

## CONCEPT OF SADHUS IN NEPALESE SOCIETY

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### **Abstract**

*The concept of Sadhus is an old Hindu tradition started long ago from the system of Ashram in Indian Sub-continent. In general, human life is divided into four stages and the last stage is known as Sanyasa. When an old person becomes free from his family responsibilities then he practices peaceful activities. This stage of life is called Sanyasa and it is a form of Sadhu. Sadhus generally live in Asharams or temples in the group. In the past, they were forced to take weapons in their hands for the protection of their life and religion. Therefore, Akhadas were established in the place of ashramas to keep militant Sadhus. They do not have to keep greed, love, exceptions and trishna and their Yajnas should relate on the well-being of the universe. They are the means of study and they should be utilized to attract tourists in modern economic world.*

**Key words:** Akhada, Sadhu, Mahanta, Khaki, Trisna, Keshin, Japa and Tapa

### **Introduction**

*Sadhus* are called Yogi, Saint, Bairagi and Sanyasi. They do not have any personal properties, houses, family and the family names. They are not allowed to follow particular religion and are not permitted to stay in a fixed center. Therefore, they move here and there and beg for his daily food. *Sadhus* are not allowed to store food and property for the

future. They are not allowed to keep the begged food for another day. They eat whatever they get from begging and stay without eating in the case of not getting. They pass most of their time in *Japa*, *Tapa*, Yoga and worship of gods and goddesses. They do not have any willing and ambitions for the future life. They move wherever they want and eat whatever they get in begging. Therefore, they are treated as the beggars also.

Like *Sadhus*, *Sanyasi* is such a person who has left his family, relatives and property and the *Bairagi* is a person having Bairag. The person who does Yoga is called Yogi and Maharaja is said in the sense of exiled king. *Mahatma*, *Santa*, *Paramhamsa*, *Abhaduta*, *Guru*, *Baba* and *Achary* are other names that are given for *Sadhus* . Hence, a man having great soul is Mahatma, Saint is *Sant* and *Paramhamsa* means big goose. A *Sadhu* is said *Paramhamsa* in the sense that he finds out the truth like the goose which can separate the milk from water. *Abhaduta* means not duel and *Guru*, *Baba* and *Acharya* are the words for a teacher. Some of the *Sadhus* live in Ashram and provide religious educations for their followers and the students. Therefore, they are called the teachers also. In the same way, *Sadhus* motivate general people to enter in their sects and give mantra as a teacher. So, they are given such names. They are called *Bratya* and *Saanichamedra* also in some references (Ghurye, 1953: 13).

Real *Sadhus* can control their sense organs and they can live without food and drink for many days. They can survive in extreme cold and hot climate from their eternal power. Therefore, they have their own kind of personal world. They behave different from a general people and their daily activities are different. Some of the *Sadhus* have special kind of eternal power and they can show abnormal activities. Nepali people know them as known, elite, *Siddha* and kind

person. They do not have any cast, Varna, occupation and religion. Therefore, their aim of living is to work for the well-being of the universe. The history of *Sadhus* in India shows that they took the weapons in their hand instead of taking books and fought for the safeguard of their religion. It was not done for the own sake but done for the safeguard of the society.

At present the efforts of *Sadhus* should be linked for tourism development of a country. Development of tourism can become the main aspect for economic development and the activities of the *Sadhus* should be connected with its promotion. The Yogis, *Sadhus*, *Bairagi* and Mahatmas can attract the tourist in their centers from the activities that they perform each year. For example management of *Kumbha Snana* in river sites, organization of *Melas*, *Jatras* and festivals in different religious centers and demonstration of their mysterious and Yogic activities can attract thousands of pilgrims and tourists in certain locations. Therefore, role of *Sadhus* for the development of tourism is much more important in our country. If *Kumbha Mela* is organized in a religious center, millions of people reach there to take a holy bath. *Sadhus* can organize such events without any expectations for personal benefit. Hence, we need a policy to use *Sadhus* for tourism development and economic uplift of local people.

## Origin

*Sadhubad* was started long ago from the time of Indus valley civilization in Indian Sub-continent (Eliade, 1969: 354). Some terracotta figures of males with beard faces are found in the excavation of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. They are seen with curly hair style (Basham, 1969:22). Other terracotta three headed human figurines having horns in their head is also

found. It is seen seated in the terracotta plates. This figure is said the figure of Lord Shiva (Marshal, 1931: 17) not of a *Sadhu*. Hence, *Sadhubad* is related with different religious sects whereas this system of Shiva worship of Indus valley is related with *Saiva Sadhubad*. Therefore, we can say that the system of *Sadhubad* among the followers of Shaiva was started from the time of Indus valley civilization. Only archaeological evidences to know the system of Sadhu of that period are found till date.

The concept of *Sadhubad* was developed more in Vedic period. We can find some literary sources related on *Sadhubad* from this period. But the priority is not given for this system in such sources. Lord Shiva is said *Bratyapati* in *Rigveda* and the references of *Kesin* is also found in this text. In this reference, we can say that the *Keshins* were *Kapalika* Yogis of that period and their leader was lord Shiva. *Kapalika* Yogis are the followers of Lord Shiva who stay most of the time in cremation spots. They eat burning flesh of dead person and polish their body with the ash. They wear garland made of human skeleton and walk without wearing any clothes. The reference of *Rigveda* (10.136.1-7) clearly shows the existence of such naked Yogis. In their features it is said that they carry fire and eat poison. They were *Aghori* or *Kapalika* Jogis of *Saivism* from their characteristics (Gross, 2001: 19). The people having reached in *Sanyas* ashram are called *Yati* in *Rigveda*. Therefore, we can say that the system of *Sadhubad* was in the process of development up to this period.

*Sadhubad* is mostly related with Hinduism and the literary sources that are composed after Vedic period have given the references of this system. For example, the *Dharmashastras* and *Dharmasutras* have given different kinds of rules and regulations for *Sadhus*. According to a reference of *Brihadaranyak Upanisad* (4/4/22), ancient *Rishis* used to

pass their life without any ambition of getting child and property. This *Upanisad* suggests us to pass other three ashrams before entering into the last *Sanyasi* ashram. It was one of the ways of getting salvation, according to this text.

In general, term *Sadhu* and the beggars are the same. It is believed that they become *Sadhu* to escape from the household difficulties. In the same way, it is said that some people cannot accept the changing environment of the society and become a *Sadhu*. Therefore, some people think that they are beggars and unproductive faces. Most of the *Sadhus* except *Akhadawala* move one place to another without any aims. They do not have certain places to stay permanently. Therefore, they are not counted in the national census also. *Sadhus* are not controlled by the political boundary of different countries. They do not need the citizenship of a country, because they do not keep permanent property in their name. So, we cannot find out their nationalities. Most of the *Sadhus* live in India and some of them are seen in Nepal.

## Types

There are different kinds of *Sadhus* in Indian sub-continent. Some are seen walking without wearing clothes and others are seen in ragged and old clothes in their bodies. Wearing of terrifying garlands made from human skeleton and skulls is also another feature of some Saiva *Sadhus*. Specially, *Kalamukha*, *Kapalika* and *Keshin Sadhus* are seen in such a posture. Some of Naga *Jogis* are seen without any piece of clothes in their bodies. Different kind of earrings, bangles, necklaces and garlands are their ornaments. They want to show them different than the other people of the society. So, they wear different kind of clothes and ornaments different than other people. Some *Yogis* like to accept the things, which are neglected by the society. In the same way they eat

whatever they get. Some Yogis eat human meat, urine, alcohol and stool to show them different than the others. Their food, drinks, dresses, ornaments, weapons, *Tika*, stick, nature and activities are some criteria to divide them in different groups. *Apastambha*, *Gautam* and *Baudhayan Dharmasutras* have given some rules for the *Sadhus*, which are the main basis to divide them in different groups. Among them, *Baudhayan Dharmasutra* has divided the *Sadhus* of the forests in two groups in the way that they eat rough and cooked food. Both of them pass their life in the forest doing *Tapa* and *Japa*. They are different according to their sects also. Different sects are separated from their dresses, garlands and *Tikas* (Gross, 2001). In short, the *Sadhus* are divided in the following categories.

1. ***Kutichaka Sadhus***: *Sadhus* who live in the hut are called *Kutichaka*. Their main duty is to provide the education to their students. Therefore, they need to stay at the *Kuti* or hut all the time. The students beg and bring food to their teacher. Therefore, such types of *Sadhus* do not beg for food. Such *Sadhus* are well educated and they pass their life in giving different kinds of education to the pupil. In general, they give religious teaching or education to the pupils. They keep *Tupi* on the head and wear *Yagyonpawit* in their neck. They take the tiger or deer skin for living or sleeping. They carry a bag, a *Chimta* and *Tumba* with them.

2. ***Bahaduka Sadhus*** : Such *Sadhus* also live in the *Kuti* and teach to their pupils. They have their own different character that they eat only the alms begged from Brahman's house. They take horizontal ash *Tika* to their forehead. It is with three lines. They carry trident in their hands.

3. ***Hamsa Sadhu***: Generally, some *Sadhus* move different religious sites whole the year, which are called

*Hamsa Sadhu.* Such *Sadhus* never stay more than a night in a village. As a regular traveler, such *Sadhus* sometimes eat cow's dung and urine is the lacking of getting food to eat. They take *Janai* (the sacred thread), carry a piece of tiger's skin and wear white *Tika* in their forehead. They shave their hair clean and some occasions they keep the hair long also.

4. ***Parahamsa Sadhu:*** *Parahamsa Sadhus* are those who are different than the others in their rules and characters. They never stay at a place for the long time. Such *Sadhus* do not wear clothes. In the case of wearing clothes, they prefer to wear old, rotten and ragged clothes. They do not wear sacred thread. They beg and eat whatever they get in the alms. They prefer to stay in lonely place and crematories. They are considered as a high quality Yogi or *Sadhu*. Sometimes they act as mad persons. They do so to show different and higher themselves than the others.

5. **Other divisions:** According to other divisions of *Sadhus* one is *Turiyatita Yoghi*. They do not have any properties except their body with them in such a categories of *Sadhu*. In the same way other category is *Abhadhyutas* who do not follow any kind of rules and regulations. In the lack of rules they can do whatever they like. The *Sadhus* who move aimlessly in the forest are called *Audumbara* who eat only the fruits of the forests whatever they get in the way. *Bairinchas* and *Balakilyas* are other types of Yogis found in Indian subcontinent. Hence, *Bairinchas* are always busy to conduct *Vadic Yagnas* and *Balakilyas* move in the forest with hair long. They wear the bark of the tree as their clothes. Their body and activity is totally related with the forest. Their food is also collected from the forest and they do not have any connection and relation with the villagers or the societies. *Phenap* is a kind of *Sadhus* stay whole the life in the forest and sleep in the bare land. They never carry clothes with them.

*Phenaps* eat fruits and grains whatever fall down from the trees. We can see different kind of *Sadhus* who pass their life like the pigeon eating only the raw grains. Some of them eat the grains dried only in the sun and they never eat the food that is cooked in the firewood.

*Jogis* and *Sadhus* are different personalities in the context of their gestures, life styles, dresses, foods and activities. They remain far from the contact of the family and their efforts are not related with the society. Therefore, *Jogis* or *Sadhus* do different activities than a person of a society. Their divisions are also done based on such activities, their food and clothing habits. Some *Jogis* wear nothing in their body and visit different religious places naked, which are called Naga (naked) *Jogi*. *Digambar* is also a category of naked *Jogi*. Other category of *Jogi* is *Khakwala* who seems with ashes covering the body. In the same way *Phalaharis* eat only the fruits and *Gudaribabas* carry rotten mat and wears sacks and rotten clothes. One handed *Jogi* raises his hand all the time and *Khadebaba* remains standing for the long time. Other category of *Yogi* is *Siddha*, who has taken the education from his teacher but does not follow any sects or *Sampradayas*.

*Sthandhari*, *Khalsa* and *Akhamals* are other types of *Sadhus* found in India and Nepal. Hence, *Sthandhari* lives in Ashrams or *Mathas* and works for the protection or extension of religion. In the same way *Khalsas* are busy to beg alms in the villages. They behave like the teachers and try to teach the religious rules to the householders while begging. They never stay long in a place. In the same way *Akharawalas* live in *Akharas*. *Akhara* is a camp like the military post, where militant *Sadhus* live there as the soldier. They always live and visit in the group. While walking to the other places rather than their *Akhas* they take tent, weapons and utensils with

them like the soldier and live inside the tent. They are militant in their nature, because they were appointed to save the religion from weapon. In the same way, *Karmakandi* begs alms and manages *Yagna* for the wellbeing of the people and society. *Upasana* is the main activity of *Upasanakandin Sadhus*. In this way Yogis are divided into different categories or types based on their food, clothes and activities.

According to some religious texts of Hinduism, only Brahmins were allowed to pass all four Ashrams and they were given the right of becoming a *Sadhu*. There is a religious rule to pass their life in three, two and one Ashram for *Kshetry*, *Baisya* and *Sudra* respectively. Therefore, they do not have the right to enter in to *Sanyas* Ashram and to become a *Sadhu*. But the tradition of being a *Sadhu* by other groups of people rather than a Brahmin was also popular in India from very beginning. We can get the examples of women *Sadhus* also in this region. According to a legend found in *Mithila* area *Sulava* a *Kshetriya* women became a *Sadhu* and she followed the rules of *Sanyasin*. In the beginning she was unable to get an appropriate boy to marry and at last she became a *Sadhu*. This event proves that there was a custom of women and *Kshetriya Sadhu* in *Upanisadic* period (Gross, 2001: 33).

Some of the *Sadhus* are found literate, but most of them are illiterate. There is not a rule to become literate to become a *Sadhu* in *Dasanami Sanyasi Sampradaya*. There are some sub-divisions of *Sadhus* like *Akali*, *Nirmali*, *Udashi*, *Nihangi* and others who have their different rules to be followed. In the same way the rule of entering in to *Sanyasa Asharam* after the age of 75 was not followed strictly and even a boy aged 10 started to become a *Sadhu* in his early childhood. Almost all-religious text of the Hindus were written by Brahmins. Therefore, the students of this group

were allowed to enter in to *Sanyasa* Ashram. Latter on freedom given to the lower cast people to become *Sadhus* also encouraged the students to become *Sadhus* in earlier age. Then, *Sadhu* system was separated from Ashram *Vyabastha*.

The system of *Sadhus* was started from very beginning earlier than the Vedic period. Some archaeological evidences of Indus Valley Civilization are found on the existence of *Sadhus*. It was just the beginning of this system, which was developed more in Vedic period. Latter on it became famous and number of *Sadhus* was increased in high number. For example Chinese Buddhist pilgrim *Hiuen Tsang* has seen ten thousand *Sadhus* worshipping in a *Saiva* temple (Ghurye, 1953: 44) in seventh century AD. *Hiuen Tsang* has given some features of *Sadhus* in his travelogues that some had cut their hair off; others tie their hair in a knot and go naked without clothes. He says that they cover their body with ashes and by the practice of all sorts of austerities they seek to escape birth and death (Ibid). According to the reference of *Hiuen Tsang* the *Sadhus* described here belonged to the *Kapalika or Kalamukha* sect of *Saivism*. But we cannot find any references of *Vaisnava Sadhu* in his references. Therefore, we can assume that Banaras was familiar with the *Shaiva Sadhus* at that period rather than *Baisnava Bairagis*. Santabad in Baisnava Sampradays was started latter than *Sadhubad of Saivism*. Therefore, we cannot know the effect of *Baisnava Bairagi* in the travelogue of *Hiuen Tsang* in India.

The attempt of *Shankaracharya* was the first for the development of *Saiva Sadhubad* in India. *Shankaracharya* established four *Mathas* in four directions of India. They were *Badrinath* in the north, *Saradamath* in the west, *Sringerimatha* in the south and *Jagannathpuri* in the east (Gross, 2001: 52). From the steps of *Shankaracharya* the number *Shaiva Yogi* was increased in a great number. Different sub-divisions of

*Sanyasi* are also found from that period. *Ekabandi, Ashrama, Saraswati, Bharati, Van, Aranya, Giri, Sagar, Parvat and Puri* are some divisions of Dasnami *Sanyasi* as divided by *Samkaracharya*. A yogi who lives in the *Tirtha* is called *Ekdandi* and a person living in the *Ashrama* is called *Ashramawal*. Yogis having higher knowledge are called *Saraswati* and *Bharati*. Their names are given in the basis of the goddess of knowledge and ideology. In the same way the Yogis living in the forests were named *Bana* and *Aranya*. A Yogi living in the hill is *Parvat or Giri* and living near the sea is called *Sagara*. Hence the Yogi living in the urban area became *Puri* according to this division. *Nath Panthi, Virshaiva and Lingayats* are other categories of *Saiva* Yogis according to their features. It was very hard to follow the rules of early *Saivism* saints for a *Ghrihasta* and a Yogi. Therefore, some soft rules were made and the people who followed it became *Lingayat, Nathpanthi* and *Virashaiva*.

Militant *Sadhubad* was also developed in northern India in medieval period. Unfair treatment and attacks of Muslim Fakirs encouraged Hindu *Sadhus* to take weapons in their hands. At first Dasnami *Sansyasi* started this system in Hinduism. Most of the militant *Sadhus* were naked who are known as *Naga*. They were like soldiers and used to stay at *Akhadas*. Hence, *Akhadas* are like military camps, where militant *Sadhus* reside with weapons and tents. Such *Akhadas* were established by the *Sadhus* in medieval period to protect their life. A reference found in *Harshacharit* of Banabhatta also has given an example of some *Kapalika* Yogis having swords in their hands (Ghurye, 1953: 99). This description reflects the environment of pre-battle situation. But the battle was not done with the other group at that period.

All together there were eight lakhs Muslim Fakirs and twelve lakhs Hindu *Sadhus* in early seventeenth century

according to a western traveler Tavemier (Tavemier, 1684: 178). In the same way thousands of *Sadhus* were there in Rajasthan of India at that period. A reference of their quarrel for the procession of land is found in the history of Rajasthan (Tod, 1920: 601). But Muslim Fakir became aggressive with Hindu *Sadhus* after the establishment of Muslim rules in northern India. The struggle between Muslim Fakirs and Hindu Yogis was also started after that period. Some foreign writers argue that there was a militant force among the *Sadhus* of India from very beginning. They say that at first *Saiva Dasnami* and *Bainva Bairagi* used to fight for their importance and existence. According to a reference, they used to carry weapons like bow, arrow, sword, spear and shield (Farquhar's, 1925: 16). They used to paint their faces and bodies to show the fearsome appearances before going to the battle. They used to hang long matted hair in their head. According to this reference some *Sadhus* of India became militant from the beginning of medieval period. But it is not true, because *Saiva* and *Bainava Sadhus* used to do dispute in some issues. But they did not need to do long dispute in different issues.

After the beginning of Muslim rule in Northern India hundreds of Hindu *Sadhus* were killed by the Muslim Fakirs in Banaras. Therefore, a *Sadhu* named *Madhusudan Saraswati* went to the Mogul court of Delhi to petition Akbar regarding the killing of *Samsyasi*. According to this account his minister Birbal suggested him to appoint more non-Brahman *Sanyasi* and arm them for their protection. This event is estimated happened in 1565 AD and then more militant *Sadhus* from *Kshetry*, *Baisya* and *Sudra* groups were also recruited in *Dasnami Samnyasi Sampradaya* (Gross, 2001: 65). They became defensive military branches of the sect. Among *Dasnami Samnyasi* three were considered as Brahmin and they were not allowed to take the weapon. Rests of others

were from other groups and they were trained to use the arms as the soldiers. This event guided them to establish *Akhada* with the help of Naga *Samnyasi*, which was one of the branches of military *Sadhu* like a regiment of the soldiers. The post for the chief of *Akhada* was *Mahanta* who was responsible to control his camp (Gross, 2001:65). In this way the *Akhada* of Yogi was used as the centre of militant Yogi in this period.

### **Akhadas**

*Akhadas* are the residents of Naga Yogis, where only the militant Yogis reside with their weapons. It is like a regiment of the soldiers. Naga Yogis have *Panchatan Akhadas*, where there are six main *Akhadas* and other many branches. *Juna*, *Abahana*, *Niranjni*, *Ananda*, *Mahanirmani* and *Atal* are the main six *Akhadas*. There 15000 militant Yogis in *Juna Akadha*, whereas only 100 to 200 militants reside in *Ananda Akhada*. In the same way all together 500 *Sadhus* reside in both *Mahanirmani* and *Niranjani Akhadas*. The headquarters of Naga *Dasnami Akhada* are located at Banaras, *Haridwar* and Ujjain. All kind of *Akhadas* are administered from 12 geographical units and they are called *Mandala* (Round Figure). An elected *Mahanta* manages the administration of his area. The flags and worshipping gods are different in different *Akhadas*. They take different kinds of flags from different *Akhadas* in *Kumbhamela*. Shree *Pancha* manages all these things and in an *Akhada*. The members of an *Akhadas* are called *Shambhupancha*(*Ibid*).

The administrators of *Akhadas* are elected from the Yogis at the time of *Kumbha Mela*. Their knowledge and influence also helps to be elected in different posts of *Akhadas*. In reality *Kumbha Mela* is the main occasion for the Yogis to be collected at once in a certain place. In other time

some of the *Sadhus* visit different places and they cannot meet each other in a place. *Sri Mahanta, Karobari, Dhuniwala, Jhundiwala, Kotwala and Thanawala* are elected at that occasion. They work as the administrators, managers and other works. *Mandaleswara* and *Mahamandaleswara* are also elected to administer the *Akhadas*. Only educated, knowledgeable or intellectual *Sadhus* can be elected in such posts.

*Baisnava Sadhus* are called *Bairagi*. *Ramanandi* Yogis are in highest number among *Vaisnava Sadhu*. *Ramanandi* are also divided in to three groups as *Sthandhari, Khalsa* and *Akhadamal*. They have thirty six *Dwars*, which means they are thirty six types. *Ramandi Sadhus* take Mace and wheel in their hands and shaves the hairs. But they keep their beard and moustache long. Some of the Yogis keep their hair long and tie the knot. They tame *Tika*, wear the *necklace* of *Tulsi*. Taking the Mantra of Rama from a teacher or Guru, wearing of sacred thread, and taking vase are their characteristics. Chanting Mantras and wearing white and yellow clothes are their features.

Yogis were taught Yoga, art of battle and gymnastics in *Akhadas* in the past. *Dasnami* had main six *Akhadas* and many more their branches in India. The main *Dasnami Akhadas* are located in *Allahabad, Banaras, Haridwar, Ujjain, Nasik* and *Saurashtra*. All these *Akhadas* were established in between tenth to sixteenth century AD. *Ananda Akhada* was the oldest one which was established in 856 AD (Gross, 2001:67). Though the dispute between Saiva *Dasnami* and *Baisnav Bairagi* used to be seen from thirteenth century AD, *Ramanandi Naga Yogis* were seen from seventeenth century AD only. In the same way the *Akadas of Ramanandi Bairagi* were established between 1650 to 1700 AD (Ghurye, 1957:177). *Naga Shaiva* Yogi used to loot *Vaisnava* temples

and pilgrims in medieval period. Therefore, *Baisnava Bairagi Akadas* were also established. Muslim Fakirs and Hindu *Sadhus* also used to fight each other. They used to travel different sacred places of India and loot the temples in the way also. Muslim Fakirs also were not back in loot. A troop of Yogi started to loot from *Haridwar* used to reach up to Bengal in British period. They used to loot the tax collected from the government and the factories also (Ghosh, 1930:67). British officers also used to be looted and threatened by them. They used to want respect from the society and the government. Very much suffered from the Yogis, British Governor Hastings banned them to walk in Bengal and Bihar with weapons in their hands. He further proclaimed that in the case of finding them in such a situation they would be forced to work as a labor in making road whole the life. From this we can guess that British rulers were very much suffered from the activities of Yogis in India.

As the *Akhadas* remain very rich, *Mahanta* the chief of *Akhada* also becomes rich. But other Yogis of the same *Akhadas* remain poor like the beggar. According to the census of 1891 and 1931 AD, the number of Yogis was 2717861 and 1896225 respectively. With respect to the data of 1891, it is said that nearly a third were Muslim chiefly found in *Panjab* and *Hindustan* (CBS, 1891: 203). Again we cannot find so big number of Yogis in a single center. Therefore, we can assume that this number represents the total of devotees and ascetics. According to a report there were ten to fifteen percent of women *Sadhus* in that period (Gross, 2001: 120). Latter on counting of the Yogis was stopped from the census of 1961 in India, because they do not live in certain places. They move here and there all the time and it is harder to count their number according to the report. Now we do not know the actual number of Yogis in India and Nepal. A great number of *Shaiva* and *Baisnava* Yogis live in Banaras and Ayodhya

respectively. *Baisnava* Yogis think that they need to walk round to *Brindavan, Rameswara, Jagannath and Dwaraka* four centers each per year. Shaiva Naga Yogis prefer to visit 12 *Jyotirlingas* of twelve centers. *Dasnamis* visit in the group taking tents and other necessities with them, where as *Baisnavas* Yogis do not do so. *Saiva and Baisnava* Yogis visit mostly their own Tirthas. But both of them visit Banaras, *Prayag* and *Haridwar*. *Sadhus* live in *Matha* and *Akhadas*, where they gain knowledge and learn to use weapons. *Mathas* are the center of gaining knowledge, where as *Akhadas* are for using weapons. In the same way Ashrams are related with knowledge and *Karmakanda* also.

### ***Sadhus* of Nepal**

We can see different kinds of *Sadhus* in temples and religious sites of Nepal in some occasions. In the same way some *Sadhus* are seen visiting in the villages also. In the occasions, festivals and feasts they are seen in the Tirthas. But we do not have *Sadhus* residing permanently in many Tirthas of Nepal. The moving *Sadhus* also cannot be identified whether they are Indian or Nepali. We do not have permanent resources to feed them in the Tirthas and the tendency of Nepali people towards Sadhu is not so favorable. That is why most of Nepali *Sadhus* also do not stay here for the long time. They prefer to visit different *Akhadas* and *Ashrams* of India and they are seen here only in the occasion of *Melas* and *Parvas*.

The system of *Sadhu* is the same in Nepal like India. Most of Nepali *Sadhus* are the product of the Gurus of different *Akhadas and Ashramas* of India. They have taken *Diksha* from the *Sadhus* and *Mahantas* of India. Most of the *Saiva Sadhus* of Nepal are related with the *Akhada* of Banaras. Banaras is easy to reach from Nepal and most of the Nepali

students reach there to take religious education. In the same way most of *Ramanandi Bairagis* of Nepal are related with *Ayodhya*. *Bairagis* related on the *Matha* and *Ashramas* of *Vrindavan* and south India are also found in Nepal. *Janakpur* the birth place of Sita lies in Nepal, but we don't have permanent *Ramanandi Bairagi* residing in this place. *Bairagi* of this area also pass most of their time in different *Ashrams* and *Akhadas* of India. *Nimbarki Sadhus* who have the dominant number in Nepal also are related mostly with *Brindavan*. Nepal is famous for *Nathpanthi Yogi*. We can see their existence from very long ago in Nepal.

There are different centers of Nepal, where different kinds of *Sadhus* are seen. At first *Pashupatinath* is the main place, where many *Saiva Sadhus* reach per year. There are some *Sadhus* in *Pashupatinath*, who permanently reside there and beg for food from *Tirthayatris*. Instead of *Saiva Sadhus* some *Baisnava Vairagis* also visit this place per year in the occasion of festivals. *Shivaratri* and *Balachaturdashi* are main occasions when thousands of *Saiva Sadhus* reach in *Pashupatinath* temple. They reach up to *Muktinath*, *Gosaikunda*, *Swargadwari*, *Ratannath* temple Dang and *Gorkha* also. *Gorkha* is related with the resident of *Gorakhanath*. In the same way *Ratannath* Math is there in Dang where *Kanphatta Nathpanthi Sadhus* reside permanently. *Pindeswara*, *Haleshi* and *Auliya Matha* of eastern Nepal are also famous for *Saiva Sadhus*. They reach there in some occasions and return to their destinations. *Barahakshetra*, *Ridi*, *Devghat*, *Triveni* and *Balmiki* Ashram are main *Vaisnava tirthas* of Nepal. Therefore, we can see different kind of *Baisnava Bairagi* visiting there per year. In the same way *Janakpur* is also an important *Tirtha* for *Baisnava*, where thousands of *Bairagis* visit there. But we do not have permanent source for feeding food to the *Bairagis* in *Janakpur* also. Therefore, they do not stay there for the long

time. They make a short trip there at the time of festivals and return again towards their destinations.

We do not know the actual number of *Sadhus* of Nepal, because we do not have the permanent shelters for them in Nepal. In the same way they do not stay in a place for the long time and they move here and there among different *tirthas*. They pass most of their time visiting different Tirthas of India, where they can get food and shelter. Therefore, we cannot estimate their accurate number in Nepal. According to a survey done this year by the researcher, all together there are near about 30 thousand Nepali *Sadhus* including *Saiva and Baisnava Bairagis*. But they do not stay in Nepal for long. They move here and there in Indian Tirthas. In occasion of *Melas and Parvas Tirthas*, most of them are seen in *Pashupatinath, Varahakshetra, Devaghat, Balmiki Ashram, Trivenidham, Janakapur* and other centers. Again, they take their way and reach up to their destinations.

The main centers where most of Dasnami *Sadhus* and *Baisnav Bairagis* visit per year are *Varahakshetra, Chatara, Ramdhuni, Pindeswara* and other surrounding sacred areas. They visit generally these centers in occasion of festivals. There is a tradition of *Naga Jogis* to carry the flag of *Auliya Baba* to *Varahakshetra* from *Chatara* in this occasion of *Kartika Mela*. *Saiva Naga Jogis* who reach *Chatara* for this purpose make a plan to carry the flag up to *Varahakshetra*. A single *Naga Sadhu* has to carry the flag without taking a rest. He cannot keep the flag in the floor also. It is done with competition treated as a prestigious deed for *Naga Yogi*. *Hundi* is provided for the *Yogis*, who participate in carrying this flag. It is believed that *Auliya Baba* was the first priest of *Varahakshetra*. He used to sit at *Auliya Matha* and according to a legend used to reach daily to *Varahakshetra* to worship the god. After his death his flag is brought up to

*Varahakshetra* in *Kartik Mela* in his memory. It is believed that *Kartika Mela* begins legally from this event and the flag is kept inside the temple for three days. In the same way the Same Yogis bring back the flag to *Auliya Matha of Chatara* and *Kartik Mela* ends from that event.

The Yogis who participate in *Kartika Mela of Varahaksetra* have an old tradition of collecting a kind of tax called *Tolabatti*. Next day of *Kartika Purniya* these Yogis collect such kind of tax at *Varahakshetra* and *Chatara*. It is believed that the *Mahantas* of *Chatara Math* ruled in this area for the long time. They had given the right to collect tax at that period. Therefore, it is believed that this system is continuing in the form of *Tolabatti* (Khatiwada, 2067: 307) even today. There is a system of providing some amount of money for the Yogis in *Pindeswara Dharan* too, as *Handi*(food free of cost for *Sadhus*). It is given in cash instead of providing food as *Hundi*. The price level of the food is increased very high but the *Handi* given to the *Sadhus* is not increased. Therefore, the *Handi of Pindeswara* is equally divided to the Yogis in cash who reach there after *Kartika Mela*. But no Yogis stay at *Varahakshetra, Chatara and Pindeswara* permanently as it is lacking regular fund for the food (Ibid).

In recent years *Chatara* of eastern Nepal is developed as ancient *Haridwar* by *Jagatguru Bala Santa Mohansaran Devacharya* and its fame is increased up to the large area of India and Nepal. The first *Kumbhamela* of Nepal was organized here from 2003 AD by him. After that *Kumbhamela of Chatara* is established and it is considered one of the best places to take *Kumbha Snana*. *Kumbha* is organized there in every 12 years interval. This *Mela* is specially organized in the side of *Koshi River* where *Sadhus* of different sects reach there to take a bath and participate in different activities. Thousands of Yogis reach *Chatara* from different *Mathas* and

*Akhadas* in this occasion. Not only Saiva Sadhu and Baisnava Bairagi, the *Sadhus* of other sects like *Nathpanthi*, *Ramoutpanthi*, *Tamoutpanthi* and *Kabirpanthi* also reach there to participate in different occasions. As there is not the system of *Guthi* and management of *Handi* is lacking *Jagatguru* Math manages food for the Jogis in this occasion. In occasion of some functions organized by *Jagatguru* Math *Sadhus* are fed from its internal source. So, the numerous *Sadhus* reach there at that time to participate in different *Yajnas*. More *Sadhus* arrive there in the occasion of *Kumbha Mela* than other feast and festivals. The first sacred bathing is done by *Sadhus*, which is called Saisnan or Maha Snana. After that other pilgrims and religious persons also take bath in *Kumbha*. In this way *Kumbha* is possible from *Sadhus* of *Akhadas*.

*Pashupatinath* area is a suitable place for *Shaiva* Yogis in Kathmandu valley. Therefore, some Yogis stay there permanently. In the lacking of regular fund to feed Yogis, most of them are forced to beg with the pilgrims. In the same way thousands of *Sadhus* reach there in occasion of *Shivaratri* and *Balachaturdashi*. They beg for food, participate in different functions and return again in their centers. *Sadhus* are fed in the occasion of Mela in *Pashupatinath* from the fund of Pashupati Development Fund. But in other occasions the *Sadhus* who live there should manage their food begging from the pilgrims.

*Triveni*, *Balmiki* Ashram and *Devghat* are also suitable centers for the *Sadhus*. But only a few numbers of *Sadhus* stay there permanently. *Muktinath*, *Khaptad* and *Swargadwari* also are the centers for the *Sadhus* to travel in different occasions. In the same way the *Ratannath Matha* is the permanent centers of *Natha Sadhus* where there is a system of providing regular food for the Yogis. Therefore,

some of *Nathapanthi* Yogis are residing there permanently. Mahantas and Yogis are given the responsibility of the priest in some religious centers and they are residing there permanently. For example the main priests of *Ratannath Dang* and *Palpa Bhairav* are *Nathapanthi* Yogis. They reside in these centers permanently to do their duty. We can see different kinds of Yogis moving in the villages and begging food and money also. They travel different places and it is very hard to count their number. They are not bound with the political boundary.

With together *Nathapanthi*, *Saiva*, *Aghori* and other kind of *Saiva Yogis*, *Nimbarki*, *Ramanandi*, *Pranami*, *Shrivainava*, *Kabirpanthi*, *Ramoutpanthi*, *Swaminarayan* and other group of *Baisnava* Bairagi also are found in Nepal. We can find *Ballavi*, *Tamotpanthi* and other groups of *Bairagi* also in Nepal. Some Sanatani Yogis are also found in this country. Comparing to the gender only seven percent of Yogis are the women. In recent years *Vaisnava* women *Bairagin* are greater in number than other sects. The rules and regulations of *Saiva Jogis* are very hard to follow for the women. Therefore, their number in this sect is very low.

As *Sadhus* it is necessary to analyze the existence of Buddhist monks and Muslim Fakirs of the same categories of people. We can find different kind of Buddhist Monks in Nepal. Most of them reside in different *Biharas* of Kathmandu valley. In the same way Lamas reside in the Gompas and monasteries. Basically Lamas are found in the *Gombas* of mountain region and Kathmandu valley. But the monks and Lamas do not move different places like Hindu *Sadhus*. In Nepal some of the places are developed from the activities of *Sadhus*. Feasts and festivals in some places are also organized by *Sadhus*. For example we can take *Chatara* of eastern Nepal, where the Ashram of *Jagatguru* is established. A

*Ramanandi* Ashram is also developed in this location. There are two *Babas* who are responsible to manage different kinds of *Yajnas* and festivals in this location. Thousands of *Sadhus* and elite people visit this place per year from Nepal and abroad. Therefore, the Yogis have become the means of tourism development. Many more people have got job there and it has become the means of income generation. Most of the pilgrims and visitors visit such places in the occasion of feasts and festivals. Therefore, *Sadhus* are not only beggars and unproductive persons. We can use their activities for local development, income generation and self employment. They can become the means of tourism development. Hence, *Sadhus* are the means of income generation in Nepal, not the beggars and unproductive persons. We can use them in the sector of income generation, peace building and tourism development. Their feasts and *Yajnas* should be demonstrated to the tourists and they should be attracted. Their activities should be managed for the livelihood of general people. They should assist to the society and the county for the development of education also. Therefore, *Sadhus* also need to do creative work rather than to stay idle.

## Conclusions

*Sadhus* are such persons who do not have any ambitions, greed and expectations. They do not have any personal properties and residences. They are said unproductive and beggar, because they do not live in a certain place and beg for food. But most of the festivals and feasts in sacred places are organized from the help of *Sadhu*. In the same way the greatest sacred bath of the Hindus the *Kumbha Mela* is organized by *Sadhus* and this bath starts from the *Sai Snana*. It is a kind of *Snana* of *Sadhus* which is done at the time of *Kumbha Mela*. It is a kind of *Maha Snana* and general people start bathing after this bath. Therefore, *Sadhus* are the main

persons whose activities are related on the management of festivals. It is a means of collecting travelers and attracting tourists in such places. That is why *Sadhus* and their activities can become the means of attractions in religious sites. In Nepalese context, *Sadhus* can remain the means of income generation and welfare of general people.

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