

The Impact of Nāth-sampradāya on Saint Literature

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The word 'nāth' comprises of two letters: the former means the most original form and the later means establishment. Therefore the word 'nāth' means a spiritual establishment in the state of original form of this universe.¹

According to the followers of 'nāth-sampradāya', Adināth, the incarnation of Lord Śiva, was the founder of nāth-sampradāya.² Matsyendrenāth, Gorakshnāth, Jalandharnāth, Kṛṣṇapāda, Gahanināth, Karnipānāth, Charpatanāth, Revānāth, Bhartrināth contributed a lot to the development of this sampradāya. Among these scholars, Matsyendrenāth was the originator of Kaul jñān (*vamamārga*), Jalandharnāth and Kṛṣṇapāda was the originator of Kāpālik view, and Gorakshnāth was a *hatha yogi* (a branch of yoga based mainly on *āsanas* and *prāṇayāma*). This sampradāya is known as *avadhūta-sampradāya*, *siddha-mata*, *siddha-marga*, *yoga-marga*, *yoga-sampradāya* and *avadhūta-mata*. The followers of this sampradāya believe that all other ways of spiritual practices are inadequate. They consider their way the best and capable to provide the divine bliss. It is earlier said that in nāth tradition the spiritual practices, (i.e. *prāṇāyām nādānusandhān*, *mudrā*, *kundalini jāgaran*), practiced by Gorakshnāth is known as *hatha-yoga*. It is purely based on internal purification.

In *Hatha yoga* it is considered that *Idā*, *pingalā* and *susumnā* are three parallel channels of energy situated in the spinal cord. At *mulādhār-chakra* there is a selfmade *linga* that is *swayambhū* in between *idā* and *pingalā*. When a *sādhak* of nāth yoga merges *prāṇa-vāyu* into *apān-vāyu* and starts flowing *prāṇ-vāyu* in *suSumnā-nāḍī*, he moves forward to attain the state of higher consciousness. In terms of *Hath-yoga*, this process is known as *kundalini-jagārān*. According to a follower of *hatha-yoga* at the basal part of the spinal cord there is the position of triangular, *agni-cakra*. It is the place of the self-made *linga* (*swayambhū-linga*). This *linga* is encircled by three and half serpentine of kundalini circles, which is inactive in three states of awakening, sleep and state of dreams in ordinary human life. There are another circles of energy, which is known a *mūlādhār-cakra* with four lotus petals. Just above the *mūlādhār*, in umbilical region there is a place of *swadhisthān-cakra* that resembles six petals lotus. Above this *cakra* there is *manipūr-cakra* and near the heart there is *anahat-cakra*. Both the *cakras* resemble the ten and twelve petals lotus respectively. In the region of neck, there is *viśuddhākhyā-*

cakra, which resembles the sixteen-petals lotus. There is the position of *ajna-cakra* between eyebrows, which has only two petals. The main aim of a *hath-yogi* is to pierce these six energy centers (*carkas*). When *kundalini* awakes it pierces six *cakras* from *mūladhār* to *sahasrār*. This upward movement involves sequential opening of the *cakras*.

It is discussed in the *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, that *yogi* relaxes after merging the soul into nonentity and nonentity into soul. The state of nonentity is the state of *samadhi*, when the soul remains into *sahasrār* after piercing the six energy centers from the *muladhara-chakra* up to the highest cerebral region. In the state of nonentity there is no feeling of bliss and sorrow in a *yogi*. It is just like presence of empty earthen pot into the space but the fact is that the *yogi* is always filled with eternal joy from inside and outside just like a full earthen pot into the sea.³ He always remains in the state of divine bliss (*kaivalyavasthā*).

Hath-yoga has seven parts 1- *shat-karma* 2- *āsana* 3- *Mudra* and 4- *pratyāhāra* 5- *prānāyāma* 6- *dhyāna* 7- *samādhi*

A *hath-yogi* keeps the body channels clean with the help of *shata-karmas*. He attains resistively with the *āsanas*. *Mudra* provides stability and *pratyāhāra* provides tolerance and endurance. He gains lightness with *prānāyāma* and attains state of realization by meditation (*dhyāna* and *samādhi*). *Shata-karmas* are *dhauti*, *vasti*, *neti*, *nauli*, *trātaka* and *kapāl bhāti*. The *āsana* is the process of putting the body in a special posture. Among the 84-lak positions, 32 postures the important are *shiddhāsana*, *padmāsana*, *bajrāsana*, *gaumukhāsana*, *gorakshāsana*, *mastyandrāsana*. According to *hath-yog Pradipika*, there are ten-*mudrās*, comprising of *mahā-mudrā*, *mahā-bandha*, *mahā-vedha*, *khecari*, *uddiyān-bandh*, *mula-bandh* *jalandhar-bandh*, *viparita-karni*, *bajroli* and *shakti-cālani*.

These *mudrās* helps to keep *vāyu* and psyche (man) in balance, to attain meditation and to get the state of ultimate consciousness. The practice of *prānāyāma* is helpful to expand the 'prāna'. *Hatha-yoga* is mainly based on *Prānāyāma*. When *kundalini* gets excited and moves upward, it generates the energy, which produces a divine sound (*nāda*). *Nāda* generates the light and it appears in the form of *mahābindu*. *Anahat-nāda* or *Anāhad-nāda* is present in whole universe. Usually one cannot listen to this *anāhad-nāda* by his external ears. By the practices of *hatha-yoga* a *sādhak* makes *kundalini* to awake after piercing *satcakra*, he hears *anahat-nāda* (divine sound). This sound changes during the different state of *sāadhanā*. It may be in the form of *megha-garjan*, *bheri*, *jharjhar mardal*, *shankh*, *ghanta*, *kinkini*, *ban Śi*, *bhramar* and *vina*.⁴

Besides the concept of *yoga* and practice of *yoga*, there are concepts of God, teacher, disciple etc. According to the followers of *nāth sampradāya*, god is beyond any name, form, time, space and limit. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and self-lightened.⁵

The saint poets attracted towards *Nāth yoga*. *Nāth yoga* gave ecclesiastical impact on the life style of *Kabir*, *Paltū dās*, *Sundar dās*, *Dulan dās*, *Dadū dayāl* and *Nānaka*. All these poets were the spiritual aspirants and they accepted the practice of spiritual enlightenment of *Hatha yoga*. *Gorakshnātha* has clearly discussed that spiritual knowledge cannot be achieved without the blessing of a real teacher:

x# dhtS xfgy# fuxjk u jfgy#A
 x# fcu X;lua u ik;yk js H#bzy#A⁶

(Every one should try to find a spiritual teacher. Without the help of him one cannot achieve the real knowledge.)

To him, the main difference between a spiritual teacher and a disciple is the difference of their stages. A person with less spiritual knowledge should get knowledge from the person of higher knowledge standard. Till their consciousness allows, they should live together otherwise they should wander alone. *Gorakshnath* says:

vf/kd r#k rs x# cky;# ghak r#r rs py#A
 efu ekuS rls l xs jels ufga r#S jels vdy#A⁷

Hindi saint poets are greatly inspired by Hath-yoga's spiritual practices. There is a great regard of their spiritual teacher, yogi. According to them a real *avdhūta*⁸ can only be a real spiritual teacher. All the saint poets like *Kabir*, *Dādūdayāl*, *Nānak*, *Sunderdās* and other have immense respect for a real teacher. I can quote here some of their verses:

dchjk ge x# j# fi;kj ckdh jgh u NkdA
 ikdk dyl d#kj dkj cg#j u p<#h pkd & dchj

(Just as the baken earth pot never comes to the potter's wheel again, in the same manner by the blessings of a divine teacher I have become desireless.)

l nx# dh efgek vur vur fd;k mixkjA
 y#pu vur m?#m#;#j vur n#ko.lg#j & dchj

(The blessings of the spiritual teacher are infinite. He has opened my inner eyes and made me to realize the God.)

ckck xje#k Kluk j# xje#k /;kuk jA
 xje#k nrk xje#k jrkj xje#k xouk jA

x xx x xx xx xx xx
 x#e{k jk;k x#e{k ik; k x#e{k eyk jA
 x#e{k rta x#e{k l t} nknw [kyk js &nknw n; ky

(I have totally surrendered to the sayings of the divine teacher and enjoyed the blessings of him.)

dk;k elgā ykd l c] nknw fn; s fn[Mbz
 eul k olpk dežk] x# fcu y[kk u tkbz & nknw; ky

(The spiritual teacher has shown the God with everyone inside the body. Without the blessings a real guru no body can realize it.)

lrx# dh vlh cMbz i# dy= fcps xfr ikbz & ukud

(The greatness of a spiritual teacher is that I have realized the God with in the trap of the family surroundings.)

x# fcu Klu ufgā x# fcu /;ku ufgā
 x# fcu vlre fopkj u ygrq gā
 x# fcu i# ufgā x# fcu ue ufgā
 x# fcu lhtgq lrlō u xgrq gā** & l#jnkl

(No body can achieve knowledge, attention, realization of soul, love, satisfaction and discipline without the blessings of the spiritual teacher.)

All these saint poets have shown the necessity of a spiritual teacher. All knowledge without spiritual knowledge is meaningless. No one can get the real spiritual knowledge without the blessing of a teacher. In the view of Kabir, the importance of a real guru is above even the supreme power of the universe. According to Garib Dāsa the real teacher is a living God⁹ but the teacher should be enlightened by the higher spiritual knowledge and higher state of consciousness. A teacher without higher spiritual knowledge spoils the life of his disciple. Kabir holds in this regard:

tldk x# Hh v#y# psyk [kj k fujvA
 vāks vākk Bfy; k n#; wdiū iM#A

The poetry of the saint poets is also impregnated with the concepts of yoga. There is a discussion of *āsana*, *prā^aāyāma*, *a-tacakra-bhedana*, *kundalini-udbodhana*, *samadhi*, *nādānusandhāna* and *bindu-darśana* at many places. Kabir has discussed six *cakras* at many places in his poems. At one place, he says at human body is an earthen pot (*gāgari*) in which one can collect

the divine water secreted from the *sahasrāra-cakra*. *Trive^{ṛi}* or *tirtharāja* is mentioned for the conjugation of *idā*, *pingalā* and *susumanā*. He says:

myVs iou pØØV- cšKj l fū l jfr ya ykxh¹⁰

(By the awakening of the *kundalini cakra* the *sādhaka* attains the state of zeroness for realization.)

ØVeloj cšKj tkj mtjkj dHjgA¹¹

(After piercing *satcakra* one can realize the real knowledge.)

myfV iou ØVpØ fuokl h rhjFkjkt xarVokl h¹²

(*Sādhaka* of *nātha* yoga merges *prān vāyu* into *apān vāyu* and starts flowing *prāna vāyu* in *susumna nadi*. He moves forward to attain the state of higher consciousness. The poet has described that state as *tirtharāja*’.)

ØVpØ dh xlxjh f=osh l ze ?KVA¹³

(The human body is just like a earthen pot(*gāgari*) which has six *cakras* and the triangular meeting place of *idā*, *pingalā* and *suSumnā*.)

Dādūdayāl referres the *idā*, *pingalā nādi* as *Gangā-yamunā*:

**lgt tkx l k ea jgš nkw fuxqjh tkuj
xzk mVWh Qsj dfj teqk ekfg vkuA¹⁴**

He fully supports *hatha-yoga* and reposes faith in the presence of *idā*, *pingalā* and *sushumnā* in every human body. He unfolds the benefit of the *kundalini udbodhana* in the human body in the following way:

**?KV&?KV xksh ?KV&?KV dKlgj
?KV&?KV jke vej LFkuA
xzk&teqk vlrjonj
l jlfj uhj cg\$ ij l hA¹⁵**

(Every body has the source of energy and the pleasure of great God. In every human body there is the presence of *idā*, (*Gangā*), *pingalā* (*Yamunā*) and *susumnā* (*surasari*). The triangular unity of *idā*, *pingalā* and *su-humnā* give the eternal pleasure of *samādhi* to man.)

Sant Raidas has similar views about *kundalini*:

**myVh xz teq ea ykoA
fcu gh ty eTtu }S ikoA¹⁶**

(Here he indicates about *kundalini udbhodana* where *prāna* flows into *suSumanā* after blocking *idā* (*Gangā*) and *pinglā* (*Jamunā*) *nādi*.)

Advocating for *hatha-yoga*, Kabir says that with the help of *unman mudrā* one can purify his mind and can get command on *prāna-vāyu*. He adds that it relieves from the vicious cycle of death and rebirth. He stresses the attaining the actual knowledge of *hata-yoga* than the outer dress code or rituals of this tradition:

I s tkch tkdS eu eā epk] jkr fnoI uk djbZ funkA
 eu ea vkl.k eu ea jg.k] eu dk ti ri eu lWdg.kkA
 eu ea [kijk eu ea lkhA vugn ca ctkoS jxhA
 ipetk]j Hkl e dfj HkklA dgS dchj IIS ygIS ydA¹⁷

Describing *shata-cakra* many saints mentioned *Sahastrār-cakra* as *gagan*,¹⁸ *gagan-mandal*,¹⁹ *gagan-mahal*,²⁰ *śunya*, *bhanwar*,²¹ *guphā* etc.

Kabir takes of all these yogic definitions and practices in a straightforward manner:

>huh>huh chuh pnfj;kA bMk&fixyk rkuk Hkjuh
 I ņku rkj I s chuh js pnfj;kA²²

In *Hatha-yoga Pradipika*, the state of *manonmani mudrā* is appreciated²³ It is discussed in *Śiva-samhitā* that the center of energy named *yonī*, which is triangular in shape and situated in the root of *sahastrār-padam* of *Brahma-randhra*, secretes nectar continuously.²⁴ In *khechari-mudrā*, yogi averts the tongue towards backward and upward direction to sip the secreting nectar. In the following verse Kabir explains the same subject in a nutshell:

vo/lwejk eu er okjA
 mDefu p<εk xxu jI ihoA f=Hkpu Hk;k nft;kjA
 xMdfj X;ku /;ku dfj egok ihoS ihou gjkA²⁵

(When the sadhaka reaches the highest point of realization (unmani mudra) he attains real wisdom and sips the divine nectar.)

These saint poets were very much aware of *bandhas* also. Kabir has elaborated the importance of *mūla-bandha* in following manner:

ey cWk Ij xxu Iekuk I ņku ;k ru ykxhA²⁶

(He reaches the highest stage of knowledge and totally forgets the word after staying in the state of *mulabandha*.)

In nutshell we can say that in the most of the poems of the *sant-kavya* one can find a great influence of *nātha sampradāya* the various practices of *nātha* yogis like *kundalini-udbodhana*, *nādānusandhāna* and *bindu-darśana* is depicted in their writings. Kabir and other saint poets have simplified it for the common people.

References

- 1 Nakāroānadi rupam thakarah: sthāpyate Sadā.
bhuvantraya mevaikah: shri Goraksha namastute. ---- Rajaguhya,
quoted in Natha Sampradaya, Hazariprasad Dwivedi. Allahabad,
Hindustani academy, 3
- 2 Ādināthah: sarveṅām prathamah:, tato nāthasampradāyah:
pravritta iti nāthasampradāyino vadanti.’
Brahmānanda, Hathayoga Pradipikā’s tikā, (Allahabad Pa^aini office,
1915)
- 3 Antah śūnyo bahih śūnyah, śūnya Kumbha ivāmbare.
Antah pūr^o bahih pūr^o, pūr^aah kumbha ivār^aave.
Hathyoga Pradipikā, 5/55
- 4 Adaū jaladhi jimūta bheri jhajhar sambhavah,
Madhye mardal śankhotthah gha^atākāhala jāstatha,.
antetu kinki^ai vanśi vi^aā bramar nisvanah,
Iti nānā vidhāh śabdāh shrūyante dehmadyagāh.
Makaranda pīban bhringo gandha nopekhsate yathā,
Nādāsaktam tathā citta viṅayannakankshati.
Quoted *Avadhūta Gitā* in *Goraksha Siddhānta Sangraha*,
Mahāmahopādhyāya Gopinātha kavirāja, Saraswati Bhavan, 1925, 18)
- 5 Na Brahmā Rudrau na surapatisuram naiva prithvi na cāpo,
Naivagni nāpi vāyurna gagan talam no diśo naiva kālah,
No vedā naiva yajñā na ravi śaśinau no diśo naiva kālah,
Svayam jyotih satyamekam jayati tava padam saccidānandmūrte.
Siddha siddhānta Paddhati, 70.
- 6 *Gorakhavā^ai*, Editor Pitambar Dutt Barthwāl, Prayāga, Hindi sāhitya
sammelan, 1999, 34.
- 7 *Gorakhvā^ai*, 55.
- 8 vacane vacane vedāstirthāni ca pade-pade,
driṅtau-driṅtau ca kaivalyam soavadhūtah shreyastunah.
Eka haste dhritastyāge yogaścaika kare swayam.

Alipatastyāga yogābhyām soavadhūtah shreyastunah.

(In his words, there is the essence of Vedas. With his blessings one can get higher state of consciousness. Such teacher gets the highest place in the world.) Quoted in *Avadhūta Gitā, Goraksha Siddhānta Sangrah*, 1.

- 9 Aisā Satguru ham milā, hai jindā jagadīśa.
Sunna bidesi mila gayā, chatra mukuta hai sisa,
Garibdās ki Bāni, (Allahabad Velvediyar Printing works)
- 10 *Kabir Granthāvali*, Śyāma Sundar Dās, (Prayaga: Kāśi Nāgari pracarani Sābhā, 1928)71
- 11 *Kabir Granthāvali*, 111
- 12 *Kabir Granthāvali*, 210
- 13 *Kabir Granthāvali*, 74
- 14 *Dādūvāni*, Pt. Candi Prasāda Tripāthi, Lai ko Anga, 33
- 15 *Dādūvāni*, 407/1
- 16 Raidās ki bāni, 56
- 17 *Kabir Granthāvali*, page 205
- 18 Gagan Madhya ko kanwal hai, bajatā anahad tūr.
Das Hajār ko kanwal hai, Pahunca guru mata sūr.
Carana Dās ki Bāni, Part I, Allahabad Velvediyar Printing works, 36
- 19 Sabda anāhat hota jahān hai, Tahān brahma kā bāsā.
Gagan mandal main karat kalolen Param joti pargāsā.
Malūka dās ji ki Bani, Allahabad Velvediyar Printing works: 17.
20. Gagan mahal ke bica Ami jhar lagini., Palatū sahib ki bāni, part II,
Allahabad: Velvediyar Printing works, 26.
21. *Kabir Granthāvali*, 69/4.
22. *Kabir Granthāvali*, 104
23. ekam sristimayam bijam, ekā mudrā ca khecāri.
Eko devo nirālambah, ekāvasthā manonmani.
Hathayoga (Pradipikā, Allahabad Panini office 1915) 3-53
- 24 Brahmarandhre hi yatpadmam sahasrāram vyavasthitam.
Tatra kande hi yā yahih tasyāh candro vyavasthitam
Trikonā kritisyah sudhā ksharanti santatam
Śiva Samhitā, (Allahabad Panini office, 1914) 5-103,
- 25 *Kabir Granthāvali*, 72
- 26 *Kabir Granthāvali*, 69/4