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'Pashupata' to 'Shiva': The Journey of a 'Nature God' to a 'Supreme Vedic Deity'

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Abstract
As per the Puranas, the transformation of Pashupata to Vedic Rudra and finally to Shiva was a slow process of shifting culture closely interacting with each other. On critical analysis it is observed that it happened due to the multiplicity of belief systems attached to Shiva by all the ideologically same but different distinct sects who worshipped him. It is to be noted that the different sects took the same Pashupata in remarkably different ways thereby assigning different ideological identities to Pashupata and Rudra, and even then there is only one Shiva.

Keywords: Pashupata, Rudra, Vedic, Shiva

Introduction
Objective
In this research, I worked on two basic points

First, working on the fact that the term 'Pashupata' has few common features in all 'Shaivite' cults but at the same time has few features which are different between them. In the later decades these different features got entangled with each other and all branches of 'Pashupata' and 'Rudra' were taken to be same.

Second, It is an amalgamation of the different cults of Shiva which needs extensive research to bring forward more knowledge to identify the differences between Rudra, Pashupata and the transformed Shiva.

Research Approach
Quanlitative approach by the help of references of the available manuscripts and sources. The secondary sources has certainly been gone through. The Amity university library was accessed to have the actual understanding of the research topic.

The abode of transformation
One of the exceptionally popular belief systems in the Indian religious society is no doubt **S**haivism. Religious scholars have always adopted the externalist approach for Hinduism and its traditions. Any such approach for 'Pashupata' would certainly be unjustified because its very essence is based upon dualities. By this research, I have tried to explain these dualities. Side by side, I will try to elucidate the evolution of Rudra (Later Shiva) as a deity and 'Pashupata' as a cult.Information on Rudra can be known from various sources starting with the Vedas. Lord Shiva with name 'Rudra'as a major God got his place in religious scriptures right from the sacred Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. One complete 'Shiva Purana' is dedicated to him and gradually became the primary subject of the Tantras. It's known that Patanjali's 'Mahabhasya' is a basic work on 'Shaivism' due to its references to Shiva and Pashupata. The later Puranas and the manuscripts of Tantras give much information about the several Shaiva Sects and as well as different forms of worship. The Puranas mention to the period in which Lord Shiva had developed into a major deity. 'Pashupata Sutra', 'Svacchanda Bhairava', 'Netra Tantric' and 'Bhairava' Tantras are religious texts which provide a deep foundation for this research. The research is in two parts- 'The Deity' and 'The Cults'. I have tried to highlight the gradual evolution of both of them over the centuries after finally revealing the actual magnitude of present dualities.

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Among many theories to explain 'Shaivism', one is the 'Proto-Shiva' theory. Basically this theory is laid on the foundation of the male figure found on the seal excavated from the Harappan civilization. This figure depicts a male figure in seated position with horned crown and animals surrounding him. Sir John Marshall states that the steatite seals approve of some primitive deity based to the Hindu God Shiva. He claimed that the seal figure is a reflection of Shiva only as a yogi and named as 'Pasupati', the Lord of animals. It is suggested that the seal figure is in fact the seated bull with human face which is identical to the figure of bulls engraved on the early steatite seals around 3000–2750 BC. This is the first mention of 'Pashupata' anywhere with distinct physical proof. Based on this the origin of Lord Shiva can be traced to the Vedic age with name 'Rudra' which is in fact the 'Pashupata' of Harappan times. It can be assumed that they both refer to the same deity Lord Shiva.

As mentioned in the religious Vedas, 'Rudra' is depicted as the lord who showers thunder and storm which spreads from the heaven to the earth. It is also said that he is the lord who slays animals and human beings. (Bhandarkar,145-146). Lord Rudra in the form of Lord Pashupata (Harappan age) is worshipped to not to effect children with deadly diseases and also to keep everyone in the village rid from illness. Lord Pashupata was the Lord of 'Pashu'-Animals. The Harappan people used to pray the Lord Pashupata to hold the thunder and lightning till their domestic animals (Pashu) reach their home. The same Lord Pashupata went through a phase of evolution and changed to Lord Rudra in the Vedic age. He was believed to curse with diseases but "also at the same time, cure them as his prowess in medicine is unmatched." (Rig Veda-Book 1, Hy. 43, Szt. 4). Lord Rudra showers lightning along with thunder and is taken to be the head 'Maruts', The group of warriors. This is clearly mentioned in the stanza from the Rig Veda:

"Who are these radiant men in serried rank, Rudra's young heroes (Maruts) borne by noble steeds?"

(Rig Veda – Book 7, Hymn 57, Stanza 1)

The transformation of the Lord Pashupata of the Harappan age to Lord Rudra in the Vedic age and finally to Lord Shiva in the Pauranic age. To begin with the Lord of Pashu to the deadly Rudra, the first observed transition can be drawn a definitive link between Lord Rudra and Lord Pashupata. This is called the 'duality' in the evolution where the transformation was not a complete transformation but the transformed 'Pashupata' moved along as a distinct identity along with the new 'Rudra'. In the vedic age the same God is found in dual form. Gradually 'Rudra- Pashupata' acquires the untouched status of the Supreme destroyer and now transforms into a new 'Shiva' during the age of Puranas. The first Shaivite cults can be observed in this period only. It can be said that at this point the duality in his nature can be noticed. 'Pashupata', 'Rudra' and 'Shiva' has much in common then also there are many elements which are uncommon. The scholars agree that all three are of same origin yet they have different qualities so much so that different cults came up. All spiritually worship the same God but practically different. Lord Shiva is taken as an epithet of Lord Rudra in

the ancient religious texts and it is actually Lord Pashupata who comes up as unique and distinct entity. Finally the renewed conception of Lord Shiva into 'Maha Sadashiva' and 'Netranath' shows the teleological progression which transits from crude simplicity to sophisticated complexity.

Rise of Rudra-Pashupata as a major deity
The rise of Rudra-Pashupata as a major deity of Hinduism from the Vedic age to the later Puranic Period can be observed on two basic grounds. First is Shaivism itself as a system of worship and second, a closely knitted Shaivite cults and different schools of thought. The prominence of Lord Shiva till date may be the result of these 'closely knitted' Shaivite cults. While focusing on the journey of Pashupata to Rudra and finally to Lord Shiva it can be seen that in fact it is a journey of a 'Nature God' to a Vedic deity and finally to the Supreme God of Pauranic texts as one of the Gods of 'Trideva- Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh'.

It can be observed that the Vedic Rudra is ferocious in nature and was supposed to be worshipped to be safe. Thus it is clear that the worship is out of fear rather than for reverence or faith. To quote- "the purpose of worshipping him was to hopefully convince him to transform into Pashupata, the auspicious" (Gupte,36). The reference to Vedic Rudra as the restorer of peace and prosperity and the deity who liberates (see Book7, Hymn59, stanza12 - Rigveda) clearly suggests the worship of Lord Rudra during the Vedic age. It is also to be noted that any of them i.e 'Pashupata'or 'Rudra' in any way did not impose his dominance over the other Gods of Rigvedic age. Rather the Vedas approve the dominance of Gods like Indra, Vayu and Agni over Rudra. So it can be said that any system of a theistic based approach around Rudra was non-existent. As per my research, this basic trend continued throughout the age of the Smritis and even the Dharmasutras. Few scholars have explained the introduction of Lord Shiva in the mainstream Hinduism through Rudra who was assumed by the scholars as a non-Aryan God. Rudra married 'Sati', the daughter of the Aryan King of earth named Daksha (Gupte, 36). After the destruction of Daksha's Yajna due to the suicide of Sati, he was taken as the Lord of destruction. The first distinct indication of Shaiva tradition, based on Rudra-Pashupata, is given in the one of the oldest upnishads, Svetsvetara Upanishad. In this Upanishad, Rudra is described as the Supreme eternal being. This eternal being is the actual foundation of the cosmos and universe and side by side transcends it.

To quote - "He protects and controls the worlds by His own powers; He – Rudra – is indeed one only. There is no one beside Him who can make Him the second. O men, He is present inside the hearts of all beings. After projecting and maintaining all the worlds, He finally withdraws them into Himself."

(Chapter 3, Verse 2 - Svetasvetara Upanishad)

The Atharvasiras Upanishad is devoted to the Rudra's image of being supreme and ascribes few titles to him like omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient (Sarvavyapak, Sarvagyani and Sarvabhaumik) further strengthening his position in the 'Trideva' tradition (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh).

Transformation of Cults
Various Cults sprang up during this period and are different

and distinct from the Pauranic groups in several ways. Pashupata Cult, Kalamukha Cult, Kapalika Cult, Veer Shaiva Cult, Kashmiri Shaiva Cult and Lingayat Cult came up with each similar to each other and yet different in the way of worship. These are the six branches of Shaivism closely knitted to each other. There seems to develop clear distinctions and differences made in the process of this transition from 'Nature God' worship to 'Pauranic' forms of 'Supreme God' worship. Both have their own sets of conceptual, traditional and ritual observance.

To quote - 'The latter had to undergo an initiation (diksa) into the cults of their affiliation for two main purposes: liberation in this life (mukti) and/or obtaining magical powers to experience pleasure in higher worlds (bhukti)" (Flood, "Blackwell Companion", 206).

It is to be noted that further classification happened, now into two categories: basically the 'Higher path or the Atimarga' and the 'Mantramarga or Path of mantras'. A basic and distinct difference is found between the two. The followers of the 'Atimarga' focus and seek for 'liberation', while the followers of 'Matramarga' seek 'Bhakti' along with 'liberation'. It is found that the Pashupatas, the Kalamukhas, the Kapalika are sects that follow 'Atimarga'.

Transformation of Icons

As the different cults of Shaivism started to form a distinct identity of their own, they started to develop different Icons to worship. Each one of these cults has tangible religious sculptural representations. Each has a mythological history tracing back to the origin of human race and each has separate iconographic features. These include distinct seating position (Asana), finger and hand position (Mudra). Minute details of number of limbs, size of eyes, length of hair, supportive weapons and other heavenly objects in hands and even separate vehicles is allotted. It is specifically for the sake of uniqueness that the various forms of Icons have been further divided into 'sub forms'. These 'sub-forms' have classically been titled as such that they depict at least one aspect of lord Shiva. Lord Shiva's identity with an intrinsic characteristic can be critically traced back to several other representations of 'Pashupata' and 'Rudra'. It can be said that the 'Primary forms' are separate isolated representations in different ages of different aspects of Lord Shiva's character and so cannot be centralized to a mere general form. The sub forms depict and represent to the numerically various forms of cult worship.

Several elements of Lord Shiva's character derived from the 'Pashupata' and 'Rudra' requires careful assimilation with the sub-forms. Let's take one example. All the destroyer (Sanghara) forms of all the cults enlisted represent several forms of an angered Shiva. Be it 'Tandava' form or 'Natraj' or 'Trinetra', none of them separately describe the destructive and furious potential in his basic character. To enable so, an amalgamation of all of them is important. Due to this amalgamation, they are considered as 'sub-forms'. 'Ardha-Narishvara' is a unique form which depicts an important characteristic of Lord Shiva and so cannot be further generalized into a single category.

So it can be observed that a complete series of Icons taken from several cults of Shaivism is required to represent and side by side comprehend the identity of Lord Shiva in a lucid and organized way.

Pashupata Cult

The traditions of the oldest cult of Shaivism, 'Pashupata Cult' is known from the 'Pashupata Sutra'. The sacred text is taken as the 'Book of revelation' amoung the Pashupatas. The religion based myth says that Lord Shiva entered the dead body of a young boy, Brahmin by caste, which had been left in the grave yard. The dead body became alive and revived and transformed into as 'Lakulisa', the Lord of the 'Lakul' or short stick'. He then spread out his knowledge of philosophy of life and death to four of his disciples. This knowledge is the content of 'Pashupata Sutra'. Lord Lakulisa is said to be a gifted human in Pauranic literature. Noted historian, D.R Bhandarkar puts forward the date in the second century (Banerjee, 450). The mentioned date can be considered as the period of the beginning of the Shaivite cults (Pashupata is the oldest). Now this could be contemporary with the reference given as 'Shiva-Bhagvata' in the 'Mahabhyasa' of Patanjali. Thus, it can be inferred with systematic and further research that probably 'Lakulisa' cannot be claimed as the founder of this cult but perhaps the chief propagator. Although the very fact that Lakulisa is claimed to be the 28th birth of incarnation of Lord Shiva in the sacred Puranas, itself leaves no doubt on the importance and the popularity of Pashupata cult in early practiced Shaivism.

As per the instructions for a follower of Pashupata cult in Pashupata Sutra, he must be an ascetic. Although, this wasn't extended to the traditional practices of restricting asceticism to Brahmins. A Pashupata follower may not follow it in extreme phase leaving his household but instead can continue with his household as an ascetic.

To quote- 'However, an area where this non-conformity did extend, was in the modification of the varnasrama dharma stages of life to involve a transcendent fifth stage (siddha), in which the Pasupata reaches union with Shiva' (Flood, 'Blackwell Companion', 207).

Lakulisha followed the extreme form of Pashupati practice of penace.

To quote – 'The Lakula ascetic imitated the terrible form of his Lord Pashupata, carrying a cranium begging bowl, a skull-topped staff, a garland of human bones, ash covered, with matted hair or shaved head' (Flood, 'Blackwell Companion', 207).

Conclusion

Many scholars do believe that the Non-Pauranic sects in the way of practicing the sub-divisions display a general typed tendency of drifting far away from orthodox Brahmanical tradition. It happened in the matter of the oldest claimed cult, Pashupata, and redefining it as did by Lingayats and Kalamukhas. Later on the Kalamukhas got popularity as they got acceptance by few states which suggests the wider recognition of the Non-pauranic cults. It can be said in addition that the spectrum of theological and ritualistic norms of these cults promote various yet same understandings of the basic essence of Lord Shiva and Shaivism. Thus it suggests of a complex social and cultural tradition that had surfaced within Shaivism.

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