



## Panchastavi in Kashmir





# PANCHASTAVI IN KASHMIR

## A BRIEF STUDY

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## 1.0 PANCHASTAVI - A BRIEF STUDY

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### I. Prologue:



The compound word 'Panchastavi' in ordinary parlance connotes a collection of devotional hymns divided into five cantos. The very first verse of the first canto remakes it abundantly clear that these panegyrics are essentially meant for the 'Rainbow-hued' Divine Energy comprising the 'speech' and 'resplendence of symbols'. Moreover the whole gamut of Alphabet from AA to Ksa is presided over by this Transcendental Energy; and to speak squarely, it is the progenitor of the sound and sense. At times it has been equated with super-knowledge, bliss and even this whole cosmic world. Moreover, this 'super-marvel' Maha-maya creates and annihilates this world of sound and sense by the triple formula of desire, perception and action. However it is also to be conceded that this poetic work is essentially an allegory in which the mental experience of supreme consciousness has been clothed in the flesh and blood of words to make it appear as physical or concrete. The poet has very candidly referred to this approach in the fifth canto (6th verse). So the 'Benign Motherhood' of that 'Primeval Energy' has become the focal point throughout the pages of this devotional composition.

### II. Title of the Composition:

But this word five pancha or, the original panchan has many other shades of meaning, moreso with the Saiva philosophers, which naturally must have weighed with the poet while giving a name to his composition. So, it will not be out of place here to , allude to those shades contained in the number five, so as to comprehend exactly as to what the poet wants to express by its use. Perhaps this contention presupposes that the devotee-poet has deliberately confined his imagination to five cantos (stavas) only, so as to make it synchronize with other shades of meaning contained in this number.

In 'TantraSadbhava' - a Shaivistic treatise, the Divine Energy has been described as five-fold, panch-mantra gata and also Panch-vidha having five forms. Herein clear reference has been made to the five modes of reciting a Mantra or an incantation with syllabic instants (Kala). These are Ishana with five instants, Tatpurusha with four. Aghora with eight; vamadeva with thirteen and Sadyojata also with eight respectively, making a total of thirty eight, which works out to be the exact number of consonants in the Alphabet.

The school of cognition in the Shaiva-lore takes five as the synonym of five duties which are Abhasan appearance, rakti attachment, Vimarshan scrutiny, Bija source, and avasthapanam establishing. These five duties or the stages of perception are also extricable part of the muttering of an incantation Japa-vidhi; hence the reference to mantroddharah delivering an incantation is not without purpose in Panchastavi.

Moreover, this pentad of devotional poems is essentially a treatise on Para-vidya super knowledge, as conceived by the Shaivas. Naturally to spell out its contrast with the negation of knowledge avidya - Ignorance, the poet must have made its five-fold division in his mind. This ignorance comprises tamah - error- Moha - illusion-, Maha-mohah - obduration-, tamisrah -fallacy, and andha mental blindness;

copious references throughout the text of Panchastavi for dispelling tamah - error moha - illusion etc. have been made in this context. " Consequently these concomitants of ignorance are to be crossed, so that Super knowledge may dawn which is also called Shuddha Vidya or sad- vidya) by the Shaivas, which can be attained by adopting the course prescribed in Shuddhadhvan - the pure path. The Shaivas also believe that the purusha - the limited individual self has five envelopments of niyati - confinement, Kalah - experience of changes in time, Ragah - attachment, Vidva -limited knowledge and Kala -limited authorship. The cumulative effect of these aberrations produces Maya (obduration) and this can be removed completely by Shuddha vidya, the pure knowledge as alluded to above. Actually Maya obduration, is the name given to non-identity between Shiva and Shakti. So the poet invokes the 'Immanent Mother' Sakala Janani - to emancipate all the living beings from this 'knot of Maya'. As a corollary to this, having overcome Maya (obduration) the experiencer has to traverse five stages of sad-vidya, assimilative consciousness (Aishvarya). All pervasive conscious-self, Sadakhya, objective conscious self, Shakti tattva predicative manifestation, and Shiva-tattva subjective conscious-self, so as to identify himself with the Parama Shiva (Supreme conscious-self), the acme of Shaiva realization. The Panchastavi-kara (the composer of Panchastavi) has referred to these in very unambiguous terms also." In addition to these shades of meaning projecting from five, it cannot be gainsaid that it does not connote the body made up of five elements namely Prithvi, solidity. Apas liquidity, Agni (formativity). Vayu (aeriality) and akasha (etheriality). The recitation of an incantation is definitely a mental drill with physiological basis; so the body - the very first expedient for accomplishing Dharma- is an inevitable part of this mental discipline. Hence the poet is at pains to refer to this Vehicle in his eulogies to the Supreme Energy.

Not only this, in several Tantric works, human body is looked upon as Shri Chakra (disc of bountiful Superhuman power) in which the microcosmic angles of the Energy (Shakti) have been detailed as tvak (Skin), asrah (blood), mamsam (flesh), Meda (lymph) and asthi (bones). The macrocosmic angles have also been defined as the five elements, five tanmatras (subtle elements ) belonging to Shabda (sound), sparsha (touch), rupa (colour), rasa (flavour), and gandha (smell), five senses, of perception, five senses of action and five pranas. This aspect of SHakti (Energy) has been fully brought out not only by Panchastavi but also by another compilation of panegyrics named Saundarya Lahri (the wave of Beautitude) even. Again the five karnas @ur (generative causes) in Shaiva philosophy are Brahma (the progenitor), Vishnu (the nourisher), Rudra (the annihilator), Sada-Shiva, (perennial & immanent conscious spirit) and Ishvara (the supreme Lord). To this belief the poet has succinctly referred in these eulogisms."

Last but not the least, the Shiva from which the Shaivism derives its name, is supposed to have five faces, Panch-mukha, but it is just a corpse (Shavah), without the union, with Energy (Shakti). This very thought has been expressed by the author in dexterously fine poetry. The Saundarya Lahri begins the devotional praise of the Super-Energy with this belief.

So it has been made abundantly clear that the poet, who composed Panchastavi was an ardent Shaiva and had all these shades of five in his mind, when he deliberately selected this very number, so pregnant with esoteric content, for choosing an apt and befitting title for his imagination concentrated in Panchastavi. It could not have been a mere accident or even a happy coincidence; it was wilfully done by him as a conscious artist and a versatile Shaiva.

In tune with the arguments advanced above, it also seems plausible to assert that Shaivism in essence advocates a happy compromise between materiality (bhoga) and spirituality (Yoga), a rewarding attitude to life, and if that balance is tilted in favour of any of the two, that attitude will get disturbed and may not contribute to the well-being of the humanity at large; so when vamacharah (the left hand ritual of the Tantras) pleaded for the introduction of pancha makara (five Ms); naturally as a healthy reaction to this degenerate Tantric ritual which ran counter to the Shaiva teachings, the poet thought it fit to substitute the five eulogiums for five Ms. This conjecture is substantiated by the dig in undertones he has dealt at such believers in his own composition. The use of the words aparey and budhah are significant here.



Budhah (the wise, enlightened) call this super-Energy as transcendental (akulam); in contrast with this aparey (others), not enlightened or wise call Her Kaulam personifying Kaulacharah.

### III. Nomenclature of Cantos:

Furthermore, the poet has captioned each canto with a sub-title. Herein also these subtitles have been used not haphazardly but with a purpose.

**First Canto:** The first canto bears the sub-title Laghu (insignificant or light). In the penultimate verse of this chapter, the poet has justified the use of this word and hinted at his insignificance laghustvatmani for undertaking such a lofty yet burdensome task for analysing the Super-Energy. However, also, it seems that he has tried to play on the word 'Laghu' and in keeping with the Shaivistic tradition tried to keep it occult rahasya sampradayah. As the word discussion has many other meanings also we have to glean any such out of these, which is in consonance with what has been described in this canto.

Without mincing words, it may be said that this canto tries to define, explain and emphasize the purport contained in the aphorism ' Vidya shariratta mantra rahsyam. "The occult power of an incantation is its efficacy to strike identity between the sound and its symbol. " Vidya has been described as nothing other than the symbols (matrika) of the alphabet. Hence the 'origin of letters' and their method of grouping into an incantation and the consequent mode of recitation has been fully dealt with in this canto. This very knowledge of letters has been treated as a fond Mother granting each and every boon to her children. These sounds and symbols (nada, Bindu) emanate from the Muladhara where these are coiled together like a Kundalini - the coiled serpent and traversing twelve stations (dwadash-dalam) approaches the Brahma-randra and then its return or descent into the Kanda or Muladhara begins and it again lies dormant there. The poet, while describing this terse and yet intricate discipline of the breath is alive to the fact that it may not be taken kindly to by the prospective realizers; they might feel diffident to practise this course which seemingly appears guru (weighty, difficult); hence to make it popular and banish all the scare from the minds of the devotees, he has captioned this chapter as Laghu (very light, easy to comprehend). Some say that it is the composition of a devotee named Laghu Bhattaraka, hence the sub-title Laghustava will mean a panegyric composed by Laghu, a diminutive from Laghu Bhattaraka.

**Second Canto:** The second canto, is known as charchastava (the panegyric containing careful study or reflection). Herein the attributes of the Divine Mother ( Energy ) in cosmic form have been fully described. She is also invoked to cut the shackles of birth and rebirth, and to release the devotee from the prison (bondage) of his body. This canto gives in detail the immanent form of the Super-Energy, whereas the first brought into bold relief Her Vishvotteerna transcendental form.

**Third Canto:** The third canto bears the title gatastavah. Gatah is patently derived from Ghat verb meaning to unite, to join or, bring together. Herein the ghatnam or sanghatnam (union) of Shiva and Shakti is complete. The impersonal as described in the first and the personal in the second cantos respectively get fully immersed in each other in this canto just like the water and its container (Ghatah). This coincides with the paraparadasha or bhedabheda vimarshanatmakta (complete identity) for which sadyidya (the perennial and pure knowledge) is also a synonym. Hence the third canto deals with this aspect of knowledge. The Ghatah (pitcher) is looked upon as the body metaphysically by the Yogis and the water inside it is taken to be the soul (Atman). The body of the alphabet (Vidyasharira) has been profusely mentioned in the first Canto, the second locates its soul and the third marks their auspicious blending, hence the use of the word ghatah or the verb ghat. So the poet jeers at those fools who torment their body with various kinds of penance or make themselves paupers by spending lavishly on Yajnas (sacrificial fires) and liberal remunerations. The realizer attaining this stage has not to bother himself with these fruitless rituals. This very union between the sound and the symbol, para (higher) and apara (lower), the immanent and the transcendental. Shiva and the Shakti, Bheda (duality) and abheda (identity) has been very beautifully alluded to by the poet while addressing the Supreme Energy as 'Shabda Brahmamayi'.

**Fourth Canto:** The fourth canto is called Amba Stavah, a panegyric eulogizing the Mother. The word Amba is to be read in the context of Jyeshtha and Raudri. While discussing the origin of letters, the 'Tantra Sadbhava' has to say that Raudri the terrible, on account of the agitation it produces, is the first stage of a letter being conceived. Jyeshtha-'the elderly or prominent' indicates its form being taken, and Amba is the final sound which comes at the tip of the tongue. Hence it is established beyond doubt that embryonic and formative stages of a letter having been described at length in the previous chapters, the fullfledged word having taken shape and being pronounced singly or is a part of an incantation is actually the Amba. This word also means a mother like matrika, hence may also mean vidya Super-knowledge as corroborated by the poet himself in the very first verse of this chapter. Herein, consequently the praises of Vidya have been sung which has been naturally equated with Shakti (energy) without which Shiva is a non-entity ( asamartha ). So, this Amba (Mother) is the real generative power in nature or man ; bereft of Her, this world would look desolate. Moreover, only when Her two lotus - feet are enshrined in the of hearts people, the puzzling din and strife of obstinacy, argument and counter-argument will cease. In the last verse the poet prepares the ground for captioning the penultimate chapter as 'sakala janani stava' by invoking Her as as sakala bhuvana mata (Mother of all the worlds - inanimate or animate) with Her protruding breasts ebbing with the milk of human kindness.

**Fifth Canto:** Sakala (entire or whole) can be expounded in more than one way. It may mean, along with other parts, digits or full, such as sakalaindu (the full moon). It might also connote in the language of Shaivas as savyenjan (with consonants) as against nishkala (avyenjan without consonants one of the methods of japa muttering an iticantation. It might also indicate the medial sounds or letters of the incantation with sakala japa vidhih the method of muttering with consonants. The latter part of the compound Janani (Compassionate Mother) makes it more clear and all the same unambiguous. Actually this chapter is devoted to the propitiation of the 'Universal Mother' Jagatmata; and this Universal Mother is maha vidya Super knowledge being beyond speech and argument. This all-pervading Mother represents in Her ownself attributes of creation, sustenance and annihilation, as also the over-lordship and the super-knowledge, thereby exhibiting diversity, out of unity. She showers supreme bliss on those, who take pains to know Her in essence.

#### IV. Precise import of Tripurasundari

Before proceeding further it seems pertinent to explain the content of Tripura or Tripura Sundari personifying the 'Divine Energy' and repeatedly used by the poet in all the cantos.

*tri* denotes number three and *pura* means among other things, the body also. The word thus literally will indicate any such woman who has three bodies (tripura) or who represents in herself the beauty of three worlds (whole cosmos). Perhaps to facilitate the exact comprehension of this word, the poet, on his own, has advanced reasons for calling this 'Divine Energy' as Tripura. After enumerating the triple form of gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra), fire (household, sacrificial and of pyre), energies (desire, perception and action), basic vowels, worlds (Bhur, Bhuvah and Svah), Vedas (Rig, Yajus and sama) and other cosmic manifestations, he very convincingly tries to establish that this threefold division is actually an extension of the essence of the Divine Energy, consequently called Tripura. Shaivistic lore confirms this view of the poet, 'Prapanchasara' asserts that 'Ambika' is named as Tripura because of its accent on the three basic vowels. 'Tripurarnava' lays down that the Energy residing in 'Sushumna, pingala and Ida'-Blood Vessels- as also in the mind, intellect and soul is called Tripura. 'Kalika Purana' says since everything is threefold, so she (Divine, Energy) is called Tripura. 'Vamakeshvara -Tantra' believes that Tripura is threefold in the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and also personifies in Herself the three powers of desire, perception and action. 'Varaha Purana' also explains the name on those very lines. Hence the word Tripura is actually the manifestation of triple power of the super-Energy-Raudri, Jyeshtha and Amba-the birth of a letter from the embryo to the actual pronounciation. Letter is an indissoluble part of an incantation, hence the poet feels that Tripura Sundari on being discerned by physical eyes or through mastering a Mantra (mentally) dispells sins and mitigates the fear of death.

Hindu genius has all along provided form (Vyakt BERTE) to the formless (Avyakta), not because it believes that 'Divine Energy' can have any form, but with the sole motive of making that abstract Entity look like a concrete object, especially in human form, so as to make it more acceptable and intelligible to the general masses. To make this approach more impressive and effective the image of the Mother came in handy for them. "An unworthy son may be born, but there can never be a bad- Mother." This attitude is at the root of the Mother- worship so popular with the Hindus. In this way also the so called polytheism grew out of the monotheist. Even in the hoary times of Vedas the seer was constrained to remark "Ekam hi sadvipra bahuda vadanti "The Reality being one is interpreted in many ways." On the same analogy the poet-devotee of panchastavi has provided all the human attributes to Her, and yet made her look superhuman. Hence Tripura in essence being an abstract feeling of mind, has been painted in words pulsating with undivided devotion as a 'Loving Mother'; such discipline of mind is a mental experience beyond the domain of physical words. This discipline will remain incomplete, if the mention of the common belief is not made that Tripura is the consort of Tripurari (shiva). Propitiation of Tripura is still performed in Kashmir especially by a sect of Kashmiri Pandits, known as Tikus, presumably a Kashmiri rendering of trik.



**Tripurasundari**

#### **V. The name of the Composer**

Unfortunately for us, the poet has maintained sphinx-like silence about his name, time or lineage throughout the length and breadth of his versified composition. However strange it might seem, but it is all the same true about many Sanskrit authors of repute. Even Kalidasa, the prince among poets has been also reticent about himself. Barring a few authors like Bilhana and Ksemendra, the date and name of whole galaxy of Sanskrit luminaries of Kashmir is still a matter of research. In the Shaivistic literature only Abhinavagupta has given his brief biographical sketch and some dates in one of his stotaras devotional panegyrics. Herein his versatility has to be thanked, otherwise the Hindu attitude of mind by and large feels shy of publicity more so, of self-advertisement.

In 1917 A. D. T. Ganapati Shastri brought out an edition of the first chapter of Panchastavi naming it as Laghustuti with the Sanskrit commentary of one Raghvananda. On the authority of the commentator he put down the name of the poet as Laghu Bhattaraka:

< verses >

However, he has also referred to another commentary on the same treatise which to quote him is very voluminous and consists of nearly two thousand verses by some Parameshwaracharya. This commentary is not still out, hence nothing can be said about it. Had this commentary been made available after getting it printed, who knows many knotty problems would have been solved. In his introduction the learned Shastri has not referred to Panchastavi at all, and has, for all practical purposes, thought these 21 verses to be an independent work, and not the first canto of Panchastavi. Curiously enough the commentator Raghavananda also has not made the mention of Panchastavi or its other cantos even once directly or indirectly. This intriguing silence poses many questions which deserve plausible answers. Firstly, it seems that Panchastavi as a whole is unknown in the south and only its first chapter has gained currency there. Therein also the original Stava has been substituted by Stuti even though both mean the same thing. Moreover, it is thought to be a Composition of some Laghu Bhattaraka.

It is very well known that Shaivism of the south is predominantly dualistic in content. Madhvacharya (A.D. 1199-1276) has described: ' Shaiva Darshan ' as, a, dualistic system, which is fundamentally at variance with the Monistic system which thrived only in Kashmir. Nimbarka (A. D. 1162) emphasizes that it is from duality bheda that non-duality abheda can be realized. In the Tantric literature a clear division has been made on the basis of duality and non- duality; hence the Tantras like Kamaja, Yogaja, etc. numbering ten have been ascribed to the dualistic school of Shaivism. Therefore it seems surprising that a composition like this advocating non-duality should come from the south. As will be made clear later Panchastavi as a whole, beyond any doubt, breathes an air of being composed in Kashmir, and to crown all, by a Kashmiri author. Hence it seems plausible to surmise that the text of only one canto was commented upon by Raghvananda for propounding a faith which would have raised many eyebrows there. If we contend that the other four cantos were lost, it will not be tenable in the face of his not referring to any one of these in his commentary. For fear of being misinterpreted and also misunderstood, he stopped at the conclusion of the first chapter. Perhaps this will also solve the puzzle of substituting Stutih for Stava by him. Even though both these words mean the same thing, yet in usual practice Stava is a collection of stutih; Had he used the original Stavah he would have then betrayed the knowledge of other Stavahs also. Hence he changed the word to Stutih without impairing its connotation as in the original, and also thereby implied that he knew nothing about other cantos. Our poet has used the Stutih ( praise ) in the same context, which confirms our belief in the rightness of this conjecture. Raghvananda wanted it to look like an independent and single Stutih (praise) of the 'Supreme Energy' like 'Saundarya Lahri' or Bhairavastuti of Abhinava Gupta.

Bhattaraka or Bhattara is an appellation of respect or esteem joined with the names of either very learned Brahmins or Kings, its diminutive Bhattah still survives as a generic name for Kashmiri Pandits. In south no such practice is in vogue perhaps with the exception of Kumarilla Bhatta; so Laghu Bhattaraka seems also to be a Kashmiri Brahmin; 'Laghu' taken as an adjective would mean 'quick witted' or one who was so proficient as to give the minutest details Laghava (noun) about the Supreme Energy. Hence it can not be the actual name of the author but a commendatory epithet used by the commentator for his erudition and devotion. On the analogy of *ralayauhahbedah* (Panini's diction in his sutras) it strikes as the name of the commentator himself *laghava* becoming *Raghava*. Hence we come to the conclusion that the commentator did not know the real name of the poet and to be on the safe side ascribed it to a quick-witted Kashmiri Brahmin *Laghu - Bhattarka* and thereby inserted his name also with it. Lakshmi Dhara in his commentary on - *Saundarya Lahri* while quoting from *Panchastavi* has referred to its author as an 'Acharya' generally, but in one case has referred to Kalidasa particularly also in this context. However, we can authoritatively say that he is not the famous Kalidasa of *Raghuvarnsha* or *Shakuntala* repute. It might mean "A votary of Kali," some Acharya who was a devotee of Kali is perhaps meant by him.

In some manuscripts in the possession of the Kashmir Government Research Library the name of the author has been given as *Laghavacharya*, and in some as *Acharya Prithvi Dhara*, disciple of

Shambhunatha. In one Ms the name of the poet has been written as Shri Ramchandracharya. Kasbmiri tradition ascribes it to Abhinava Gupta. In the quoted verses from Panchastavi used by commentators of 'Vidyarnava' and 'Saubhagya Ratnakara' the author has been mentioned as Dharmacharyah. Nityananda, the commentator of Tripura Mahimastotra also corroborates the same view. Harabhata Shastri, the reputed local scholar also has taken Dharmacharyah to be its author.

The very fact that there is no unanimity of views about the authorship of Panchastavi leads us easily to think that actually the author has wanted to remain anonymous to which view the last verse of the first canto also subscribes. The use of Laghustvatmani (insignificance of his own self) debars him to proclaim his name. This is the zenith of humility and knowledge has been acclaimed as the giver of the same. As to the names Acharya, Kalidasa and Dharmacharyah, we may say that actually these are not the proper names but assumed ones. Acharya may mean a preceptor and Dharmacharyah accordingly indicates a preceptor of Dharma, here Shaiva Dharmah ostensibly. At times even scribes when not finding the name of the author therein, may have put in their name in his stead. In the absence of any indisputable and authentic evidence, we are forced to conclude that the authorship of Panchastavi is an unresolved mystery.

#### VI. Date of Composition

Panchastavi is the quintessence of Tantric scriptures of non-dualistic school. The earliest extant reference to its verses used as quotations are found in the Saraswati Kanthabharana of King Bhoja. The probable date of the composition of Saraswati Kanthabharan is between 1030-1040 A. D. Hence Panchastavi must have been composed much earlier to it; by the time of Bhoja its poetic merit (leaving devotional apart) must have been established on firm footing, only then it could deserve a place in this work on poetics. Moreover Saundarya Lahri whose authorship is ascribed to Shankaracharya, does in a way, treat the same thought as couched in the Panchastavi.

For this very reason Lakshmi Dhara has quoted profusely from it. It is very difficult to say as to which composition of these two is earlier; in other words, what debt they owe to each other is a subject of profound research. However it can be said without any fear of contradiction that the subject matter of these two compositions being similar, as also the phrase and idiom at many places, both these might have been composed at the same time when the devotional climate in Kashmir was vibrating with 'Shaivistic Monism'. It is also believed that Shankaracharya was converted to this line of thinking during his sojourn in Kashmir. Local tradition of Kashmir also confirms it. Shankara's date has been fixed between 788-820 A.D. So it seems probable that Panchastavi was also composed during this period, Even if it may be argued that Panchastavi is posterior to Saundarya Lahari, still it could not have been composed by after 1030-1050 A.D. in any case. The upper limit may be fixed at 788-820 A.D. Shankara's visit to Kashmir and consequently composing Saundarya Lahari by him, and the lowest limit is furnished by the date of Bhoja's treatise on poetics (Saraswati Kanthabharana) i.e. 1030-1050 A.D. During this span of period our poet's composition must have seen the light of the day. So in all fairness to the author, it may be concluded that Panchastavi must have been composed in the latter half of ninth century and by the time of Bhoja its verses had attained sufficient fame and credence for being included in his work.

#### VII. Common authorship of five Cantos

One more point deserves consideration before we conclude this brief study, whether this is the work of one and the same author, who-so-ever, he might have been. On the strength of the internal evidence as well as the external, we have to answer this query in affirmative. The data available to us from the internal evidence conclusively points towards this hypothesis. Besides the astounding similarities of phrase and idiom and even repetition of words, the reference made to Vatsa Raja Udyana who was blessed with plenty and opulence by the Divine Mother, in more than one cantos, corroborates this view. Not only this, in the second factual reference there is mention of a famous Kashmiri king Pravarsena also, who, has been equated with king Udyana. The use of api (also) in the verse itself makes this inference obvious. The king Udyana as also the "Pravara" (Pravarsena) is the correct translation and not 'Udyana pravara' or very esteemed Udyana. Pravara herein is not a qualifying adjective of Udyana, but a noun,

name of another king Praversena, the use of api (also) can be justified only then, otherwise it seems redundant. The translation thus would be 'king Udyana' (as referred to already in I-12 but also Praversena (api) which agrees with the singular sah in the third line, otherwise should have been tau (these two). In this verse, therefore explicit reference to Udyana has been made. Praversena has been obviously mentioned explicitly. If the poet had meant to refer to Udyana again, he could not have escaped the blemish of repetition and as such his verses could not have been cited as examples by rhetoricians like Bhoja and Mammata.

Taking this suggestive import into account, we can easily identify as to which Praversena is meant by the poet, as Kalhana has given two kings of this name in his Rajatarangini. It seems Praversena II (590 A.D. roughly), who was a great warrior and an ardent believer like vatsa Raja Udyana. In Kalhana's own words: "He founded the city of Pravarpura on the outskirts of Sharika Parbat, which formed the centre of the new city". This Sharika Parbat, now known as Hari Parbat is regarded as the abode of the Goddess. So the cause of establishing the capital around Sharika Parbat is not far to seek. Being the recipient of favours from the Goddess he wanted to remain permanently under the canopy of Her feet literally. Moreover, verses not only from the I and V cantos, but from II, III and IV have also been quoted by later writers, this fact beyond any doubt establishes that these were the product of a single poet's imagination.

#### VIII. His Kashmiri Origin

He was a Kashmiri by birth needs no further elucidation. The monistic Shaivism was founded and propagated only here. It could not catch up with other schools of this philosophy, more especially in the south. This poetic composition is found as a whole in Kashmir alone, and from very remote times its verses are on the tongue of the Kashmiri Brahmins. In this connection reference to purely Kashmiri herbs like trupsi also points eloquently towards this conclusion. Moreso, reference to Praversena discussed earlier, also substantiates this view. Reference to Udyana in this respect is not so important, as he has been an ideal with most of the Sanskrit poets and Dramatists for his amors, exploits and bravery. Praversena is known only to Kashmiris; Kashmiri scholars have often referred to him, but no mention of him has been made anywhere in Sanskrit literature outside Kashmir. Tripura Pooja is exclusively carried on here without any break from times immemorial. Tripura worship outside Kashmir does not seem to be popular, even Tantriks over there have chosen kali as their Tutelar Deity (Isht Devi). Only the Brahmins of this place persist with this name of the Goddess.

#### IX. Epilogue

In the end, it looks quite appropriate to invoke the 'Supreme Energy' in the words of the poet himself who is bold enough like other true Shaivas of Kashmir to announce that caste restriction is no bar to Her propitiation; but only the steadfast intellect and unflinching faith overcomes any impediments whatsoever, ushering in a span of material opulence and spiritual ascendancy for the devotee. In this context it will be of interest to note here that the charisma of 'Shakti' worship here in Kashmir, prompted 'Adi- Shankaracharya' to pay this tribute to Her imminence and transcendence:

"Oh Youthful Spouse of Shiva, Thou art Mind, Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth and dost thereby transform Thyself into the universe. Nevertheless there is nothing beyond Thee. By Thy play Thou dost manifest Thy consciousness and Bliss in the body of the universe."

## 2.0 PANCASTAVI IN KASHMIR

by Dr. B. N. Pandit



The Pancastavi is a collection of five hymns sung in the praise of Mother Goddess Tripura, the personified absolute Godhead of the lord. God is Siva in His ever static transcendental aspect. He is the theistic Absolute reality of Saiva monism. He is Himself Sakti, the absolute divine power of Godhead in His ever dynamic immanent aspect. Both Siva and Shakti are thus one and the same reality. Such two concepts of Sivahood and Shaktihood, known under the two names are worked out with respect to the ultimate absolute reality just for the sake of the perfectness of understanding on the part of seekers of the truth. God is to be realized by them in both His static and dynamic aspects. He remains ever pure, even while appearing in the forms of numerous creations and dissolutions of countless universes containing all sorts of beings, objects, sin, piety, etc. To create, to preserve and to dissolve the phenomenal existence as well as to conceal the real nature of subjective beings and to reveal it to them are the five divine activities of God and that is His Godhead which is His very essential nature. Had He not possessed such nature of Godhead, He alone would have existed: no other subject or any object would at all, have appeared and that would have meant a dreadful nihilism, without any charm about it. All charm lies in the divine activities of God. The highest degree of charm lies in recognizing and realizing one's own self as none other than Almighty God Himself. No recognition is possible without forgetting, because recognition is a kind of recollection of some previously known but subsequently forgotten, particulars of a person or a thing. God, pushing playfully His nature of Godhead into oblivion, appears as a finite being and He, revealing it again to such a being, recognizes His own nature of Godhead. Fire is realized to be fire only through the realization of its powers to illuminate, to give heat, to burn and so on.

We put our fingers inside the ashes in our "Kangri" to examine if there is fire in it. If we feel sufficient warmth we become sure about the existence of fire. God is realized through the realization of the powers of Godhead. When an adept practitioner of spiritual sadhana feels actually his powers to create, to dissolve, to make and to unmake things at his free will, he realizes himself as none other than God. Discussions and debates without such realizations are futile. Parrots also can conduct such discussions, if trained to do so. A Spiritual aspirant has to realize all divine powers in him. For such purpose he has to meditate and contemplate upon the dynamic aspect of the Absolute and that is its Sakti aspect. The worship of higher and superior deities help in the attainment of such realization and all such deities, right up to lord Sadasiva, are different types of outward manifestations of the Godhead of God. Therefore any worship, that is ever performed by any spiritual aspirants, is in fact the worship of the Godhead of God. Sakti alone is thus the real object of spiritual worship. Therefore the worship of Sakti becomes an essential element of the sadhana of Saiva aspirants. Bhatta Kallata, Bhatta Pradyumna and Abhinava Gupta were staunch worshippers of Sakti. Hymns sung in praise of the absolute Godhead of God, the Divine Mother of the whole universe, are therefore accepted as part and parcel of Saivism. Pancastavi is thus a beautiful Saiva Sastra composed in poetic form. It is as good a Saiva Sastra as the "Sivastotravli" of Utpaldeva and is practically as much popular with the Saivas of Kashmir as the latter. For the sake of

conducting the divine drama of the five divine activities of Godhead and also for the sake of the fulfillment of the longings of worldly beings, God appears in the universe in the form of numerous divine beings, belonging to both male and female sexes, assisting each other in their duties in the divine administration. All such forms of God become objects of worship for aspirants desirous of attaining worldly, heavenly and spiritual aims of life. Female deities are very often much more suited to human beings having still some human weaknesses in them because the approach of such female deities towards them is very much motherly in its character. Such an approach on their part does not ignore the human weaknesses of their devotees and therefore these deities direct worldly souls, step by step, towards upward ascent to higher stages of spiritual evolution. Such deities do not resent the passionate longings of worldly beings for the attainment of sensual enjoyments. Granting such enjoyments to them through right means, these motherly deities carry them steadily and slowly to some higher spiritual states and finally lead them to the highest state of perfect liberation from all bondage and to the actual attainment of perfect Sivahood, that is the position of absolute Godhead. It is on this account that Tantric Saivism and Saktism attach greater importance to the worship of God in His female aspect, the aspect of His absolute motherhood and Pancastavi contains religio-philosophic lyric poetry of a very high standard eulogising such female aspect of God. Therefore it has become very popular with the Saivas of Kashmir.

The first one among the five hymns of Pancastavi bears several commentaries in Sanskrit. It alludes to several doctrines of the Tantric worship of mother Goddess through the use of the bijamantras and has therefore attracted the attention of commentators, well-versed in Tantric sadhana. One of the commentators names the hymn as Tripura-bhaiyavistava. All the five hymns can be counted among the best examples of the most beautiful religio-philosophical lyrics. Many esoteric doctrines of Sakta-sadhana and Tantric yoga, described through the medium of poetry, can be found in all the five hymns in abundance. The principles of Saiva-Sakta monism also have been expressed likewise at many places. The similarities in the poetic style, the views on the methods of sadhana, the expression of the doctrines of philosophy and the general literary character of all the five hymns prove it beyond doubt that all of them are the works of one and the same philosopher-poet. A spontaneous rise of the poetic inspiration, capable of creating charming poetry, has been counted among the signs of a devotee on whom God bestows His forceful divine grace.

Thus says Malinivijaya

*Tatraitat prathamam cihnam Rudre Bhaktih suniscata, Kavitvam pancamam  
ineyam salankaram manoharam. (M V T. II 14 to 16)*

The author of Pancastavi was surely one among such philosopher poets. He has not said anything about his personal history except that the Mother Goddess had been pleased to grant him all the worldly pleasures through honest and respectable means. He says thus about it.

*Yace na Kancana na kancana Vancayami  
Seve na Kancana nirasta - samasta - dainyah.  
Slaksnam vase madhuram-admi bhaje varastrim  
Devl hrdi sphurati me kula-kama-dhenuh.*

( P.Sh. III-19)

The highest thing prayed for by the poet is a constant engagement in the worship of the Mother Goddess by means of the activities of all his senses and organs. He says about it:

*Tvad-rupaika - nirupana-pranayita-bandho drsos tvadguna - Grama Karnana  
ragita sravanayos tvat samsmrtis cctasi,*



*Tvat padarcana - caturi karayuge tvat kirtanam vaci me kutrapi tvadupasana vyanita  
me Devi ma samyatu,*

(P.Sh.II-29 )

Pancastavi is highly popular with the pandits of Kashmir who sing it regularly at the time of their daily worship at their homes and especially at the religious places of the Mother Goddess. On account of such popularity of the poem in Kashmir, many articles of Kashmirian writers have been appearing from time to time on Pancastavi at Srinagar and Delhi. Many things about the hymns and their author have thus come to light. But some important facts which have escaped the attention of the writers of such articles are being brought to light in the paper at hand. Pancastavi has been enjoying popularity in Kashmir from ancient times, as its verses have been quoted as examples by Mammata- Acharya in his Kavyaprakasa in the twelfth century. On account of this popularity of the poem, writers in Kashmir have been tempted to believe that its author lived in the valley. An oral tradition is prevalent in Kashmir which says that the work was composed by Abhinavagupta on the occasion of his discussions on Saktism with Sankaracharya, the great Vedantist teacher Sivopadhyaya, an eighteenth century author and renowned teacher of Saivism, refers to the meeting of the two great philosophers in his Srividya, a small work aiming at a mutual reconciliation between Tantric Saivism and Upanisadic Vedanta. He says that a boy disciple of Abhinavagupta getting just an indication from his preceptor, stood up and in order to impress the importance of Saktis on Sankaracharya, uttered Laghustava as a spontaneous flow of poetry coming out of the speech of an "Asukavi". Many other similarly wonderful but fantastic things about the meeting of the two great teachers are still being heard from old pandits of Kashmir.

There is a gap of at least two hundred years between the times of these two great teachers of monism. All the traditional tales about their meeting are therefore based on mere fiction. Such tales do not establish any historical fact. The tradition of writing such fictitious accounts of the lives of great religio-philosophic teachers is based on the policy of the authors of the later Puranic mythology. One of its fresh traditions was laid down by Madavacharya in the fourteenth century. He wrote an extensive poetical work name 'Sankra-digvijya' after about five hundred years from the time of Sankaracharya. While doing so he did not adhere to the account of the religious activities of that great teacher as given by Anantanandagiri in his Sankaravi Jaya-Kavya which was written after only about a hundred years from the time of Sankaracharya. Madavacharya wrote his poem only on the basis of his poetic imagination and personal devotion. It contains many fictitious stories and hardly any correct historical accounts. About ninety percent of it is mere fiction with just about ten percent of history in it.

Such tales about the life of Sankaracharya, as had been recorded by Madavacharya, and as had been built upon further by his followers, were imported to Kashmir in the later part of the fifteenth century by some such pandits of Kashmir that had been earlier driven out of the valley by Sikandar butshikan and were later invited back and rehabilitated in the valley by Sultan Zainulabadin. They had picked up devotion for Sankaracharya while wandering in the plains of India. But these of the pandits of Kashmir, who were highly devoted to teachers like Abhinavagupta followed the policy adopted in Sankaradigvijya and fabricated, likewise, many fantastic stories of the opposite type through that very power of poetic imagination, which had been used by Madhavacharya. It is a wonder that most of the research scholars of today do not at all care to examine the authenticity of such imaginary accounts and go on quoting Sankaradigvijya as an authority on the history of Sankaracharya. Madhavacharya says at one place that Abhanivagupta, a Sakta commentator of Brahmasutra, living in Assam (Kamarupa) was a Tantric sorcerer who applied sorcery to Sankaracharya with the result that the latter developed a dangerous disease name bhagandhara in his lower intestine. There is no evidence that can establish the existence of any scholar under the name Abhinavagupta other than the great Saiva author of Kashmir. The story is thus purely imaginary in character. The description of the temple of Sarada, as given by Madhavacharya, is also based mostly on poetic imagination. Similarly the stories prevalent in Kashmirian tradition are also mere fiction. The account of Laghustava, as having been uttered by a boy disciple of Abhinavagupta, is also based on oral tradition of an imaginary character. Its having been composed by some Lagvacharya is the

imagination of the commentator. There is neither any internal nor any external evidence to prove the correctness of any such thing.

Nityanada, an ancient commentator of some tantric works, says that Laghustava was composed by a poet named Dharmacharya. This fact has been corroborated by Vidyaranya, a fourth degree disciple in the line of Sankaracharya, in his Srividyamavatanttra. Referring to the "Maya-Kundalini" verse, he says that a particular theological doctrine had been indicated by Dharmacharya through the verse concerned in this Laghustava: Satu Sri-Dharmacharya varyaih svakiye Laghustave "mayakundalini" ityadi-slokena sucitah. (V.T.Ch. 31 P.654) The author of that Tantra appeared after about one hundred years from the time of Sankaracharya and Dharmacharya preceded him. As all the five hymns appear to be the works of one and the same author, the whole of Panchastavi was composed by him.

As far the domicile of Dharmacharya, the author, he appears to have been a southerner belonging probably to Kerala. The facts given below strengthen such view:

- i. Panchastavi resembles Saundaryalahari of Sankaracharya, a Keralite, in its technique and also in its theological as well as philosophic contents.
- ii. It alludes to the importance of Sabari as the most favourite form of the Divine Mother goddess worshipped by her devotees. Worship of Sabari holds such position in the Kerala tradition of Tantric Sadhana, but not in the Kashmirian tradition.
- iii. Panchastavi does not contain even the slightest mention of any of the kali deities popularly worshipped by Saivas of Kashmir, especially by Somananda, Abhinavagupta and Jayaratha.
- iv. The Yoga system that has been mostly and highly praised in Panchastavi is neither the Trika Yoga nor the Kaula Yoga, the two systems which were highly popular among the Saiva/Saktas of Kashmir. The hymns allude to the highest importance of Kundalini Yoga, which does not enjoy any prominent position in the Kashmirian tradition but is highly popular in the south as its highest importance has been accepted in both Tamilian and Canaries works on Siddhanta Saiva and Virasiava respectively. But Kashmir Saivism does not give much importance to Kundalini Yoga. There it can be included in Karanayoga of the Trika System and such yoga has been assigned there the third step in the descending order in the third type of yoga named Anavobaya. Saundaryalahari of Sankaracharya also describes kundalini-yoga as the means of unity with the Absolute.
- v. There is not even the slightest allusion to the Sambhavayoga or even to any special variety of Sakta yoga of the Trika system in any of the five hymns of Panchastavi.
- vi. Some practices of Kriyayoga have been alluded to in it, but any specific type of Anavayoga, like Uccara, Karana etc. of the Trika system has not been at all hinted at in Panchastavi.
- vii. Abhinavagupta and Siddhanatha (alias Sambbhunatha) have eulogized special deities of Kramanya in accordance with the Sadhana of Saktopaya, but such deities do not find any place either in Panchastavi or in other stotras like Saundarya Lahari and Subhagodaya of the south.
- viii. Panchastavi follows thus a typically Kerala tradition of theology rather than the Kashmirian tradition.
- ix. Panchastavi does not resemble even the Tattuagrabha-Stotra, a hymn to Mother goddess by Bhatta Pradyamna, the chief disciple of Bhatta Kallata. The resemblance with Saundary-Lahari is on the other hand, immensely remarkable.

x. The only important common element between the Sadhanas of the Trika system and Pancastavi is the worship of Tripura with the help of three bijamantras named Vagbhava, Kamaraja and Saktibija but that is one of the highest common factors of nearly all the Tantric systems of Saiva/Sakta theology.

xi. The Philosophic principle of absolute and theistic monism is also a common element of all monistic Saiva/ Sakta traditions and cannot lead to any specific conclusion.

**It is thus clear that** Pancastavi does not follow the Kashmirian tradition of Sakta theology but follows the Kerala one. Acharya Amrtavagbhava, a highly advanced practitioner of Saiva/Sakta theology, has also recorded such facts about Pancastavi in the introduction of the work published through his efforts and instructions. As for its highest popularity in Kashmir, that cannot lead to any definite conclusion. Makundamala by Kulasekhara Alvara of Tamilnadu also enjoys such popularity in Kashmir and stories about this author also have been heard by the present writer in his boyhood. Poetic imagination has always been a strong element in the character of Kashmiri brain and Kashmiris were ever since used to such creation of fiction that looked as history. In fact this tendency also existed in some lower or higher measure In all literary writers of India, Madhavacharva is typical example of such poetic writers. Being himself a Kashmiri, the present writer would also like that a beautiful poetic work like Pancastavi were attributed to the pen of some Kashmirian author, but the facts mentioned above do not allow him to think in such terms.

There is however no doubt in the fact that Dharmacharya, the author of Pancastavi, was a master of Saiva/Sakta monism and belonged to the whole of India from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and from Kamarupa to Dwaraka.