

Some Aspects of Kashivishveshvara Temple at Lakkundi

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Both Acharya Haribhadra and Rajashekhara relate in their works entitled *Shaddarshana-samuchchaya* the characteristics of *Yauga* or *Shaiva-mata*.¹ Among other things, they state that the *Shaivas*, who may be classified into four groups viz., Shaiva, Pashupata, Mahavratadhara and Kalamukha depending on differences in practices (*sva-sv-achara-bhedena*), believe in eighteen *avataras* of Ishvara (*tasya (Ishvarasya) cashtadashavatara ami*). The names are enlisted as Nakulisha, Kaushika, Gargya, Maitreya, Kaurusha, Ishana, Paragarga, Kapilanda, Manushyaka, Aparakushika, Atri, Pingala, Pushpaka, Brihadarya, Agasti, Santana, Rashikara and Vidyaguru. They are considered worshipful *Tirtheshas* (*ete tesham tirtheshah pujaniyah*) and are revered at every step.

Nakulisha, better known as Lakulisha, has iconographic representations quite in number, either as standing or seated. The 7th-8th centuries temples in the Pashupata centres, like Alampur, Mahakuta and Pattadakal have depictions of Lakulisha on them. The earliest representation of Lakulisha in the core region of the Chalukyas of Badami is on a pillar of Vaishnava Cave 2 at Badami.² Apart from a *lakuta* in hand, a feature of Lakulisha is an erect *membrum verile*. Lakulisha's teachings, embedded in *Lakulagama*, seem to have remained central, with Shakta overtones, in the beliefs of the later Pashupata-Kalamukhas, who were profoundly influential during 10th-14th centuries period in Maharashtra-Karnataka-Andhra region as mentioned in epigraphs. However, Lakulisha images (with erect *membrum verile* and *laguda*) in this period are scanty. One of them is on the superstructure of the Siddheshvara Temple at Shirur (Bagalakote



Fig.1 : Kashivishveshvara temple, Lakkundi, General View

District, Karnataka), a temple which belonged to the Simha-Parishe branch of Pashupata-Kalamukhas.³ It is possible that such Lakulisha images were consciously avoided during this period in Karnataka.⁴

In view of the importance given to the 18 *avataras* of Shiva in Pashupata worship, the present author was exploring the possibility of finding their depictions conceived as teachers. And now, it seems at least one such depiction is traced. This is on the well-known Kashivishveshvara temple at Lakkundi in Gadag district of Karnataka.

The Kashivishveshvara temple (Fig.1), an 11th century later Chalukya temple, has been earlier described in number of publications for its architectural interest and it is not necessary to go into the details.⁵ But from the sectarian point of view there are some interesting aspects which will be considered in this paper. The principal sanctum is for enshrining a Shiva *linga* called 'Kavatala-Chavundeshvara' in inscriptions. The temple is a *dvikuta* of modest size built in Karnataka-Dravida style. The *gudhamandapa* of its east-facing main shrine has, in addition to an entrance doorway from the east, a principal entrance from the south with an elaborately decorated doorframe of *nava-shakha* (nine *shakhas*) variety. Such an additional entrance doorway from the south side of the hall is a feature of some Pashupata-Kalamukha temples of the period in Karnataka (e.g. Amriteshvara temple at Annigeri) and probably owes to the presence of a *matha* structure on the south side for the *sthanacharya*.

The *vimana* of Kasivisvesvara temple has on three sides *devakoshthas*, now empty. The sculptures on the *vimana* wall include Ravana lifting Kailasa, Bhima fighting Bhagadatta's elephant, Ravana wrestling with Airavata, dancing Chamunda, Saptamatrikas, etc. On the south side, the *gudhamandapa* exterior carries two noteworthy and interrelated relief-images. One is of *Bhikshatana* Shiva, a four-armed nude form arriving with an umbrella in hand (Fig.2). The second, a more important one is the relief sculpture of nude and tusked Parvati with disheveled hair, seated under an umbrella and engaged in tantric worship (Fig.3). She sits on a cobra's coils, holding a small *atma-linga* in her left hand and placing



Fig.2 : Bhikshatana Shiva

the right hand near breast. In front of her is an indistinct object on a stand, probably a bell. A howling dog or wolf is seated beside her. A *trishool* is fixed in front of her and near it are five pots placed one over the other. An abbreviated version of this sculpture may be seen on Balligave Tripurantaka temple pillar. The sculpture is obviously of strong Shakta import. Shakta inclination of the Pashupata-Kalamukhas is well attested by an inscription from Mahamaya temple at Kukkanur (Koppal district).⁶



Fig.3 : Parvati in Tantric Worship

Inside the main shrine, on the architrave above *garbhagriha* doorframe, there are some interesting relief figures in compartments. One of them depicts four seated ascetics arranged in two pairs (Fig.4). They carry *lakuta* in left hand, while the right hand seems to be in the gesture of preaching. They may be identified with the first four Pashupata teachers, viz. Lakulisha, Kushika, Garga and Maitreya. In another compartment, there are two rows of figures (Fig.5) : the upper row contains a larger figure of a seated pot-bellied ascetic flanked



Fig.4 : First four Tirtheshas on architrave over sanctum doorway



Fig.5 : Pashupata-Kalamukha ascetic teachers

on his left by two persons, one seated and one standing; the latter has his hands in *namaskara-mudra*. In the lower row are three seated ascetic figures : the central figure has hands in *namaskara-mudra* and the figure to his left holds a *lakuta* in the left hand and possibly *akshamala* in the right. It is not possible to guess who the figures represent except that they are ascetics of the Pashupata order.

Of equal importance is the west-facing Karnataka-Dravida shrine of the Sun-god (Aditya) which stands opposite the main shrine (Fig.6). This is treated with no less care in its details than the main shrine. Its *vimana* has *devakoshthas* on three sides which are now empty. At least one of them - the one in the east wall - had the image of Aditya. There were other well-cut images on walls, of which only standing figures of Nagaraja and Nagini on the east and *khatvanga*-bearing Bhairava on south survive.

It is the set of images of ascetic-like figures adorning the upper part of the wall flanking the superstructure model over the *devakoshtha* on east side which is of great interest (Fig.7). They are organized in two rows of five on the south flank and two rows of four on the north flank, making a total of eighteen (Figs.8-9). Apparently, the number is intentional. All are seated, two-armed, pot-bellied and have moustache and beard and heavy matted-hair (*jatadharinah*). They look alike and carry *lakuta* (*dandadharah*) in their left hand and some indistinct object in the right. They wear sacred thread (*yajnopavitinah*) and appear to have covered the privities with a piece of cloth (*praudhakaupinaparidhanah*). Their number and the *lakuta* in hand suggests that they represent the eighteen *Tirtheshas* of the Pashupatas.

There are sixteen figures arranged flanking the *devakoshtha* on the south side also. They are organized in two rows of five figures on the right side and two rows of four on the left (Figs.10-11). They comprise of fourteen *lakuta*-bearing ascetics and two non-ascetic figures with hands raised in gesture of praise. These ascetics are seemingly younger than those in the set of eighteen *Tirtheshas*. The figures in the upper row hold *lakuta* indiscriminately in left hand and those in the lower row have it in the right hand. In the remaining hand each ascetic holds what appears to be a manuscript. Correspondingly on the north side wall also there



Fig.6 : Aditya Shrine



Fig.7 : Set of eighteen Pashupata Tirtheshas on east wall



Fig.8 : Tirtheshas detail, left side



Fig.9 : Tirtheshas detail, right side



Fig.10 : Pashupata ascetics on south wall, detail



Fig.11 : Pashupata ascetics on south wall, detail

probably were ascetic-teacher figures but these are badly damaged. It is possible that these ascetics are of later Pashupata teachers.

That the Kashivishveshvara temple was the most important Pashupata-Kalamukha temple in Lakkundi with a *matha* attached to it is borne out by inscriptions. The god is mentioned as Kavatala-Chavundeshvara and the area around the temple was distinguished as Chavundapura. Chavunda is a common *alias* of Bhairava during 10th-14th centuries period in Karnataka. Thus, the deity though in *linga* form was probably conceived as Bhairava. The *sthanacharya* of this temple exercised authority to assign the *sthanacharya*-ship of other temples at Lakkundi. An inscription of CE 1064 states that Vamashaktipanditadeva, the *sthanacharya* of Kavatala-Chavundeshvara temple, assigned the temple of Jinneshvara to Kalamukha *acharya* Pavitrarasijiya, whose affiliation, judging from circumstantial evidence, was to the Simha-Parishat.⁷ The Kashivishveshvara temple was thus likely affiliated to Simha-Parishat. There were other *mathas* elsewhere, such as the *matha* of Grameshvara temple in Kaginele,⁸ affiliated (*pratibaddha*) to this Kavataleshvara *matha*. Pashupata-Kalamukha ascetics of the neighbourhood such as Purigere (Lakshmeshvar, Gadag district) used to reside here.⁹

Thus, the Kashivishveshvara temple at Lakkundi, apart from its architectural interest, is of considerable significance for its Pashupata-Kalamukha imagery. The image depicting Parvati in tantric worship suggests a strong Shakta inclination of the Simha-Parishat branch. It is perhaps necessary to investigate whether the prefix *simha* attached to this *parishat* has its base in the importance given to Shakti in their belief. The figures of the first four Pashupata *Tirtheshas* over sanctum doorway and of the eighteen *Tirtheshas* on wall who are deemed to be *avatars* of Ishvara strengthens the claim of the Simha-Parishat that it represented the *Maha-Pashupatas*.¹⁰

References & Notes

1. C.D. Dalal, Ed. *Ganakarika*, Central Library, Baroda, 1920, pp.29-30 and 35-36.
2. S.V. Padigar, *Badami*, Department of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, Bangalore, 2012, illustration on p.26.
3. For an account of this temple, see S.V. Padigar, 'Siddhesvara Temple at Sirur - A Pashupata Shaiva Monument: Architecture and Cult', *Jnana-Pravaha Research Journal No.XVIII - 2014-2015*, Varanasi, 2015, pp.8-22.
4. Nude Bhairava images are found in large number during the 10th-14th centuries period, most of them directly associated with Pashupata-Kalamukha temples. But they are not shown with erect *membrum verile*. The depiction of any of Shiva's forms with erect *membrum verile* seems to have been despised.
5. H. Cousens, *The Chalukyan Architecture of the Kanarese Districts*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, Vol.XLII, Govt. of India, Central Publication Branch, Calcutta, 1926, p.79; A. Hardy, *Indian Temple Architecture: Form and Transformation, The Karnata Dravida Tradition, 7th to 13th Centuries*, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p.336; M.A. Dhaky, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Temple Architecture, South India, Upper Dravidadesa Later Phase, A.D.793-1336*, American Institute of Indian Studies and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Delhi, 1996, p.120ff; G. Foekema, *Calukya Architecture*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2003, pp.492-501; etc.
6. *Hyderabad Archaeological Series*, XVIII, No.13.
7. H. Gogi, *Lakkundiya Sasanagalu* (in Kannada), Mahila Sahityika, Hubballi, 2008, pp.19-20, No.8.
8. *South Indian Inscriptions (SII.)*, XVIII, No.76.
9. Gogi, *op.cit.*, pp.67-68, No.39.
10. *SII.* Vol.XI, No.85.