

## COPY RIGHT



ELSEVIER  
SSRN

**2022 IJIEMR.** Personal use of this material is permitted. Permission from IJIEMR must be obtained for all other uses, in any current or future media, including reprinting/republishing this material for advertising or promotional purposes, creating new collective works, for resale or redistribution to servers or lists, or reuse of any copyrighted component of this work in other works. No Reprint should be done to this paper, all copy right is authenticated to Paper Authors

IJIEMR Transactions, online available on 26<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022. Link

[:http://www.ijiemr.org/downloads.php?vol=Volume-11&issue=Issue 12](http://www.ijiemr.org/downloads.php?vol=Volume-11&issue=Issue 12)

**10.48047/IJIEMR/V11/ISSUE 12/120**

TITLE: A STUDY OF MYTHS AND ESOTERIC PRACTICES OF TANTRIC TRADITION IN KAMAKHYA

Volume 11, ISSUE 12, Pages: 908-916

Paper Authors **SANJAY KUMAR, DR. RAJEEV KUMAR JAIN**



USE THIS BARCODE TO ACCESS YOUR ONLINE PAPER

To Secure Your Paper As Per **UGC Guidelines** We Are Providing A Electronic Bar Code

## A STUDY OF MYTHS AND ESOTERIC PRACTICES OF TANTRIC TRADITION IN KAMAKHYA

CANDIDATE NAME= SANJAY KUMAR

DESIGNATION= RESEARCH SCHOLAR SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR

GUIDE NAME = DR. RAJEEV KUMAR JAIN

DESIGNATION= PROFESSOR

SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR

### ABSTRACT

The relation between patronage and the production of art is one of the important concerns during the contemporary period. The link between the social base in terms of the patrons and the clients and the power relations mediate the production of ideas and their representatives as one of the important issues that have been worked out. Patronage constitutes a fragment of culture; both are intertwined. It influenced the social context. Patronage could be observed in alternate traditions; it was both from above and below. It encompassed themes like religious institutions, educational institutes, art, architecture etc. Royal patronage, as well as patronage forms the common masses, constituted its alternate traditions. However, the key factor in realizing is that patronage from below is practice in a universal manner. Thus they comprise the category of client or audience in a comprehensive understanding of the term.

**KEYWORDS:** Myths And Esoteric Practices, Tantric Tradition, Kamakhya, architecture, Royal patronage

### INTRODUCTION

Royal patronage could be viewed as one of the chief strongholds in Indic religious traditions. It represents an integral aspect of religious, historical narrative since initiation. It has encompassed various religious traditions like Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina, Vaishnava, Shaiva and Tantric. Patronage extended to themes like art and architecture were also encompassed within the domain of sacred spaces.

Even though, India as a country never had a very specific condition where an individual religion was designated as a state religion, during its thousands of years of historical narrative, one or another religion in different period did enjoy state patronage. The illustration could be viewed during the reign of the Gupta dynasty what is today called as Hinduism, were granted the patronage of the dynasty,

also during the reign of Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty, Buddhism was designated almost to the status of being the state religion, and during the Mughal rule, Islam also did enjoy greater patronage than its equivalent, Hinduism and its various sectarian branches.

Royal patronage enhanced supplementary assistance for the development of any particular religious sect or tradition. With times this could be observed to have augmented. Royal patronage benefited not only the institution, art and architecture but also the sacred geography, as it assists in taking proper measures for its subsequent extent.

### Categories of studying patronage and the frames of reference

Study of patronage can be categorized into two prominent categories- royal patronage and lay patronage. These two categories of

patronage benefits in the observation of the same as two distinct entities. It also enhances in ample study and understanding of the same, the pattern of its development with times.

The category of royal patronage is prominent in the religious setting since ancient Indian historical narrative. The benefit aided through the category of royal patronage augments in the further development and spread of any particular religious tradition.

“The proliferation of sources of royal patronage also benefited religion, with the several major Indian religions finding support in different kingdoms: Buddhism in the Indo- Greek kingdoms, traditional Indian religion in the Shunga Empire and Jainism in Kalinga. The results were evident in the construction of impressive religious monuments throughout India including the first permanent temples devoted to the worship of Indian deities, stupas where the relics of the Buddha were preserved and sanctuaries excavated into the sided of mountains. The nature of traditional worship also changed as devotional cults appeared addressed to deities such as Vasudeva, the creator god Vishnu, incarnate as Krishna, in addition to the sacrifices prescribed in the Vedas.”

The category of lay patronage in the setting of Indic religious milieu could be observed through the lens of development and bonding. The said category of patronage is said to have established a firm bond amidst the patron and the client. Lay patronage was at the root of devotion with a mass base. The magnifying effect could be viewed during the patronage of the Bhakti movement and towards the Bhakti Saints.

## **Patronage patrons and comparative religion**

Comparative religious traditions are prominent in nature in India, which included Vedic religion, Puranic religion, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam constituted and developed with the benefit aided by state patronage support. This state patronage also benefited in the comprehensive development of art, architecture, iconography etc. of the said religious traditions. The state patronage also aided in the spread of religious traditions to neighboring lands like Buddhism.

Patronage regarding the setting of Hinduism is more prominent in the display of art and architecture. Temple art and architecture have reached its zenith by royal patronage. Along with royal patronage, temple art and architecture have also been benefited by the patronage received from the mercantile group.

Devotional Hinduism as a phenomena rose from the 3rd Century A.D. and the development shaped a requirement for enshrined images, and it together with the renouncing tradition of Buddhism, which made a key influence to sacred architecture led to the growing propagation of images, rock- cut and free-standing temples. From the Kusana and the Ikshvaku period initiating from the first to the third centuries A.D., patronage to Buddhist and Hindu shrines could be viewed....Under the inspiration of Puranic Hinduism, the sculpting of images and building of temples developed as the latest form of patronage.

Early Mauryan patronage to the Ajivikas as depicted in the Ashokan inscriptions depicts their hold on the social condition

during the period. Buddhism and Jainism both flourished during the early historical period under royal patronage aided to it. However, the patronage received by Buddhist and Jain was of alternate nature which was received by other religious traditions. This alternation in nature could be said to be because of the principles preached by Buddhism and Jainism.

The abandoning of materialism and the spiritual aspirations of Buddhism and Jainism led to a modification like patronage. Buddhist and Jain lay devotees offered alms to monks and devoted in religious art and architecture.... Communal patronage found among lay Buddhist, and Jain devotees in religious art from the merchant classes continued, alongside the growing involvement of higher caste princes, nobles and to a lesser extend kings.

The extended patronage aided in the development and spread of Buddhism, but it is the withdrawal of patronage that led to the decline of Buddhism in the land of its origin. However, withdrawal of patronage affected Buddhism in India, as it flourished in the neighboring lands with the benefit of royal patronage. Jainism suffered identical faith in the land of its origin.

## **PURANIC AND TANTRIC RELIGIONS AND PATRONAGE PATRONS**

Royal patronage in the setting of Puranic religion during the ancient and early medieval period displayed the nature of the indirect benefit. The temple as an institution benefited in a minor prospect than the Brahman as a dominant caste in the society. The theme of caste played a

governing role in the occasion of royal patronage during the said period.

Singh is of the view that the royal patronage played a vital part in defining dominant cults, but not by granting direct patronage to religious establishments, however, indirectly through granting patronage to Brahmans. Varied dynasties with varied origin and background both in the North like that of the Kushanas and Satavahanas in the Deccan, extending patronage to the Brahmans points out to the fact of a fundamental thread which aids in explaining few of the patterns visible in the religious history of ancient and early medieval India.

## **The Brahmanical tradition of Hinduism was established after the third century B.C.E.**

Through a system of caste, it strengthened the supremacy and reputation of the Brahmans, a class which was comprised largely of priests and scholars and it was considered distinguished within the hierarchy. Royal patronage also played a vital part in defining the supremacy of the Brahmanical cults, in a smaller amount through direct patronage of religious establishments than that of the indirect patronage of Brahmans.

Tantra in medieval religious setting rose as a prominent Indic scared space, which provided a meeting ground and voice to the lower strata of the society, which included sudras and women. However, to strive in the societal norms, it was in requirement of royal patronage. This royal patronage was delivered within the domain of the feudal state. Royal patronage for tantric religious milieu was delivered outside the arena of Vedic orthodoxy, by kings and patrons who denied this

orthodoxy and pursued to legitimize their rule.

Much of the medieval Tantra synthesis was developed by religious specialists in the employ of feudal kings who are often hailing from low- caste or foreign backgrounds sought to legitimate their rule through consecration rites denied them by the Vedic orthodoxy. As a result, much of Hindu Tantric practice involves the ritual transformation of the individual self into the idealized persona of a Trans individual god-king who creates and control a pantheon of divine and demonic vassals form his royal palace, which was located at the raised center of his utopian mandala.

## **1. Specificity of patronage patrons in Assam**

Royal patronage in Assam historical narrative comprises of various domains like religious institutes, architecture and literature. These patronage patrons have sustained from pre-Ahom to Ahom period. The various domains could flourish as a result of unrestricted patronage that it received. The royal patronage could be said to have initiated since the time of Naraka.

Patronage was not limited to any particular religious structure, but rather to the sacred sect or tradition. The mention of Naraka become inevitable when discoursed on the theme of patronage. Initiation of Shaktism patronage in ancient Assam was carried out by him. This was continued later by the Chutiyas and Ahoms. Vaishnavism as a sacred movement, was patronage by Koch in the initial stage and Ahoms in the later stage. These royal patronages were accountable for the widened success of the said sacred sects.

Literature was also comprised within the domain of royal patronage. “The development of the early Assamese literature owes a great deal to the patronage extended by the Kings to the poets, scholars and writers of the medieval period.” The literary patronage was extended for the composition of Buranjis and also Vaishnava literature.

“The outstanding contributions of the Ahom kings towards the development of Assamese language and literature were the buranjis. The buranjis were compiled under royal edicts and decrees of high dignitaries of the state so that the confidential documents also could be consulted if and when it was necessary to do so.

## **2. Source material for the study of patronage in Assam**

Study of patronage patrons in Assam could be carried out by examining the source material combined of inscriptions and texts. Pre- Ahom and Ahom period highlighted ample source material for the study of patronage. Inscriptions during the said period revealed various knowledge like land grants, donations, professions of the client etc. Texts comprised both in Sanskrit and Assamese language under the patronage of the kings. The most renowned in the category were Vaishnava literature.

Significant attributes of land grants inscriptions in pre- Ahom Assam were of the characteristics of divine affiliation then economic. A kind of all-pervasive religious attitude is amply documented in the pre- Ahom inscriptions... most of the inscriptions of pre- Ahom Assam were of land grants. The real purpose of the grants, therefore, was the donation of land.

However, the granting of land was not considered an economic operation; by the manner, it was expressed, it seems to have borne a significant affinity to a religious way of life. Although the actual purpose may have been economic, this purpose was expressed in religious terms.... Therefore a grant was something more than a mere land donation. The preparation of the donors, as well as the manner of donation, had a religious dimension to it. To leave the religious dimension out of all this and to speak of donations of land as merely as economic activity would be to present a fallacious picture. Land donation and religion were a part of the same totality for the people of pre- Ahom Kamarupa.

### **3. Patronages patrons of Kamakhya as an institution**

Pre- Ahom witnessed royal patronage extended to Kamakhya as an institution. Origin and initiation of adoration in the temple structure of Kamakhya could not be established with precision. However, the association of Kiratas as a tribe are often associated with the initiation of adoration in Kamakhya. "Before the advent of Naraka, the aboriginal Kiratas of Pragjyoisa were the followers of Saiva cult. But at the same time, the Shakti worship was prevalent among a considerable section of them. The mother Goddess or Devi Kamakhya manifested in the form of Yoni symbol and representing Shakti or procreative force of the female was an object of veneration for those Kiratas, who were the devotees of the creed."

Naraka initiated and bought Kamakhya under the umbrella of royal patronage. Naraka, however, shares a mythical origin. It could be established that he initiated

mother goddess adoration with both Aryan and non- Aryan tradition. Taking over Kamakhya from the Kiratas, had unlocked ways for its adoration in both paths.

It was Naraka who after conquering Pragjyotisha and its original inhabitants, the Kiratas brought to prominence the aboriginal cult- that is the cult of mother goddess adoration in the form of Yoni which was contrasting from the cult of Shiva adoration in the form of phallic. No wonder the Kamakhya was an embodiment to the synthesis of both Aryan and non-Aryan beliefs and practices.

The mother cult of Kamakhya must have been a part of certain matriarchal tribes like the Khasis and the Garos. To win over their allegiance and support and to facilitate the propagation Aryan ideas and customs, royal patronage was granted to this local cult of Kamakhya.

Ahom embraced and patronage Hinduism, which included Shakti worship as well. "Hinduisation struck strong roots in eastern Assam mainly after the Ahom royalty embraced Hinduism and offered its patronage from the 15th Century, especially as a result of the expansion of the Ahom territory westward which subsumed many Hindu speaking subjects including the Hinduised autochthons."

### **THE QUESTION OF MYTH AND HISTORY: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES**

Treatment of myths in historical narrative has primarily been of skeptical nature. Its authentication and objectivity are associated with a question. The initial problem associated with myth would be its definition. A defining myth with a few precise sets of words has proved to be a challenging job for scholars. It could offer

various meanings in different time frame and circumstance, which could be interpreted in numerous ways. It could be perceived with altered meaning in different religious beliefs.

The bracketing of myth with religion and folklore could also be posed as a problem in dealing with the same. It has to be understood beyond the boundary of both. Myths could be treated as an additional path to understand any religious setting or particular folklore. Its understanding should be grasped symbolically.

Myth cannot be defined in any one definition, no platonic form of myth against which all actual instances could be measured. Myths could be viewed to diverge immensely in the morphology and the social functions. The spiritual and psychological expansions are mirrored by myths, spiritual and psychological biography as a species, and it seems reasonable to expect that religion could also mirror the same development.

Myth has constantly been designated as the consequence of an unconscious activity and a free creation of the imagination. But here myth was made according to plan. The fresh political myths do not grow up freely.... They are artificial effects which are fabricated by very skilled and wily artisans... thus myths can be invented in the same way and according to the same method as any other modern weapon- as machine guns or airplanes. It is a fresh approach- and a thing of decisive prominence. It has altered the form of social life.

### **Important theories on Myth**

Myth could be employed as a vital source for the narration of historical events. It could hardly be overlooked when

discussing origin themes. No one precise definition could be attributed to it. Theory on myth could be interpreted in relation to various aspects associated with viz. origin, function and subject. Each aspect could be categorized as theories on myth. Thus it could be grasped elaborately. However few important scholars could be discussed when discussing theories on myth, like Mircea Eliade, Carl Jung, Joseph Campbell, and Mary Midgley.

Mircea Eliade is a well-known scholar on the history of religion, who has contributed his writings on the theme of myth too. He defines myth in the following words; myth describes a sacred history; it narrates to an episode that took place during the primordial period, the fabled time of the 'beginning'. In other words, myth expresses how through the actions of Supernatural Beings, reality comes into existence, be it the complete reality or the cosmos or only a fragment of reality- an island, a species of plants, a particular kind of human behavior or an institution. He have also noted vitality of myth in the following words myths, that it, describes not only the origin of the world, of animals, of plants and of man, but also all of the primordial events in consequence of which man became what he is today- mortal, sexed and organized in a society, obliged to work in order to live and working in accordance with certain rules.

Carl Jung has studied the theme of myth in a serious manner. Most of his works centers around the theme of myth, but not any particular work deal extensively regarding the theory of myth. However the extensive work done by him deals with the same in bits and pieces. Jung had some difference of opinion on the same with

Sigmund Freud. However, his attempt to associate dreams and myths is owed to Freud's analysis of dreams, which states that dreams have meanings.

## **THE QUESTION OF MYTH IN INDIAN HISTORY WRITING**

Question of myth in Indian historical narration contrasts from the understanding of myth in western narrations. Indian historical narration draws its myths in accordance with divine beings, influenced and highlighted in the religious literature. Campbell makes an observation The magnitude to which the mythologies and therewith psychologies of the orient and occident deviated in the course of the period between the dawn of civilization in the Near East and the present age of mutual rediscovery appears in their contrasting descriptions of the shared mythological image of the first being who was originally one but became two.

Religious literature laid the foundation of the establishment of myths in Indian historical narrative, which were included in the Vedas, Puranas and the two epics. They have also included local believes and customs in the creation of the myths. Thaper views myths as a narrative of Puranas, Myth is in a sense a prototype history since it is a collection of concepts collected in a narrative form to conserve and give implication to a significant feature of the past. Though myths cannot be applied as expressive sources on the past, their study can be used as expressive sources on the past; their study can reveal the more emphatic assumptions of a society... Mythos is defined as an 'utterance' often a tale narrated in connotation with a religious ceremony. In that sense, the narratives of the Puranic

traditions were myths since the akhyana was recited on ritual occasions and the Purana is explained as relating to ancient lore which would tend to be preserved in mythical form.

Shulman in his work has attempted to study South Indian myths. He is of the opinion that South Indian myths have borrowed much of their context from North Indian myths. The Tamil myths are nevertheless, a portion of the broader world of Hindu mythology; however, diverse their orientation, however, local their concerns, they are not independent of the classical Sanskrit tradition by any means. On the contrary, they have engaged several of the most well-known northern myths and modified them to their purposes, often altering them completely. Tamil myths share a mutual pantheon with the classical Sanskrit Puranas and with other regional literature though purely local.

Doniger, in her work on Hindu Myth had made an attempt to study mythology in the Indian historical narrative by selecting a few particular myths. She is of the opinion that Puranas were the major sources for most of the myths in Hinduism. She writes, the most widespread source of Hindu mythology, are the eighteen 'great' Puranas and the numerous 'minor' Puranas, veritable encyclopedias of Indian thought. Most Puranas have a strong sectarian bias so that the same myth appears in very different versions in different Puranas... The Puranas remains the basis of most 'modern' Hindu retellings of the myths, which seldom deviate far in any essential point from the spirit—or, indeed, from the letters of the traditional texts."



In Indian history, writing myths have contributed as an evident source of events, which highlighted the aspect of continuity. They have aided in the introduction of eras, events and origin of various mystic beings. Puranas were the major source which provided the frame for development of myths.

## CONCLUSION

Kamakhya as a primary center of Shakti worship as it celebrates festivals like Ambubachi Mela and Kumari Puja. These festivals mark the celebration of womanhood in the form of the annual celebration in the temple complex. Study of patronage patrons and myths associated with Kamakhya would also elevate the study of the same. It could be said that mixed method has to be applied for the study of Kamakhya.

Thus it could be said that Kamakhya is beyond the dichotomy of pure- impure and auspicious –inauspicious as in Tantric tradition the binary of the same are blended. It could not be placed within the ambit of socio-economic turn in temple studies as the frame of jajmani system could not be applied to Kamakhya. In the study of religious milieu, Kamakhya has to be viewed with the distinct identity of Tantric theological college. It creates a hybrid space where contradictory domains like death- life, pure- impure and auspicious –inauspicious could be viewed at the same time. These features mark Kamakhya as a unique institution which stands out among others.

The last theme deals with patronage patrons, myth and esoteric practices as part of the institution of Kamakhya. Patronage represents the aspect both from above and below. Royal patronage from above and

patronage from common massed represents its audience from below. Royal patronage could be viewed in various Indic religious traditions, and Tantra was no different from it. Outside the arena of orthodox Vedic space, those to legitimize their rules extended royal patronage to Tantric tradition. However, with times lack of royal patronage also contributed to decline of the same. The institution of Kamakhya could be viewed in the light of royal patronage since long. Naraka was the first king to have extended royal patronage to Kamakhya and initiated adoration in the temple complex. During the later period, royal patronage was carried forward by Koch and Ahom Kingdoms. Koch patronage to Kamakhya was initiated before the Ahom. The present structural complex of the temple was built under the Koch Kingdom by Nara Narayan in 1565. The first epigraphic evidence of patronage to Kamakhya by the Ahom could be viewed under King Siva Simha in 1715. The theme of myth should be grasped symbolically in the understanding of religious setting and folklore. However, terminology of myths in Indian historical narration differs from western terminology in regard to cosmic times and reference of four ages or *yugas*. Historiography of myths in Assam historical narratives represents two distinct phases.

## REFERENCES

Channa, S.M. (ed.) 2006, *Feminist approach to Religion: Ancient religion, women's role, religious rituals, spectral sexualities, feminist perspective to religious systems*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi.

Chapple, Christopher Key (ed), 2016, *Yoga in Jainism*, Routledge Publications, London.

Chari, S.M. Srinivasa 1994, *Vaishnavism: Its Philosophy, Theology and Religious Discipline*, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi.

Chatterjee, Suhas Indian 1998, *Civilization and Culture* M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

Chattopadhyaya, Sudhakar 1978, *Reflections on the Tantras*, Motilal Banarsidass Pvt. Limited, Delhi.

Chattopadhyaya, S. 1990, "Social life." *In the Comprehensive history of Assam, Vol. I*, Ancient period, Guwahati: Publication Board.

Choudhury, P.C. 1966, *The history of the people of Assam to the twelfth century* ondon.

A.D. Guwahati: Department of History in Assam.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda 1976, *The Dance of Shiva*, Sagar Publications, New Delhi.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda & (ed) by Mrs. Coomaraswamy, Ananda 1999, *Introduction to Indian art*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi.

Copel, Pala and Link, AL 2008, *Soul sex: Tantra for Two*, Career Press.

Cozart, Daniel 2005, *Highest Yoga Tantra: An Introduction to the Esoteric Buddhism of Tibet*, Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York.

Cush, Denise; Robinson, Catherine and York, Michael (ed.) 2008, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Routledge, Taylor and Francis, L