

Glimpse of 'jogi' Community and their Tunes in Sikkim

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Abstract- The origins of the Jogi group are unknown due to a lack of systematic anthropological investigations, with oral traditions frequently merging with legends and myths. The Jogi community, which dates back to ancient times, has evolved into a separate ethnic group that resides mostly in Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Nepal. They differentiate themselves from conventional Hinduism by engaging in socio-religious behaviours like as alcohol use, tantric rites, and animism. The interaction of set musical notes and flowing words gives a rich, dynamic character to the performance, making each recitation a distinct statement of commitment and skill. The tunes of Jogi are like chanting and melody mixed. In the mid night when people sleep, on that time that sound make mysterious feeling and lightly horror. The myth is there that, during chanting of Jogi at midnight the evils are destroy from the surrounding places. When they come near the house that time the tune gives the feeling as healing. Sikkim is the best part of India where we can get the opportunity to introduce with Jogi.

Key words: Jogi, Jogi community, Tunes of Jogi, Jogi in Sikkim

INTRODUCTION

The present study delves into the many facets of Jogi music in Sikkim, to clarify its socio-cultural significance, thematic foundations, and historical roots. This research aims to shed light on the intricate relationships between tradition, identity, and creative innovation by examining the evolution of the Jogi melody within the framework of Sikkimese culture. The Jogi people are among the poor and disadvantaged ethnic groupings of Sikkim. This group's characteristics include being a demographic minority, experiencing poverty and social and political marginalization, and having an unclear ethnic identity. In any case, throughout the long term, Jogis began to direct Pheri custom whenever as occupation, for their endurance, as a result of their condition of outrageous destitution. Jogis were chided and ignored by individuals when they were playing out the Pheri

custom past Kartik and Chaitra months.[Kri12 \l 16393]

BACKGROUND OF JOGI

According to scholars such as Briggs (1973) and Sharma (1982), the Jogi group may have originated with the Nath Yogis, a sect of the larger Nath Sampradaya in ancient Nepal. The term "Jogi" is commonly used to denote someone who has nothing or has cut off links with society and family. According to the Broader Nepali Dictionary (2002), "Jogi" is virtually synonymous with words like "Sadhu," "Santa," and "Sanyasi." The Nath Yogis, Gorakhnath's students, previously reigned over territories such as Karnali and Nepal's midwest. They practiced a combination of Shaivism and Vajrayana, were famed for Hathiyoga, and accepted women as sacrifices in accordance with the 'Panchamkar' ideology. The community's size was greatly enlarged by assimilating slaves from ethnic groups like as the Tharu, Magar, and Gharti, who were commonly referred to as "Sadhya" or "Mudra," thereby increasing the Nath Sampradaya. The descendants of these slaves, the Karma Nachaleka Jogi, were tasked by Gorakhnath with protecting humanity from evil forces. They were distinguished from other mainstream Nath Yogis by their earlobe piercings, which functioned as a symbol of their lack of the privilege of inner observation, or Karma chalaune. These Karma Nachaleka Jogis, who are mostly Magars, were entrusted with the holy duty of blowing the "Pheri" horn to ward off evil spirits and gather alms. Despite physical similarities to Mongolian races, their mixed heritage prevents them from being categorized as a single race. The Jogis refuse classification under the Hindu Varna caste system, retaining their own cultural identity. Their religious rites and social customs, which incorporate tantric traditions and animistic beliefs, highlight their non-Hindu identity and distinctness within Nepalese society [Kri12 \l 1033]

THE JOGI COMMUNITY

The Jogi community is one of Sikkim's most marginalized and minority ethnic groups. This community is socially and politically ostracized, economically disadvantaged and extremely impoverished, demographically minority, and ethnically unidentified [Kri12 \l 16393]. This community, also known as Pheriwala Jogi, takes their name from the Pheri, a blackbuck horn used in rites. Traditionally, Jogi men would beg from door to door at night, blowing the Pheri, and return the next day with donations. Although this tradition has ended, the Jogi people have been permanent inhabitants of Sikkim for a long time. This caste known as the Jogis spends their evenings in the villages blowing the baranth horn to ward off ghosts and evil spirits. Adult Jogis are taught to speak with spirits and ghosts. To fend off ghosts and evil spirits, they visit towns at night blowing "Baranth Horn" or conch shells or human shin bones. They travel around each house three times, blowing the instrument and repeating mantras. After visiting homes at night, they stroll around them and gather alms the next day. Black urd, rice, turmeric powder, red chili, black pepper, salt, mustard oil, cash, pieces of black fabric, and so forth are among the alms. For food, they also cultivate vegetables and raise animals [JRS11 \l 16393].

JOGIS RITUALS

Jogi culture is one of the centuries-old traditions performed by the Jogis caste in the Nepalese community. This is quite popular in Jogi's community. They do these rituals three times every year. Jogi gets up at midnight, visits a person's home, blows a unique wind instrument called SINGHNAATH also called 'Baraant ko shing' (Blackbuck horn), and returns in the morning to receive offerings and blessings. Individuals acquire confidence and believe that they will have peace at home, that evil and environmental difficulties will be eradicated, and that nothing unpleasant will happen. The religion of the Jogi people in Sikkim is based on animism, shamanism, and tantrism, with an emphasis on ancestral worship and devotion to Guru Goroknath. They believe in a spirit realm where ghosts and ancestors cohabit, and they use mantras and tantric rituals to fend off evil spirits and bring good fortune. Each Jogi home has a holy

area known as Kul where ancestral worship is performed to seek blessings and protection via rituals and sacrifices. The Kul Puja, also known as the Bhairung Puja, is a prominent yearly ceremony celebrated on the tenth of Baishaki Purnima. Jhakri, an old male kin member, serves as the priest, and only Jogi clan members attend. The ceremony emphasizes family safety and wealth by sacrificing a cock and a red hen, as well as making offerings of Roxi, Jaad, rice, eggs, ginger, Titapati leaves, and fruits. Women clean the home but do not go into the worship area during the rite. During Bhairung Puja, Jogis worship Pheri, blowing it to fend off bad spirits and pay their respects to Guru Goroknath. Ritual products include Roxi, uncooked rice, rice flour cakes, fried soybeans, cow ghee, and sacred plants. Outsiders are not permitted to approach the Bhairung Puja. In times of distress, Jogi elders perform Bhairung/Kul and Pheri rituals to treat ailing family members. During the Pheri ceremony, they chant a variety of mantras that differ according to place, age, generation, and language. In contrast to the younger generation, the elders are highly versed in these chants. The Pheri ceremony employs tantra and mantras to seek protection from the Almighty, with the blowing of the Pheri representing Bhairung's might. The Jogi group has several ethnic rites that highlight their distinct cultural identity. Saon Sankranti, which marks the start of the agricultural season, is celebrated with prayers for a plentiful crop and an invitation to a feast. Another major practice, Bhai Tika, involves sisters putting tikas to their brothers' foreheads to pray for their long life and wealth. During Dhan Puja, which is held in the fields and at the ancestral Kul during rice cultivation, the family leader presents Roxi, Jaad, rice, and other edibles to the Earth God and Bhairung. Saon Sankranti observed on the first day of the Saon month (August-September), involves house cleaning, traditional ceremonies, and Pheri blowing. [Sho\l 16393] A total of 100 Bhairungs originally existed within the Jogis. However, only twelve Bhairungs can be found in Sikkim today. These are Kaal Bhoirung, Narsingha Bhoirung, Thingala Bhoirung, Sueta Bhoirung, Baal Bhoirung, Shakti Bhoirung, But or Buttuki Bhoirung, Agni Bhoirung, Panchamukhi Bhoirung, Rudhra Bhoirung, and Akaala Bhoirung [Sil23 \l 16393]. They belong to a traditional occupational caste that explores the rural areas at night, blowing the baraant horn to ward off ghosts and evil spirits. They collect

alms the next day from the homes they visit at night. The alms include black urd, rice, turmeric powder, red chili, black pepper, salt, mustard oil, money, and black cloth pieces. They are also agriculturists, growing crops and rearing cattle for a living [JRS11 \ 16393]. The majority of Sikkimese residents who live in steep locations frequently hear strange sounds late at night, around two in the morning. Even though the locals are fairly accustomed to these sounds, anyone who is unfamiliar with the area may find them to be frightening or unsettling. High-pitched barks from dogs in the area usually come after these strange sounds. Although the entire situation could appear a little frightening, it is only Jogis executing their regular duties in that region. Along with the strange sounds, several chants or mantras that are difficult to understand can also be heard, which is an obvious sign that a ritual is taking place [Sil23 \ 16393]. Being ascetics and mendicants they had very few things in terms of their material belongings. But not all adult Jogis, and no women among them, practiced this occupation. They are engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, which made their houses and other domestic and agricultural implements no different from those of other peasant castes/ tribes and communities living in relatively lower altitudes. Adult Jogis are trained in the art of communicating with the world of spirits and ghosts. They visit villages at night blowing "Baranth (blackbuck) Horn" or conch shells or shin bones of human beings and driving away ghosts and evil spirits. They go around every house three times blowing the instrument and chanting mantras. The next morning, they collect the alms, which the householder displays on a winnow and offer them. They come with a bundle of black and white cloth bags and wearing 'rudraksha' for collecting alms that identify them to be Jogis and say "Jai Gorakhnath" but they do not speak with the people. They are an ascetic people who are followers of the Hindu sect called "Gorakhnath" to which the Shah kings of Nepal belonged. Thus, Jogis or Sanyasis also claim to be royal priests, but unlike the Bahun priests, they do not officiate on any ritual in any house. They worship Kali and Bhairav. They are economically as well as educationally very backward, but the scant information available on them is not enough to justify any claim that they might like to make as an autonomous community [JRS11 \ 16393].

HISTORY OF JOGIS CULTURE

The origins of the Jogi group are unknown due to a lack of systematic anthropological investigations, with oral traditions frequently merging with legends and myths. According to scholars such as [Bri73 \ 16393] and [Sha82 \ 16393], the Jogi group may have originated with the Nath Yogis, a sect of the larger Nath Sampradaya in ancient Nepal. The term "Jogi" is commonly used to denote someone who has nothing or has cut off links with society and family. According to the Broader Nepali Dictionary (2002), "Jogi" is virtually synonymous with words like "Sadhu," "Santa," and "Sanyasi." [Kri12 \ 1033]. The Jogi group has a long ethnic past, mostly preserved via oral traditions, and its roots are considered to be Nepalese. A group of Jogis came from Nepal to West Bengal's northern hills districts and Sikkim around 200 years ago. The Jogis celebrate Guru Goroknath, who is recognized for his involvement with Yoga and meditation, by blowing the Pheri, a blackbuck's horn. According to legend, Goroknath, a guru who lived from the 8th to 12th century BC, was a pupil of Guru Machindranath before founding his society. Bhairung, Goroknath's first devotee, is important in Jogi ceremonies and rites of passage, despite the paucity of written legends. The Jogi community is made up of many clans, including Kashima, Bhawadwaj, and Koushalya, which follow both endogamous and exogamous customs. The Jogis, who live mostly in Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Nepal, have grown into their ethnic group. They participate in socio-religious activities like as alcohol use, tantric ceremonies, and animism, distinguishing themselves from traditional Hinduism and opposing the Hindu Varna caste system. Their mixed background, as well as their distinctive religious and social rituals, contribute to their distinct cultural identity within Nepalese culture [Sho \ 16393].

LYRICS OF JOGIS MANTRA

The Jogi mantras are categorized as pre-valid mantras. In general, mantras invoke elements such as water, air, fire, space, and soil to protect humans from various negative entities. The mantras invoke the abilities of the 52 Bhairungs against bad spirits as said byretional Jogis. While reciting the mantra, they circle the house three times, blowing the baraant horn at each of the four corners. At the end of each mantra phrase, they

say "jai jai namaha" before beginning the next phrase. It's important to note that not all Jogis perform this ritual in the same way. Each Jogi has a unique style of mantra pronunciation; some may recite it quickly, while others might go slowly, incorporating rhythms and tunes.

Mantras:

Jala bhairung, Thal bhairung, Agni bhairung ko shaktile Akash badhu, patal badhu, Bal bhairung, Narsingh bhairung, Seti bhairung, Thingala bhairung ko shaktile bhuta maru, preta maru chheda maru, bheda maru Vajra bhairung, Batuki bhairung, Kal bhairung, Laure bhairung, Rakta bhairung, Chanchal bhairung ko shaktile yasai ghar dwar charai sur badhi rakshya garau, Boksi, dainiko gyana maru Dare mashan, Hwangre mashan, Danda mashan, Khola mashan, Karabir mashan ko shakti jagau Purba kali, Pashchim kali, Uttar kali, Dakshin kali, Rakta kali, Rupai kali, Danta kali, Bhashma kali, Chausathi kaliko Shakti jagau.

NOTATIONS OF JOGIS MANTRA

The words do not have definite notations, but the song is based on a five-note repeat. This musical arrangement enables a fluid and dynamic performance of the mantra. Instead of following a strict set of words, the melody evolves around these five notes, resulting in a repeated but harmonic rhythm. This adaptable method to musical notation allows each Jogi to include their style into the mantra, whether through various tempos, distinct rhythms, or distinct vocal inflections.

Sa Ga Re Sa .Ni | .Ni Sa .Ni .Pa |
 Ho...ho ho... oo.. | namoha... namoha |
 Sa Ga Re Sa .Ni | .Ni Sa .Ni .Pa |
 ho...ho.. ho... oo | masamai masama. |

SINGING STYLE & TECHNIQUES

The mantra's singing style is unique to the recite. Because it is a mantra, there are no specific rules controlling its recitation. While the melody may be identical, the technique of recitation varies widely from person to person. Each reciter takes their unique style, integrating personal subtleties and variances. They frequently utilize 'khatkas' (ornamental flourishes) when reciting the mantras, which adds to

their unique version. This versatility enables each recitation to be a distinct expression of devotion, reflecting the remitter's own relationship to the mantra.

INSTRUMENTS USED BY JOGIS

Sikkim's Jogis play the Baraant, also known as "Pheri" or "Singhanath," a unique instrument constructed from the horn of the Indian Antelope (blackbuck). The Baraant has a single hole for blowing, and the texture and tone are reliant on the player's skill. The loudness of sound changes with the blowing pressure. It is shaped like a horn and is proportional to the size of the animal's horn. To make a Baraant useful, the horn must be thoroughly processed, chopped, and sterilized. [Sil23 \l 16393]



Thedi: It is made out of a piece of bamboo. It helps to blow the air throughout the Baraant horn.

Singhnath: It is the horn of a Blackbuck called 'Baraant' in Nepali.

Playing techniques of Pheri (baraant)

While playing, the orientation of the Baraant is kept in such a way that the mouth hole is placed towards the face of the player. To produce sound through the Baraant, a deep inhalation is first carried out by the player. After this, a powerful blow of air is disposed inside the mouth-hole of the Phedi. During this process, the player can use the lips to create a sense of vibratory motion which would add to the quality of sound. This would also bring out the "uncanny" tone of sound unique to the Baraant [Sil23 \l 16393].

Cultural practices associated with the Pheri (Baraant)

The Jogis normally perform their rituals late at night to eliminate evil spirits, which are thought to be most

active after midnight. They believe today is the finest moment to confront and expel these ghosts through ceremonial ways. During these arduous rites, the Jogis select a particular village or hamlet. At midnight, they travel through the neighborhood, stopping at each house but not entering. Instead, they execute their rites at a safe distance.

The Jogis employ a distinctive horn-like wind instrument called the Pheri (Baraant) to produce a high-pitched sound known as Dhvani, which is powerful and audible from a distance. This sound informs residents that the Jogis are present. After playing the Phedi, the Jogis chant spiritual mantras that are frequently difficult for the general public to comprehend. The Jogis believe that the sounds of the Baraat and their chanting have divine power to dispel the evil spirits who haunt their dwellings (J.B. Jogi, personal communication, June 13, 2024).

The Jogis' effort doesn't stop with their nightly visits. The next day, they return to the neighborhood to see each family they assisted. These families express their thanks by providing the Jogis with food, vegetables, fruits, and money in recognition of their efforts to free society from evil powers.

Aside from the concept that Jogis' ceremonies expel evil spirits, there is another rationale for their practice. In ancient times, when Sikkim and Nepal were ruled by dynasties, kings used the Jogis to gather information about the well-being of ordinary people and report any concerns within the kingdom. The Jogis opted to perform these activities at night because they believed that bad things happened during this period. This tradition eventually became part of the Jogis' ceremonial way of life.

COMPARE WITH OTHER JOGIS

Gorakhnath puja, (Goraknather gan) : The Rajbongshi community in West Bengal's Coochbehar area practices Gorakhnath puja, as do the Jogis of Sikkim. This ceremony takes place in Bhadra (August-September) or Phalgun (February-March). Gorakhnath, originating from Uttar Pradesh, arrived in Bengal during the Pal era, circa 1200 A.D. He was a student of Matsyendra Nath, a Bengali Keibarta of the Siddha sect associated with Yogini Kula of Kamrup. The puja, led by an Odhikary or Kamrupi Brahman in the fields, includes gifts of sun-dried rice, molasses, and ripe plantains to safeguard crops from animals and

robbers. It is considered a kind of worship for Siva. During the puja, men participate, moving from house to house singing songs and collecting donations of rice, fruits, and money. The ritual involves rhythmic bamboo stick tapping, symbolizing reverence to Gorakhnath [Suk11 | 16393].

CONCLUSION

The majority of Sikkimese citizens who live in mountainous areas report hearing weird sounds late at night, around 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. Although the residents are used to these noises, someone unfamiliar with the area may find them terrifying or unnerving. Dogs in the vicinity generally respond with high-pitched barking to these odd noises. Although the situation may appear intimidating, it is merely Jogis performing their usual duty in that region. Along with the unusual sounds, several difficult-to-understand chants or mantras can be heard, indicating that a ritual is being performed. This study included interviews with a select group of Sikkimese Jogis, and the findings revealed some unique facts about the Jogis' ritualistic practices and their meaning. Furthermore, the talk offered insight into why Jogis brave the difficult effort of skulking around in the dark on moonless evenings in Sikkim, despite the region's typically bitter cold temperature. The Jogis mostly identify with Gorakhnath's disciples. In Nepal, Sikkim, and Darjeeling, they are also known as Pheriwalas. This is because, even though the Jogis have a large number of Bhairungs—as previously stated—only twelve of them are genuinely entitled to perform these rites and are hence referred to as Pheriwalas. As a result, all Jogis cannot be classified as Pheriwalas. The Jogis believe that Lord Shiva brought them to this world to remove bad spirits. They think they must defend and protect people from the evil spirits that inhabit the planet (K.B. Jogi, personal communication, 7 February 2024). The Jogi community of Sikkim, who were once known for their traditional occupation of begging and conducting the Pheri ceremony, have now embraced modern occupations. Despite this, they continue to hold on to their strong belief in the existence of various spirits and deities that reside in nature. These spirits are said to have the power to cause harm to humans if they are not appeased through rituals and sacrifices. The community relies on diviners, exorcists, and magicians to determine which

deity or spirit has been insulted and how to placate it. Jogis perform rituals three times a year, where they blow a unique wind instrument called Singhnaath or Pheri (Blackbuck horn) at night and collect alms the next morning. During Bhairung Puja, they use the Pheri to fend off evil spirits and honor Guru Goroknath. Ritual offerings include various foods and sacred items. The Jogis also celebrate Saon Sankranti, Bhai Tika, and Dhan Puja, each with specific rituals and offerings. Jogis perform rituals three times a year, where they blow a unique wind instrument called Singhnaath or Pheri (Blackbuck horn) at night and collect alms the next morning. During Bhairung Puja, they use the Pheri to fend off evil spirits and honor Guru Goroknath. Ritual offerings include various foods and sacred items. The Jogis also celebrate Saon Sankranti, Bhai Tika, and Dhan Puja, each with specific rituals and offerings. In conclusion, the Jogi community of Sikkim has a rich and fascinating cultural history that has been passed down orally from generation to generation. The origins and history of this community are still shrouded in mystery due to the lack of extensive anthropological research. The Pheri ritual, which is an important ethnoreligious spiritual feature of the community, has been practiced for centuries and is a symbol of their identity. The community's belief in spirits and their connection to nature is also an essential part of their culture. The priests hold a significant position in the community, and the people enjoy making annual sacrifices to worship their gods. Due to cultural contact with different religions, the community has also embraced Hindu Gods and Goddesses and participates in their religious festivities. Despite the changes in their religious practices and occupations, the Jogi community has managed to maintain its unique cultural identity. Their history and beliefs continue to fascinate and intrigue outsiders, and it is crucial to preserve and document their cultural heritage for future generations. As the world continues to modernize and change, it is essential to remember the importance of cultural diversity and the need to respect and value different cultures.

SUGGESTIONS

we would like to propose to the state government and all folk academies the importance of capturing the diverse array of Jogi culture in Sikkim. By organizing

workshops, it becomes imperative to disseminate the knowledge of Jogis artists. Various seminars or festivals sponsored by the government should be conducted to encourage these artists. Jogis culture needs to be documented extensively through audio and video recordings. The government can facilitate the establishment of studios where artists can record Jogi songs. This effort not only ensures the preservation of this rich musical heritage but also opens avenues for the new generation to appreciate and engage with Jogi music. Through targeted outreach, we can cultivate a renewed interest in Jogis among the young generation.”

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