

# SOCIO-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AND DYNAMICS OF NATHA-CULT: A STUDY IN KENDRAPARA DISTRICT, ODISHA

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## Abstract

***Yoga the system which is as old as the spiritual culture of Bharata varsha. Yogi revolts against the bondage of human mind and needs. Yoga helps as to reach a high level of consciousness through a transformation of the psychic organism. Yoga is the most important source of concentration to enrich the objective towards its goal. The meaning of the word is to connect. Thus it is the connecting thread between mind and omnipresence. It leads the soul towards supreme soul. In our religion, yoga plays an important place for every yogi to culminate the objective. In this respect, yoga in Nath religion procures special significance for every believer. Naths are also known as Yogis, because the foundation of their order is based on the ideas of Yoga. The Philosophical believe is that one can achieve greatest happiness and fulfillment of life through Yogic discipline with meditation practices. Yoga sadhayet Yogi. An attempt has been made to cast light on the subject.***

**Keyword: Yoga, Yogi and Yogic culture**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Kendrapara is concomitant with "Kendara" (one kind of musical instrument made of gourd) and 'para' means hamlet of a village. This instrument is played by some sects of people called Nath Jogi (Yogi), who earns his livelihood by playing 'Kendara' and by moving from door to door for alms. After the advent of the new Nathism, some sects of people adopted Nathism and called themselves Natha or Natha Yogi. It is worth

mentioning here that one ancient stone image of Machhendranath, one of the chief preacher of Nath cult is worshipped at Rajnagar. It is understood from an inscription on the body of this image that Nath Cult was prevalent in Kendrapara area during 9th Century A.D. The descendants of Nath family are now living in area surrounding of Kendrapara at Ichhapur, Nikirai, Kashati, Chandol, Derabis, Choudakulat, Taradipal (Pattamunde), Chandiapalli (Aul), Rajnagar, Mahakalpara and Pundalo (Marsaghai) etc. Kendrapara being its Kendra (Centre) the name derived Kendrapara or Kendrapara. Another thing to be noted that the word 'Kendrapara' is derived from the word 'Kendra Palli'. In ancient times, it was a centre (Kendra) of business.

The Nath cult is not a new movement, but one evolutionary phase of a very old Siddha tradition of India. The Siddha tradition explored Yoga. Naths are a Shaiva sub-tradition within Hinduism in India and Nepal. A mediaval movement, it combined ideas from Buddhism, Shaivism and Yoga traditions in India. The Naths have been a confederation of devotees who consider Shiva, as their first lord of guru, with varying lists of additional gurus.

Nath cult follows the religious and yogic discipline. Therefore, it helps to make life pure and arranged, which culminate to procure the divine identity. It fabrics a core thinking, connected with religious values. It awakens from ignorance to feel the presence of almighty. The richness of Nath Cult has created a conducive ambiance to be followed by different people irrespective of caste, religion and territorial barriers.

Most of the Nath cults descendants were playing Kendara for the livelihood or they had their own ethical

and social values for the society. Also question arises how the social perception and social acceptance has been impacted on Nath-cult. Apart from all the main point under consideration so called Nath communities were playing Kendara for livelihood or they have any cultural and religious values. Still another quires arises for the Nath communities, are they acculturated with Kendara for spreading the religious or ethical values for the people as like Bhakti/Sufi/Bhakti movement in 12th/13th Century or they were only following their traditional family occupation for livelihood.

## 2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the socio-cultural dimensions and dynamics of Natha Cult. Impact of modernization and lack of social acceptance to our ancient culture, the previous custom and tradition has been in the verge of losing its entity.

The main objectives around which this research intends to explore are as follows:-

- To understand the importance of Natha cult, their socio cultural aspects and are they culturally trained to play the musical instrument called Kendara or that have any religious or ethical objective for the society.
- To explore the characteristics, significance, current trends of Nath Cult. Why Current Nath Yogi are not playing the Kendara. "Are they not accepted by the society or they are struggling for modern facilities".
- To know whether Kendara music is for livelihood or preaching ethical values.
- To investigate the impact of the modernization and social pressure on Nath Cult.
- To find out the role and contribution of Nath cult in the field of Yoga, PALA, Ayurvedic health care, Jyotisa Charcha (Astrology) and literary achievements have the relevance for the present society.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

When we discuss about the Nath cult (Ray 2001) those are accepting the Nath Yoga they called Nath Yogi. This religion was spread from very ancient period from India

to abroad. Nath yogis are devotee of Lord SHIVA. Yoga, sacrifice and salvation are the main aim of Nath cult.

It is believed (Mohanty – 2006) that in between 10-12th Centuries, Sidha cult was replaced by Nath cult & owes its mark by eminent preacher like Gorakhnath, Matsyendranath and Jalandharnath. The Naths are known for their great inclination towards religion and yogic disciplines. Therefore it is one of the sublime and sumptuous communities, aims to reach the blessing by supreme soul through Yoga and Meditation. Out of 12th main branches, the Satyanathi branch is situated in Odisha. This was known as headquarter of Nath Dharma in Odisha. In this regard Matsyendranath and Gorakhanath are the main preachers of Nath Dharma. So Odisha is the hub of this religion, clearly shows the density and gravity enables to procure a pick point.

The Nath cult (Acharya, 1969) is closely connected with the doctrines of Yoga. It is also linked with worship of Pasupati SHIVA i.e with the worship of SHIVA as the lord of animals. Among the Indus Valley relics, the Pasupati Icon and Images of Yogis have been found, which suggest that the cult may be very old indeed, later all these cults came into close contact with Buddhism, Jainism and popular Hinduism. The Philosophical believe is that one can achieve greatest happiness and fulfillment of life through Yogic discipline, meditation practices and by sub dying powerful sense organs, such as Yamas, Niyamas, Asana, Pranyam, Pratyahar, Dhyana, Dharana, Samadhi are part and practices of Yogic culture and their living style was like a monk means far away from materialistic needs for which people called them Nath Yogi.

According (M. Sri – 2010), the Naths are an ancient order founded by Shiva Mahadev who is also known as AdiNath, Maha Yogi, Yogi of Yogis. The Naths were yogis par excellence. All the important works on yoga like the GorakshaShataka, the GherandaSanihita, the HathayogaPradipika and so on were written by Nath Yogis. The asanas, Pranayama, Kriya yoga, bandhas and mudras were practiced and perfected by them. They were usually itinerant yogis and were popularly called Kaanphatasor torn eared one, because they punctured the cartilage of their ears and wore large earrings, and also identified as – SidhaSampradaya, KaulaSampradaya, Nath Yogi Sampradya, AbadhutSampradaya and KanaphataSampradayain different parts of the country. They are (Nath – 2013)

known by title as Nath, Nathsharma, Debsharma, DebNath & Goswami also. But as a whole all are Yogi by caste and Niranjangotree.

**4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

**4.1. Research Design:**

Descriptive-method was used for this research design to address the objectives of the project. Descriptive type of design denotes to a preliminary study and the detailed discussion about the problem. Exploring means to enquiry into social phenomenon with 'care' i.e to scrutinize study materials related to the phenomena under investigation. This flexible research design provides opportunity for considering different aspects of a problem under study and emphasizing on the discovery of ideas and insights.

**4.2. Tools of data collection:**

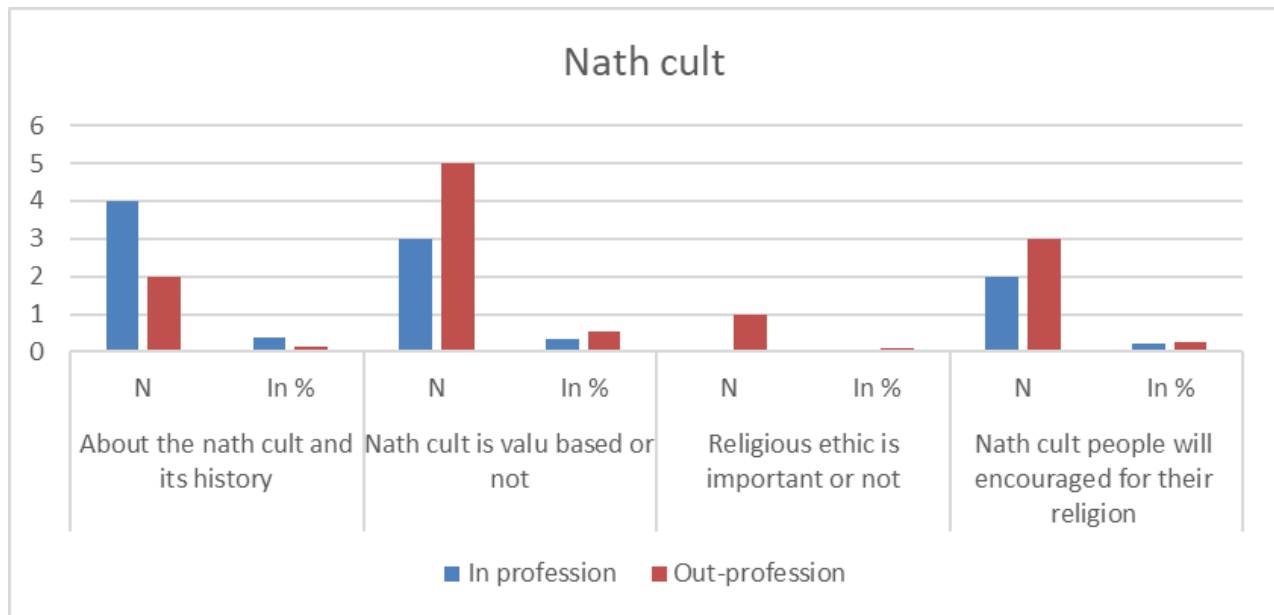
In this research data has been collected to magnify the purpose and goal. In this quantitative and qualitative process of research is fraught with different data

collected from different sources mostly primary data sources like:-

- Interviews – the methodology can be the interview means the face to face interview of the Nath Yogi communities and need to explore their traditional objective to play Kendara.
- Focus group discussion – focus group discussion among the Nath Yogi communities to find out the unique point.
- Participation observation – a participant observation need to be done in their social and cultural life.

**4.3. Findings –**

The Sample size are taken from in profession and out profession and it is revealed that most the in profession people are switch over the other profession, neither they are The members of jogi community, who used sing ancient religious songs by playing an instrument called kendra, and beg for alms from door to door, have decreased in number in the state.



**Fig- (A)**

Over the years, members of this community have changed the means of earning their livelihood by switching to other professions. The kendra players used

to sing songs from Tika Gobind Chandra, Danbira Harishchandra, Boulagai and other ancient spiritual texts. One hardly gets to hear songs such as Bhaju Kina Ram Naam Re Gobinda these days. However,

few members of this community are still seen in some villages wearing a saffron attire and pagdi as headgear. Their songs are accompanied by the music of kendra — a percussion instrument made of monitor lizard skin that is hit with a small stick to create vibrations. Earlier, kendra singers used to adopt the profession as a family tradition. "Right from our birth, we were baptised by our forefathers to continue the tradition of singing at doorsteps playing the kendra and asking for alms.

As per the fig-A most of the Nath Cult people are good knowledge on Nath cult and its religion. But looking the figure of value based or not the Nath cult people are switching over other profession and not having the keen interest to make the value in religion and its sustainability aspect. It is quite surprised the out of profession people are feels that Nath cult is having the religious aspect and its importance. and the last indicators is Nath cult people are encouraged or not, the answer is not because the government doesnot have such kind of motivational aspect to encourage the nath cult in preserve the culture in systematic aspect. Hence it is the matter of concern and following question may be unfold in future.

- a) What is the importance of Nath Cult?
- b) Changing aspects of Nath Culture.
- c) What is the Socio-cultural and ethical contribution of Nath cult for the society?
- d) Why 'Nath' communities are switching to other profession?
- e) Role of modernization and its impact on traditional Indian culture?
- f) Impact of Yoga, Ayurveda and PALA for the present society?

## 5. CONCLUSION-

Religion is not a matter of rejection or creates division; rather it is an way to search for salvation and creates brother-hood relation. In this connection Nath philosophy has created the way with all its virtues who transform an ordinary life into extraordinary, being a pure heart and soul. It is an undeniable fact that, the entire religious world accepts the significance of Yoga in life. Yoga as a purifier in human life has all strength to purifier the thought and action to bottle up all vices and bring forth the cause to feel the existence of the Supreme Power. In this context Nath cult proves itself

the broadness of Nath religion, Rich vision of Nath cult has globalised the grip.

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