

# Heritage of Amarnath Amreshvara

By: M.M. Munshi

The author is a scholar and scientist with sound knowledge of history and geography of the J&K state.

Editor



**B**ounded on the north by The Great Himalaya Range and on the south by Sachkach and Dudavan mountains at the head of Sind Valley is situated the Tirtha of Amreshvara 34° 12' 75°0' at an altitude of 12,720ft. 93878m.) where the Suaybhu (self created) Ice Linga has been worshiped since early historic if not prehistoric times.

The earliest reference pertaining to Amarnathji are found in Bringesh Samhita which is not extant today Nilmat purana, Kalhana's Rajtarangini the oldest historical document of the Indian subcontinent and mahatmayas of Amarntha and Amreshvarakalpa.

According to Bringesha the devtas out of fear of death approached Lord Shiva and prayed for deliverance from clutches of death. Shiva mercifully granted the devtas redemption from death by taking the crescent from his head and squeezing the nector with which the devtas became immortal. The

same nector got transformed into the Ice Linga, which is worshiped to this day in Amarnathji cave. The other view pertaining to the formation of the Ice Linga is that Shiva's consort Parvati was eager to learn the secrets of life and immortality, prayed to her lord to reveal the same to her. While moving with Parvati over the Himalayas Shiva rested in a cave and recited the secrets of life to her got himself transformed into the Ice Linga. A pair of snow pigeons living in the cave overheard Shiva's discourse also became immortal.

It is said and believed that pilgrimage to Amarnthji for a very long time and even the route got lost due to political upheavals and persecution of Hindus by Muslim rulers. **Pervez Dewan in his recent article of Discovery of lord Shiva's cave temple has gone to the extent of saying that the Amarnathji got lost for few thousand years till it was rediscovered by Maliks of Batakut by about 1750-75 is totally unfounded. According to Kalhana's Rajtarangini pilgrims used to proceed to Amreshvara via Shusramnaga as late as middle of 12th century** and according to Jonaraja Sultan Zain-ul-abdin the pious Muslim ruler of Kashmir visited Amarnathji cave during the fifteenth century. Francious Bernier the French doctor who accompanied

Emperor Aurangzeb to Kashmir in 1663 was two marches away from Amarnathji cave which he called grotta with congealations from somewhere in Sind Valley when he was recalled by the emperor. Even assuming that the Maliks of Batakut actually rediscovered Amarnathji Tirtha by 1775 it is easy to conclude that the pilgrimage remained in abeyance for a maximum period of about 100 to 125 years.

The claims of Maliks that their ancestors having rediscovered the Amarnathji cave by 1775 is also not withstanding, as Kashmir at that time was ruled by Afghans who persecuted Kashmiris in general and Hindus in particular, would not have taken kindly to Maliks or anyt ody else rediscovering any Hindu or Buddhist shrine, and it is impossible to believe or presume that pilgrimage to Amarnathji would have resumed during the Afghan rule.

It is true that Maliks of Batakut received a fixed share of the offerings at Amarnathji for guiding and escorting the pilgrims to Amarnathji rather than for rediscovering or retracing the route to the shrine. **Since a long time the arrangements for the pilgrimage including protection and necessary facilities are taken care of by government and a number of**



voluntary non-govt. organizations, the share of offerings being paid to Maliks seems hardly to be justified, especially in view of the fact that Baridhars of Vaishnodevi have been disassociated with the management with the creation of Mata Vashnodevi Shrine Board. The share of offerings at Amarnathji

still being paid to Maliks of Batakut can simply be compared to age old jagirdaris or privy purses.

The recently rediscovered Shiva cave temple near Hapatgund below Astanmarg could have been a halting place on the now abandoned return journey route from Amarnath to Pahalgam via Poshpathri, Hatyara

Talav, Astanmarg and Zanin and not a base camp for the pilgrimage as suggested by Pervez Dewan for the reason the said cave temple does not lie on the traditional route of approach to Amarnathji via Chandanwari Sheesh Nag and Mahagnus.

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## COMMENT

Paul Brunton in his famed work "A Hermit in the Himdayas" writes that certain places on earth possess a magnetic atmosphere of intense spiritual vibration. To Plato human language is inadequate to express the ultimate realities directly. Words, he says, conceal rather than reveal the inner natures of things.

The Greeks conveyed all their esoteric teachings symbolically, the use of parables, as in the case sermons of Jesus - and of Buddha illustrate the same tendency. In the old testament the visions of Prophet Ezekiel and in the New Testament the revelation of John show how animal symbolism affected the Bible.

I write this because my skeptic friends may be disappointed on the discription of Shiva transforming into Linga, devtas, immortality etc. etc.,

Amarnath pilgrimage is mentioned in Book 1,267 of the Rajtrangi in the accounts of king "Nara" (1008 B.C) which proves to the hilt that even before the time of Kalhan (12th century) of the Christain Era, the holy cave was annually visited by pilgrims.

Apart from pilgrims, the Shrine

has been attracting scientists, geologists and lovers of NATURE worldwide. They find Lingum impregnated with nothing but only pure fresh water turned into ice at one fixed place in the cave that waxes and wanes with the moon. Vivekananda said he was all ecstasy on seeing it.

Since 1989 certain religious bigots, though great beneficiaries of pilgrim tourism have been a big nuisance to the devotes, advantuarists, tourists, labourers and the security forces during the pilgrimage.

It is said a new "Trust" for management of the yatra and collection of offerings in cash, silver and gold is in the offing. Consensus, would perhaps, favour no local, governmental, but All India Dharma Sansad handling it exclusively (both income and expenditure) copting local voluntary institutions, organisations, groups or even individuals.

It is said such places are exploited for accumulation of wealth as huge offerings fall into the hands of greedy undeserving claimants on one pretext or the other. Avro Manhattan in his one time "best seller" the Vatican Billions

remarks that Christ was born, lived and died in poverty. His "Church" is a multi multi multi billion concern. How come that although she claims to be preoccupied with the riches of heaven, she is in reality one of the most formidable accumulators of the riches of the earth. The more popular a shrine the more abundant the collection of cash, silver and gold.

Tradition calls saints and sadhus from all parts of India, some of them bear-footed, half-naked peniless recluses who like Jesus have not even a pillow upon which to rest their head.

Many of them are seen in misirable plight from Jammu to the cave and back, exposed to blazing Sun and biting cold without proper shelters. Both State and Central Government may atleast bring these people to the level of Haj pilgrims in respect of all the required facilities which seem to be denied to them.

I am grateful to Shri Munshi for his pains -taking research and look forward to his future contributions which I am cofident will be very usefull for our readers.

S.N. Tikku

Editor

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