamangal poet Sitaram Das has worshiped Trilochan Shiva of Mahanad. **36** In the book 'Anil Purana' of Sahadeva Chakraborty, there is a description of the establishment of the Yogi kingdom in the Mahanad by Yogi Matsyendranath. **37** The poet Jadunath also said in his book 'Dharma Purana':

“ shuna e bhakata lok kadaacha naa habe shok

Kohishuna tar samachar

Mahanade aashihata uriyay haari jhanta

Dharmaghare boitarini par.” **38**

In other words, after completing the worship of Dharma Thakur, it is obligatory to walk around the Mahanad math. Dr Prabhas Ch. Bandyopadhyay said :

“ Dharmathakur was established in the temple premises of Jateshwar Nath in the Buddhist era. After the re-establishment of Brahmanism, he moved to Jalebari in Jalepara.” **39** The idol of Baharu Dharma Thakur is very much like Shiva. Again, there are many differences. Dharmathakur's clothes are saffron. Upabit and garland on the shoulder. Big eyes, thick moustache. Like an idol of fear. Dharmaraj's annual pujo is performed on the full moon day of Baisakh. Here Dharmaraj is worshiped in the mantra of Yam. Worship Mantra----

“ Om Yamaya Dharmarajaya namah.” **40**

Shiva is the deity of the Nath Yogis. That is why Shiva is in every religious temple. And there is Kamini Devi. She is worshiped as the symbol of the pot. She is the wife of Dharmaraj. Dr. Binoy Ghosh said :

“ There is no doubt that in West Bengal there was a mixture of Nath Yogis with Niranjana Dharma Thakur. There are Nathpandits in the service of Dharma Thakur. Also one more thing to remember in this context that the most authentic manuscripts of the Dharmapuja are found in the homes of the Nath Yogis of West Bengal. The question is about Panchananda. Where did Panchananda originate from and why? The one who is Shiva, even though he is Panchananda, has enough of the uniqueness of Panchananda. There is a famous Panchananda in the vicinity of the famous Shiva in Hoogly-Howrah district.” **41** The Shaivite community adopted the Dharma Sampradaya. Rarhanga and Lower Bengal were the heart of assimilation. Due to the combination of Dharma culture and Shaiva culture, Dharmaraj and Shiva are standing side by side in Baharu.

Jatar Deul: Raidighi, South 24 Parganas

In the south 24 parganas, like Buddhism and Jainism, the Nath religion probably had considerable influence. Barashi-Madhabpur was a stronghold of the Nath Yogis on the banks of the Adi-Ganga. Ambulinga or Badrikanath of Barashi, Dharmaraj or Panchananda of Baharu at one time indicative of Nathdharma in this region. **42** On the other hand, there is an old temple and ancient archeological monument of Nath community of “Jatar Deul” in Raidighi. According to the founding records, the construction of this Shikhar Deul made of bricks in the Sundarbans region took place in 975 AD. **43** The village is known for its Jatar Deul temple built during the Pala-Sen era. The temple is currently preserved by the Archaeological Authority of India. A notice board of the Archaeological Department near the Kankandighi ferry terminal, some distance from the temple, said, "This brick temple was built in the 11th century AD and is known as Jatar Deul by Jatadhari Shiva. One of the Pancharatha-based Shikhar temples is similar to other temple in northern India."

"The list of Ancient Monuments in the Presidency Division, Govt. of Bengal, 1896" contains some important information about the establishment of Jatar Deul :

“ In 1875 AD, the Deputy Collector of Diamond Harbor reported that Babu Durga Prasad Chowdhury discovered a copperplate inscription in Sanskrit on the establishment of the temple from a small mound just south of the temple during the acquisition of jungles in Jatar Deul and adjoining areas. In this article, the name of the founder is mentioned as Raja Joychandra and the date of establishment is 897 Shakabda i.e. 975 AD. No trace can be found after the copperplate inscription.”

The square deul or temple stands on a large mound. There is a one-door entrance on the east side of the deul. The height of the temple is 60 feet but the height has been reduced due to the collapse of the summit. There are 5 niches in the sanctum sanctorum of Jatar Deul. The fair is held here at Shivapujo in the month of Baishakh. It is known from an article written by Kalidas Dutta---

"At the time of excavation at a place near Deul in 1335 bengali era, i.e. 1928 AD, ancient stone coins carved with two stone carvings and some carvings of female figures and elephant statues with ascendants were found." **44**

Kankandighi, an important Buddhist archeological site in South 24 Parganas, is located 6-7 km west of Jatar Deul. In East Bengal it is also seen that the ancient monastery of the Nath community 'Yogir Ghopa' has been built next to the Sompur Buddhist monastery. Here too, the location of Jatar Deul next to Buddhist architecture is significant. It is historically true that during the decline of Buddhism in Bengal, many Buddhists took refuge in Nathpanth. Besides, there are many similarities and important issues in the pursuit of Nath Panth with the Buddhist Mahayandhara. Shri Salil Hore said:

“ Tantric Buddhist deities, Mahakal, Batuk Bhairav , Tara idols prove the existence of the Nath community at this time in this region. Although the Nath Yogis first performed Lingapujo, the Tantric ideology came after the reign of Devapala. Jatar Deul has symbolically shaped the Yonilinga, to this effect.” 45

The practice of *Shiva Shakti* sadhana has been mentioned in Nathpanth

Many monasteries and temples of the Nath community are scattered all over West Bengal. Although new temples of *Aaipanth* and *Kapilanipanth* have not been built, new monasteries of *Nateshwari* or *Aghori* Panth have been built in the present time. Therefore, it can be said that the Nath sect is flowing in West Bengal cantering on these temples. Besides, new opportunities have been created for research on Nath literature and culture centred on the Nath Monasteries and temples of the Nath community.

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