

Scientific aspects of Religious practices in Hinduism as reflected in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī*

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Abstract: In every religion, there must be some rituals, sermons, commemorations towards gods, deities or saints, sacrificial rites, festivals, prayer, funerary rites, matrimonial rites, culture and creeds etc. which gives a proper direction of the subsistence to the group of people who follow the particular religion. Those religious practices, faiths and believes are very important to maintain a social and cultural balance in the society. Moreover, some religious faiths have certain scientific reasons too. Sometimes, these religious practices conductive Science. The interdisciplinary ground of Science and Religion is also known as theology and science. So, in this present paper attempt has been made to highlight the Religious practices in Hinduism as reflected in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī* and also discuss their scientific approaches.

Keywords: Environment, science, religious, faiths, believes, *Tīrtha Kaumudī*

Methodology: This paper is basically based on the Primary sources as well as Secondary sources. In this present paper the texts of *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Atharva Veda* and *Tīrtha Kaumudī* are used for Primary data. References are put as end notes. Bibliography is placed separately. The Name of the books and original Sanskrit words except proper nouns and quotations are italicized in main body. The quotations mentioned as endnotes are not italicized.

I. Introduction: The *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is one of the smṛti digests i.e. *nivandhas* of Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa Bhaṭṭācārya. The subject matter of this work is based on different pilgrimage sites of Entire India. The whole work of the *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is broadly divided into two sections viz. *Sarvatīrthasādhāraṇavidhiḥ* and *Kāmarūpatīrthāni*. From the names of these two sections we can assume that in the former part we find the general rules and regulations of entire Hindu pilgrimage sites of India and the later part includes the description of the pilgrimage sites of Kāmarūpa. The rules and regulations of *tirthayātrā* are also elaborately discussed in this work.

Moreover, some religious practices as suggested by different scriptures are also a great discussion of this work.

Religious faiths and believes deals with the approaches of mythological, supernatural or spiritual aspects of a religion. On the basis of those faiths and believes, some rites and rituals are instructed by different scriptures of Hinduism which are known as religious practices. In Hinduism some rituals have been following from the age of Vedas. Puranas also contain some religious values and give suggestions on it. But In the age of Dharmashastras those rituals were established in as instruction. Though apparently, the religious instructions or the religious practices are perceived as unnecessary or impractical, these religious faiths and believes contain some scientific value which are very important to follow in our day to day life. As the *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is a collection of facts and datas of different scriptures, the religious side as reflected in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī* has some scientific features.

II. Religious faiths and believes of Hinduism as reflected in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī*: The work *Tīrtha Kaumudī* is all about the pilgrimages of entire India. So, it is obvious to have some religious instructions in this work. In the very beginning, it is stated that, Lord Śiva is staying in Kamrup with his beloved wife Pārvaṭī and one can easily please them by worshipping here.¹ Some people are able to achieve heaven, some of them can get liberation and some other can attain the blessings of Lord Śiva after bathing in Kāmarūpa Mahāpītha which is very auspicious even the *Kaliyuga*. After taking a bath in the Karatoyā River of Kāmarūpa, one can get four times better achievement than another tīrthas like Vārānasī, Puroṣottam, Dvāravatī etc and his liberation will be certain. Stating the glory of Kāmākhyā, it is said that one can achieve hundred times better fruit than the other pilgrimage sites. If one goes to the Jalpīśa temple after taking bath in the Nandikuṇḍa and then taking *haviṣa* (food taking during the time of fast) in the night and worships Siddheśvarī Śivā and after taking fast in the *aṣṭamī*, he/she never take rebirth. Here it is also said that after taking bath in the river Jatodakā in the *śuklā aṣṭamī* of *caitra* month (March- April) he/ she can get long life. Taking bath in the River Sītāprabhā and Agada one can

achieve *viṣṇuloka* and *brahmaloka* respectively. One who worships *kṛttivāsa*, after taking bath in the Candrikā River; his/her all sins are removed. One who takes bath in the River Phenilā in the month of Phāgun (February- March) he/she can achieve heaven. There are two *kuṇḍas* named kapota and karaṇa behind the river of Trisrota and taking bath in these two *kuṇḍas*, if one worship Lord Sun after riding the Natvā mountain, he/she can achieve the *sūryaloka*. The author quotes the verses of *Kālikāpurāṇa*, where it is said that the River Caṇḍikā is flowing from the Dhavala mountain where there are two Śivaliṅgas named Golaka and Śṛṅgī. One who worship the two Śivaliṅgas he can able to achieve the fruit of *Aśvamedha yajña*. If one takes bath in the River Apūrṇabhava, he can never get rebirth as the name of the river stated. One who rides the Darpaṇa Mountain and worship Kuvera after taking bath in the River Darpaṇa in the month of *kāti* (October- November) he/she can attain prosperity. One who worships Moon after climbing the Candrakūṭa Mountain, his wife never faces miscarriage. In the *Yoginītantra*, it is stated that if one pray the deity Rudra in the Dvipaṅcaka kṣetra than the devotee can achieve the fruit of Jyotiṣṭoma yajña.² The Puskaratīrtha in the Satyayuga, Naimiṣakṣetra in the Tretāyuga, Kurukṣetra in the Dvāparayuga and Aśvatīrtha in the Kaliyuga are regarded as the highest pilgrimage sites. If one gives oblation to his forefathers after taking bath in the Brahmasarovara, the souls of the death persons become free and thus also remove their sins. After climbing the Maṇikūta hill, if one sees the river Sumaṅgalā which is flowing near by the Maṇikūta, then he can achieve the fruit of bathing at Gaṅgā. Bathing in the Vāsavakuṇḍa and climbing on the Sukāta hill give the achievement of Indraloka. If the patients of leprosy takes bath in the time of sunrise in *saptamīthī* of the month of Māgha or Phāguna (January- February), can get rid of from this disease. If a women worship the Lord Sun by Karabī flower, Ārkaṇa flower or Dhātṛī fruit taking it into a clay-pot, than she will have a son.³ If one takes bath in the *Agastyatīrtha* and

Gavākṣagati Lake, his forefathers will be free from debt. One who climbing the Nilācala hill where goddess Kāmākhyā is staying, can achieve the fruit of Aśvamedhayajña. The liberation-desired person and the kingdom-desired person should climb the Nilācala hill through north and west sides respectively and by climbing the hill from south side can regain his kingdom. There is given some instructions that- do not visit goddess Kāmākhyā at the time of bathing and mid-day and do not touch the *yonīpītha* with dirty cloths and at the time of taking meal and brushing teeth are also mentioned. At first the *yonīpītha* should be washed by water and after that milk, curd, butter, suger, jaggery, honey, sesamum, madhu-kṣīra, uṣṇodaka, phalodaka, kuśodaka etc. are used in the washing process. Here it is also that goddess Kāmākhyā is satisfied by the Kāyikanamaskāra. The process of giving *nirmāli* is also stated here.⁴ One can achieve the fruit of Rājimedha Yajña by worshipping Parameśvara by reciting prasāda mantra. One is able to get *mahāvīdyā* by reciting the *kūlādi trikūṇḍa mantra*. Here is a instruction that- Goddess Parameśvarī should be worshipped by blood (*rudhira*), meat (*māṅsa*) and alcohol (*madya*).⁵ It is said here that – do not eat the meat of tortoise and leaf at night. It is also said that if one visits Kauṭi-Liṅga after taking bath in the Rāmahrada in Dharmāraṇya, he/she is able to get body like deities and also get the fruit of Vājapey Yajña. After saluting four yugas if one touches the Karpaddīdevatā, he will be free from rebirth and doṣas of yugas.⁶ One can achieve the fruit of Rājasūya and Aśvamedha yajña by worshiping god Karpaddī with *pañcākṣaramantra*. One can get the same fruit with the donation of the *tulāpuruṣa* at the day of solar eclipse at the pilgrimage sites like Puṣkara and Kurukṣetra. It is also said that by taking bath in the Kapilagaṅgā, one can achieve heaven or *Brahmaloka*. There are three streams are flowing through the Vaśiṣṭhāśrama of Sandhyācala hill viz. Sandhyā, Lalitā and Kānta one can achieve *Śivaloka* by bathing in Lalitā.

It is said that there are a *Śivaliṅga* on the Śṛṅgāṭa Mountain and one is able to get liberation by worshipping lord Śiva after climbing that mountain.

III. Scientific aspects of religious practices: It can be seen that, amalgamating so many verses from different sources the author wants to establish the glory of the tīrthas of Kāmaruṇa which also reflects the religious part of the *Tīrtha Kaumudī*. But if we go through it thoroughly then some scientific aspects are noticed behind these religious faiths and believes. In this work it is instructed that one should take bath at the period of Sunshine to get rid of leprosy. Actually leprosy is the diseases of skin and vitamin D is very important to prevent the diseases of skin. Sunrays contain a great amount of Vitamin D and that is why it is instructed in the *Tīrtha Kaumudī*. Moreover, according to the *Tīrtha Kaumudī* the consumption of meat of tortoise and leaf is totally prohibited at night. Actually after the Sunset the metabolism system of a person is gradually decreased and at night it becomes very low. That is why the nutrition experts always suggest to take light food at night. The meat of tortoise as well as leafs need much time for digestion which should be totally avoid at night. Mountain climbing is regarded very auspicious in this treatise which also has a great scientific approach. Actually mountain climbing is really a good exercise which gives physical as well as mental fitness to a person. Moreover, different Yajñas i.e. sacrificial rites are recommended to be done in the scriptures of Hinduism. Actually lighting of fire by putting clarified butter is a good way to purify the environment. The smoke and aroma coming from the Yajña creates a pure, nutritional and medicinal atmosphere.

VI. Conclusion: Thus it can be said that though the religious faiths and believes are perceived apparently like superstitions, those have definitely some scientific aspects which have been being believed from the Vedic age to still. In this context the treatise called *Tīrtha Kaumudī* has a great importance.

References:

¹ kāmārūpaṃ mahāpītham guhyataram param/

² kṣetram tripañcakaṃ nāma sarvadeva namaskṛtam/pūjayitvā tatra rudram jyotiṣtomaphalam labhet// *Yoginītantram*, 4.2 as quoted by Pītāmbara Siddhāntavāgīśa, Biswanarayan Shastri (ed.), *Tīrtha Kaumudī*, p. 167

³ karabīreṇa cārkena tathā dhārī phalena ca/ karabīraśataṃ datvā nārī putravatī bhavet// *Yoginītantram*, 5. 7

⁴ maṅmuktāsavarṇāni deve dattāni yāni vai/na nirmālyam tad bhavedbdaṃ tāmrapātram tathaiva ca/paṭī śāṭī ca sanmālyam naivedyam dattamātrataḥ/modakam kṣarāñcaiva yāmārdhena maheśvari//paṭṭavastram trimāsānte yajñasūtram tryaham smṛtam/yāvaduṣṇam bhavedannaṃ paramānnaṃ tathaiva ca//matsyam ca rudhirañcaivāhorātreṇa pārvati/muhurtam dadhidugdhañcānnaṃ yāmena śāñkari//karavīramahorātram bilbapatram tathaiva ca/javāvakūlamālyāñca nirmālyam sārddhayāmake// *Yoginītantra*, 2.7. 174-179

⁵ rudhirairmatsyamāñsaiśca pūjayet parameśvarīm/ *Yoginītantram*, 8. 19 p. 267

⁶ caturyugam namaskṛtya drṣṭvā devam karpaddinam/na jāyate punargarve yugadoṣairṇa lipyate// *Yoginītantram*, 2.8.80-81

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