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LOST ASPECTS OF SHAKTIPEETH TEMPLES

The marriage of Lord Shiva and Devi Sati is one of the most important events marked in the Shaiv and Shaakta sects of present-day Hinduism. The history of their marriage is well known. Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma both had their respective consorts in Devi Lakshmi and Devi Saraswati; and it was the solitude of Mahadev who remained as an ascetic that was responsible for great imbalance in the cosmic creation. The necessity of the companionship of Shakti with Shiva was felt by all Gods in order to regain balance in the creation of good over evil. The demon Tarakasura had obtained the boon from Lord Brahma that he could only be killed by the son of Shiva. So, the marriage of Shiva with Shakti was of prime importance for the destruction of evil forces.

Lord Shiva is pure and eternal. He remains forever in a pure form, undeterred and unaffected by the changes in the cosmic creation. Mahadev remains unbound by time and heavenly spaces; whether physical, subtle or mental. He remains beyond the changes in creation in physical as well as the mental realms. Lord Shiva cannot be accessed by mental speculations. It is only by His grace that a soul can access His transcendental personality and absolve oneself of the core material existence.

It is under this basis of reality that it is accepted as a fact that Mahadev appears in the form of a Shivlinga, which is representative of His form of 'Astambha' and 'Anaadi'. This Linga exists as a pillar of light in the physical, mental and spiritual realms of creation as well as annihilation infinitely. There exists no limit of beginning nor end to this pillar of light. Consequently, Mahadev exists as 'Jyotirlingas', which are representative of this infinite 'Pillar of Light' in timely and spacial dimensions simultaneously.

Reinstating the story of Lord Shiva and Devi Sati; the manifestation of the reality began as Prajapati Daksh who was the Manas-Putra of Lord Brahma and his wife Queen Prasuti ardently desired that Devi Adishakti be born to them as their daughter. After a long penance, Devi provided them with their desired boon with the condition that She would be born for Mahadev and should She be insulted in Her parental home, She shall disown them and reacquire Her divine form. So, Devi was born to them as a beautiful daughter, and named Sati, the 'Pure One'. Sati grew up meditating on Mahadev and always cherished the desire of wedding Mahadev. On an occasion She met Lord Shiva for the first time in the city of Kashi where She had gone along with Her father.

Daksh always despised Lord Shiva, His dressing up in tiger skin and applying the ash of the funeral pyre; being a stark contrast from the Vaishnav rituals that Daksh was used to following. He started disliking the idea of his beautiful daughter marrying an ascetic who was always surrounded by ghosts and ghouls and roamed alone in the Himalayas spending all His time meditating.

However, Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu asked Mahadev to marry Sati, who was the incarnation of Devi Adishakti, and so Daksh could do little to object. Sati went to Kailash with Mahadev, and was profoundly happy in Her new home and surroundings, extremely different from Her parental palace.

Soon, Daksh organized a Yajna in which all celestials except Shiva and Sati were invited. Sati asked Mahadev to accompany Her but the Lord refused stating that it would be inappropriate to go uninvited. However, in order to create a rift between Shiva and Sati, Tarakasura came disguised as Muni Narad and tried to convince Sati to go to Her father's home.

Sati went alone to Her father's home, but to Her surprise, She was not welcomed. Daksh did not talk to Her, and Mahadev was insulted. No offerings in the Yajna were made for Shiva, which angered Sati no limit. Sati burnt Herself in the sacrificial fire, while all Gods helplessly looked on. As news reached Kailash, Mahadev plucked His hair and thrashed it on the ground. From it arose Veerbhadra,

with fiery eyes and terrible weapons. Mahadev ordered Veerbhadra to destroy Daksh's Yajna and cut off Daksha's head. Veerbhadra finished all that came in his way, and carried out the order, finally cutting off Daksh's head and throwing it in the sacrificial fire.

Mahadev appeared on the scene. As a deep sorrow engulfed Mahadev, He picked up Sati's burnt body and started traversing the creation. Such was His grief and rage that as He danced the Rudra Tandav the entire creation reverberated and this went on for a long time. The demigods (Devata) became worried and prayed to Lord Vishnu to do something in the matter or else the creation would come to an end. Lord Vishnu said that till the body of Sati remains with Mahadev, He could not be pacified. So, Lord Vishnu cut the body of Sati into 52 pieces that scattered on Bharatvarsha in Bhooloka due to the ravaging movements of Mahadev.

Tarakasura was extremely happy that since the consort of Shiva was no more in Her body, and thus Shiva shall have no son, making him eternal. So, he attempted to steal the body parts of Sati as they lay scattered on the Earth. In case he managed to steal even one body part, the re-incarnation of the Goddess shall not be possible. Therefore, in order to protect the body parts of Devi Sati, being the seats of eternal and impermeable power, Mahadev appointed a Kshetrapal Bhairav at each of the sites.

Thence were established the Shaktipeeth temples, with the Devi Pindi as the body part in the rock form, along with the Kshetrapal Bhairav placed close to the main deity. Mahadev had resolved to never part with Sati. And so, He established Himself at each of the Shaktipeeth temples.

This event is said to have taken place just once. It is said that in each Kalpa, the same set of events repeat themselves. However, this was a unique event, and so it remains unknown as to how many Kalpas have passed since this event, and as each Kalpa is said to consist of millions of earthly years,

the Shaktipeeth temples have been worshiped for Lakhs or Crores of years as per the Vedic scriptures.

As Kaliyug approached, Bharatvarsha, presently known as Indian subcontinent, was attacked by the Mlecchas, for whom the sanctity of Sanatan Dharma, often referred to as Hindu Dharma, was of no value. The temples were broken, plundered, looted and as such, most unfortunately, the very history of some of these temples has been lost.

The very concept of the existence of Mahadev in the Sati temples has been lost and forgotten in the past 1000 years of foreign plunder and rule. Some of the temples were rediscovered by the devotees. The Kalighat temple was discovered when a devotee saw light emanating from a spot and they discovered the Devi Pindi along with Nakuleshwar Mahadev Shivlinga close by. The Attahas Shakti Peeth when a devotee heard the sounds of loud laughter of a woman in a dense forest in Bengal.

The Jogulamba Temple of Andhra Pradesh was also plundered, but the devotees put up a brave fight, and managed to reinstall the Goddess Deity in a new place. Another instance is of when Devi is said to have symbolically transferred to Shringeri from the original temple of Pandua in West Bengal. At present, the original Shaktipeeth site at Pandua only houses a Muslim Minar and remains under the Archeological Survey of India, while no worship is performed to either the Goddess or to Shiva here.

The 'Swayambhu' Shivlingas are self-manifested and are said to have been inducted by Mahadev Himself at a particular spot where He desired to manifest Himself. They are said to extend infinitely till Patala or towards core of the Earth.. It is hence said that the discovery of any Swayambhu Shivlinga never occurs by chance. It is only by the grace of the Lord Himself that a devotee receives an inspiration to look for it in a particular direction or spot. They carry an infinite power, in both

celestial realms and as electro-magnetic radiations emanating towards the atmosphere and towards the Earth simultaneously in the earthly realm.

The ancient scriptures foretell the names and places where these temples exist. But there remains great ambiguity regarding the real Sati temples and their exact locations.

At present, only a limited few temples out of the 52 Sati Shaktipeeths exist where Shiva is worshipped in the form of a Shivlinga along with the Devi Pindi. Out of them are the Baidyanath Dham in Deoghar, Mallikarjuna Swamy temple in Andhra Pradesh, Kalighat Temple in West Bengal, Chandranath Temple in Bangladesh and the Kalkaji Temple in Delhi . However, the Kalkaji temple is not listed in the main 52 temples, as there remains ambiguity in the name 'Kalka', 'Kalika', and 'Jayanti' Peeths and the exact locations. About six Shaktipeeth ancient temples exist which are known by the name 'Jayanti' located in various locations across the Indian subcontinent, three temples where Devi is known by the name 'Kalika', and several ambiguities exist as to which of these temples is the real Goddess Sati Shaktipeeth. A detailed description is provided in the book 'The Forgotten Shivlinga of the Sati Shaktipeeths' which give the locations of the various temples known by the same name. A reason for this is that due to the Muslim invasion and the destruction of the ancient temples, with time not only has the structure, prosperity, culture of these temples been destroyed, but to add to the multitude of complexity the British developed a system that despised all things related to the ancient Hindu culture. The greatness, depth and vastness of ancient Hindu knowledge that transgresses all arenas from science, medicine, surgery, architecture, mathematics, astrology, astronomy was undermined and a subordination to the western culture was inculcated. This gradually led to the most unfortunate of all situation; the complete washout of the basic history of some of India's most ancient shrines.

The very core existence of a Swayambhu Shivlinga, which due to the self-manifestation nature is not only the most revered but also imbues the most powerful radiations in physical, cosmic, mental and spiritual realms. The Kshetrapal Bhairav temple was destroyed completely, and it is essential that such a Bhairav temple exists in all the Sati Shaktipeeths. The Bhairav temples in some of the present day Shaktipeeths are non-existent such as in the Sharda Peeth that exists in the present day Pakistan occupied Kashmir. This temple now lies in complete ruin, and no worship is done to Lord Shiva and Goddess there. This temple had the most important place as a religious and cultural organisation and Universities where students from all over the world came for higher knowledge and education. In few Shaktipeeth temples in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, not only is the Bhairav temple missing along with the self-manifested Shivlinga that lies buried somewhere in the inner most sanctum, the very basic core of the temple that is the Devi Pindi is also not locatable. Since neither the Shivlinga nor the Devi Pindi are movable or displacable, it becomes of the utmost importance that careful investigation and excavation is done at each of these Sati Shaktipeeth temples.

The most easy observation to recognize the real Sati Shaktipeeths from the others is the existence of the temple on a hill, the existence of a 'Chitabhoomi' or ancient funeral-pyre ground that must exist very close to the temple. The prime reason for this is that the funeral pyre ground is very dear to Lord Shiva and the Chitabhoomi always accompanies the Shaktipeeth temple. The rest of the factors in order to locate the real Shaktipeeth is to locate the Swayambhu Shivlinga that shall exist very close to the Devi Pindi. Both of them are immovable and undisplacable. So even if the ancient structures of the temple were broke, and the top of the Shivlinga was damaged, still by very basic search and excavation the Shivlinga shall be rediscovered. Wherever the Shivlinga is discovered that is the real Sati Shaktipeeth temple. The Bhairav temple may then be reconstructed there in case it has been completely demolished. The Shiva Purana, one of the most ancient scriptures on the exact locations and names of these temples states 52 such temples where body parts of Goddess Sati had fallen on Bharatvarsha; presently comprising of present day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tibet and Sri

Lanka. A very small effort of excavation very close to the Devi Sati Pindi at each of these shrines by the Archaeological Survey of India or UNESCO shall unearth the completely lost and forgotten aspects of Hinduism's most ancient and holy shrines of Goddess and provide a new direction to not only the cultural revival of ancient India but also simultaneously pave the way to an expanse of knowledge in various fields; both physical as well as spiritual that remains forgotten in modern world.

References:

1. 'The Forgotten Shivlinga of the Sati Shaktipeeths'; Pratha Sharma 2018.
2. Shiva Purana.