

Unique iconography of Panchanan in Harishpur Nadia

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Panchanan a gram devata from the village of Harishpur, Nadia, Longitudes -23°24'08" N-23°24'07" N (23.4019717°N), Latitudes 88°26'48" E-88°26'49" E(88.4468313°E) revels plurality of Indic faith. Generally, Panchanan has Pingala Jata, Digambar, red complexion. His Dhyana refer him as, *ÔÔÂç;æÛÛçãæîðßçÛž·çßçæZçî»ÖÛççÓÓ*. However, recently exploring in Nadia, I came across Harishpur.

The idol of Harishpur has one of such unique iconography of Panchanan (it is recently placed). It is white camphor in colour and clam in nature, with five heads. However, it should be remembered the characteristics of the deity haven't been changed. He is a deity of perilous force remain outside the settlement. In some place he is worship in form of Shivling as well as in form of mound under a bayanan tree.

In Tantra shiva is referred as Rudra. Iconography of Panchanan at Harishpur is influenced from Rudrayamal. In tantra Bhairava of Mahadurga is Nilkanta. Bhairava Nilkanta has same features like Panchanan. Now question arise, does folk deity were influenced from Tantra?/Tantra also influenced the folk deity?

Key words : Harishpur, Nadia, Panchanan, shiva, Rudra.

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Harishpur is situated in Krishnagar-I, Krishnanagar, Simultala, Harishpur, Chamta Camp, Nadia, West Bengal, India (In), Pin Code:-741101. Longitudes -23°24'08" N-23°24'07" N (23.4019717°N), Latitudes 88°26'48" E-88°26'49" E(88.4468313°E).

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Google Map : position of Panchanantala in Harishpur, Nadia

It is a village of Bagdhi community. These people belong from lower strata of the Bengal society. Their main occupation was collection of wood from forest region, agriculture and cattle rearing. Nearly 500 people live in this village. Their village guardian deity is Panchanan. According to them he controls all the diseases, death, progeny of the village. However, his temple is outside the village near a cannal (which might be part of Gangetic meander in early period). The Site is said to be visited by Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya a Bengali saint of 15th century AD. From field survey This adds a layer of historical and spiritual significance to the site, linking contemporary practices with a deeper historical narrative.



Fig : 1- Recent temple of Panchanan in Harishpur, Nadia.

Majority of the local reports, the temple is living shrine and its continuing from pre-Chaitanya period. They also reported the temple is continuously worship from 500 years i.e., 1500AD. (Approx). Earlier the worship was conducted by making a small mound under a Banyan tree, coating with vermilion. However, In recent scenario due to cultural exchanges, external influences. Formless or abstract worship changes to the use of physical idols or images.

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Idol of the temple in Harishpur has unique representation than other Panchanan iconography present in Bengal. Gopendrakrishna Basu referring in his book about a rare iconography of Panchanan. He reports only one temple of such Panchanan in south Sithti of North Kolkata.



Fig 2 : Idol of Panchanan in Harishpur, Nadia.

Recently exploring in Nadia, I came across Harishpur. The idol of Harishpur is one of such unique iconography of Panchanan (it is recently placed). It is white camphor in colour and clam in nature, with five heads. Gopendrakrishna Basu refers to the *Rudrayamal*, a tantric text that describes Panchanan as having a white complexion and five heads. This depiction aligns with a specific aspect of Shiva, known as Panchanana, which translates to “five-faced” or “five-head”. In tantra shiva is also referred as Rudra. Therefore, shiva’s gayatri refer him as “तन्नोरुद्रःप्रचोदयात् ॥ “Rudra, I beseech you! The iconography of Harishpur have similar attributes of the dhyana mantra present in Rudrayamal.” “ध्यायेन्नित्यंमहेशंरजतगिरिनिभंचारु-चन्द्रावतंसं, रत्नाकल्पोज्ज्वलाङ्गपरशु-मृग-वराभीतिहस्तंप्रसन्नम् । पद्मासीनंसमत्तास्तुतममरणैर्व्याघ्रकृत्तिसानं, विक्ष्वद्यंविश्ववन्यंनिखिलभयहरंपञ्चववत्रंनिनेत्रम् ॥” ३



Fig 3 : Attributes of Panchanan as per given mantra in Rudrayamal text.

However, in Bengal Panchanan has unique iconography which has correlation with Vedic Rudra. Rudra is an atmospheric destructive furious god in Vedic fold. Sayana described the word Rudra from the “RUD” means to cry, while interpreting the “one who makes Agni (fire) cry (ἑὸς ἄγνις κλάει)” Frequent characteristic of Rudra is fierce and destructive. On the other hand, he is wise and bountiful. In Rigveda he is said to be great physician. Vedic fold throws light on his dual nature as a destroyer as well as a healer. Comparing Vedic gods with contemporary rural folk deities reveals the development of cultural patterns and belief systems in early human societies. Panchanan, a rural folk deity mainly popular in southern and western Bengal. The term Panchanan means one who has five head. Iconography of Panchanan describe as naked (Sky Clade), red complexion with braided hair. Like

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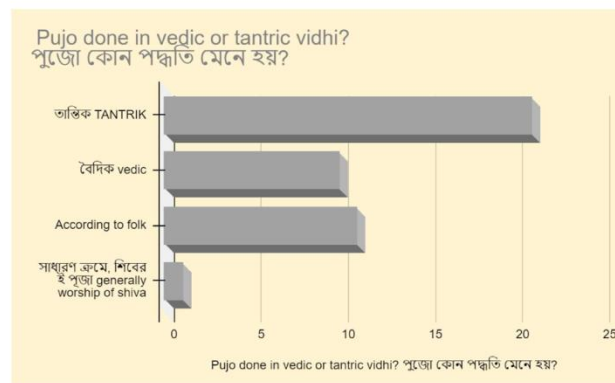
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Rudra, Panchanan has fierce characteristics and worshipped for healthy progeny. He is also considered a great physician. Comparing the deities reflect the continuity and evolution of religious belief. Representing an ancient ideology adopt with time which have a historical root.



Fig 4 : Panchanan idol (majority of iconography of Panchanan in Bengal are similar like the Present Iconography)^a

An ethnographic work also helps a constructive output. Most of the worship is done in tantric form.



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In tantric text reference of Neelkanta Bhairava reflect similarity with Panchanan. Dhyan of nilkantabhairava refer his complexion is like rising sun and had five had with Trisul and Kapal. However, most of theshastric text refer not to worship the deity. However in time of Mahadurga puja he is worship as bhairava rather parsha devta(side deity).

वाल्कार्यायुततेजसंधृतजायुतेन्दुखण्डोज्ज्वलं ।
नागेन्द्रैः कृतशेखरंजप्टीशूलंकपालंकरैः ॥
खट्वाङ्गदधतंत्रिनेत्रबिलासत्-पंचाननंसुन्दरं ।
ब्याघ्रत्वक्-परिधानमव्जनिलायंश्रीनीलकण्ठंभजे ॥



Fig 5 : Comparing iconographical similarity with Neelkanta bhairav and Panchanan.

The mantra of Panchanan is also similar like Neelkanth Bhairav.

पंचाननंमहादेवंरत्नवर्णदिगम्बरं
पद्मासनस्थंगशद्विभुजंभूषितं
प्रवलम्बबाहुसुबलंपट्टयज्ञोपवीतकम्
शिरेपिंगाजटाभारंशिशुग्रीरारी-मर्दनं
वामहस्तेशिशुधारंदक्षहस्तेत्रिशुलम्
गोमृगबाहनम्वैवबेष्टितंमणिमण्डलं
कण्ठेरुद्राक्षमालायशोभितंरत्नलोचनं
उग्रतेजोमयोरुद्रंब्रह्मीष्टं चतुःस्वीनं
ध्यायेत्पंचाननं देवं भक्तानुग्रहकारकम् ॥

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It reflects that intercultural exchange among the cult. Deity is same but changed its form with time. Deity itself shows a peculiar character the culture changes its form but never ends.

Conclusion :- The study shows a folk deity assimilates with different sects. It reflects culture never ends rather it assimilates with contemporary cult and shows its presence. It illustrates the continuity of cultural patterns from ancient Bengal through the tantric traditions to contemporary rural Bengal. This continuity, combined with the ability to integrate new influences, underscores the dynamic and enduring nature of religious belief systems in human societies.

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(a) Picture of Panchanan I used from <https://www.facebook.com/Babathakurpujo/>
