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No one really knows anything about the songs of Kāṇha, not what they mean, not when or where or under what circumstances they were written. They form a verbal Rorschach test. And the interpretations of the songs by the commentator Munidatta, as well as by the academics—Kvaerne, Shahidulla, Dasgupta, and others—are projections at best. Ray sees a butterfly where I see a pelvis. As scholars, however, we are both constrained to justify our projections, to explain to others why they make sense. Making sense is as close as we can come to truth.

Ray, as a Tibetan scholar and a practicing Buddhist, envisions Kāṇha the *siddha*, and, basing his knowledge of the *siddhas* on hagiographical literature (the impulses of which were inspirational rather than historical), he argues that I have over-emphasized the “colorful and unconventional” aspects of the singer and his songs. There was indeed a *siddha* named Kāṇha, but to assume that he is the same person as the one who wrote the song in question just because they have the same name is an interpretive step I do not choose to take. It may be like assuming that Reginald Ray, Martha Ray, and Satyajit Ray are one and the same being.

Once these mysterious songs became incorporated into Vajrayāna canonical literature centuries later, Kāṇha the songwriter did, indeed, become identified as a *siddha* and commentatorial apologetics were necessarily written. But those institutional glosses reveal no more about the meaning of the original songs in their own context than do the Patristic commentaries on the Songs of Songs tell us about the original meaning or function of that erotic, bucolic text.

As a student of Indian cultural traditions, a non-believer, and an unabashed, if not aspiring, hedonist, my projections are different than Ray’s. All Rorschach blots look dirty to me. I think I may—if anything—have under-emphasized the colorful and unconventional dimensions of the songs. I see Kāṇha the Kāpālīka (Skullbearer) and I do so because Kāṇha repeatedly describes himself as one (songs 10, 11, and 18). He is, he says, a Skullbearer who has renounced his family, smeared his body with ashes, and taken up with a low-caste consort.

Such wild, drunken, antinomian yogis enacted and embodied the mythology of Śiva in his most grotesque and wonderfully terrible form. Carrying begging bowls made from human skulls, wearing garlands of bones, they frequented cremation grounds, and indulged in violently orgiastic rites. "He who eats human flesh from the skull of a fine gentleman will attain the stature of Śiva and enter his domain," a Kāpālīka announces, "thus spake the Lord who bears a human skull" (*Moharājaparājaya* 4.23).

Kāṇha says he drinks wine, boasts of copulating with his low-caste consort, describes the ashes on his body, and laughs at conventional religion: "Rosaries, sacred texts, and all things of the spirit are just hoopediddle . . . gurus might as well be dumb and students deaf . . . *sabaja* just can't be explained" (40). I take Kāṇha on his word.

I see quite a different lineage or tradition than the one described at length by Ray. It leads neither to Tibet nor to Boulder, Colorado; it begins, remains, and evolves in Bengal. I assume the Buddhist vocabulary of the songs merely reflects the milieu of Pāla Bengal. The skullbearing celebrant of the *sabaja* path could have been a Śaiva, a Vaiṣṇava, or anything else. The religion is merely adopted so that it can be renounced. Defiance, freedom, spontaneity, is the message, the Kāpālīka style, and the *sabaja* spirit. With the Sena dynasty Sahajiyā literature adopted Vaiṣṇava vocabulary and the songs that were sung retained the meters and rhyme schemes, as well as the conventional images (the Ḍombī, the boat, the tree, etc.) and the key philosophical term (*sabaja*) of the Buddhist *sahajiyā* songs in question. The descendants of Kāṇha and the inheritors of the tradition persist in Bengal as the wandering Bauls whose songs, like Kāṇha's, reiterate the word "*sabaja*." Kāṇha says he's drunk on *sabaja* (19), that he sleeps naked in *sabaja* (36), "and thanks to *sabaja* my mind is full of emptiness" (42). By emptiness, he means, I think, not the absolute but nothing at all. *Sabaja* for Kāṇha, I believe, means practicing religion by not practicing religion, being a Buddhist simply by "doin' what comes naturally."