CHAPTER - I

Vedic Lore and Other Paradigms around
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VEDIC LORE AND OTHER PARADIGMS AROUND

Vedas are known as antique treasure of the ancient literature and all the Indian philosophical traditions can be easily traced in the Vedas. The word ‘Veda’ rooted in ‘Vid’, means ‘knowledge’, which can be of any object or the way of life. Vedas are not any particular compositions rather they convey the meaning of knowledge which may pertain to anything. However, we know very little about the Vedic times because let alone the history writings, the ancient rishis have nowhere appended even their names to the literature created by them. The period of Vedic literature spreads from three to four thousand years, though it is difficult to decide when the Vedas were created. However, the philosophers like Max Mullar and Bal Gangadhar Tilak stretch their time from 4000 B.C. to 1200 B.C.

It is a well known fact that no record was maintained by the ancient people of their religious and literary works and the Vedas also were carried forward by next generation to generations orally. That is why they are known ‘Shruti’ also. One more belief is prevalent in Indian society that Veda Mantras were never created by any human being and either they were taught to rishis by God Himself or the rishis happened to visualize them in their trance (samadhi) and hence the rishis are known as the ‘mantra drishta’ as well.
Since the Vedic literature represents the complete working of the ancient mind that is why this is essentially a literature having all sorts of diversities in it. Grossly one can divide the whole Vedic literature in four different categories, ‘Samhita’ is known as the collection of mantras and the remaining categories are known as Brahmanas, Aranayaks and Upnishads.

Four collections are available in the Vedic mantras and these are: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. These four collections are called the four Vedas and Rig Veda is held as the oldest one. In this collection the compilation of mantras pertaining to Agni, Indra, Varuna, Usha, Savit, Vishnu, Rudra, Marut have been done. In Yajurveda the compilation pertaining to sacrificial mantras has been done and many a mantra in this Veda are of the Rig Veda, though some of the prose writings of this Veda are also there in. The mantras of this Veda are sung on religious occasions of different sacrifices. Two further collections of this Veda are known as ‘Krishna Yajurveda’ and ‘Shukla Yajurveda’. Shukla Yajurveda is known by the name of ‘Vajsneyi Samhita’ also.

Practically there is not much relevance and importance of Samveda because by and large in this Veda the mantras from the Rig Veda have been repeated to explain that in which exact notation these are to be sung. That is why this Veda is known as ‘Book of Chants’ also. To alleviate the sufferings and attainment of pleasures many rituals have been defined in the Atharva Veda. In this Granth many methods and mantras have been given for
the appeasement of the ghosts and witches and that is why this work is known for the exposition of the lower life style of Indian life in the earlier times. For the Vedic Yajna or sacrificial activity four main purohitas are required; hota, recites the mantras to eulogise the gods and invokes the presence of the gods for that sacrificial act; to please gods through melodious voice udgata sings the mantras; adhvaryu in fact maintains this whole ritual through set rules and the fourth Brahma who is supposed to be quite adept in the Veda Vedangas takes care of whole of the yajna.

The above mentioned four collections are supposed to have been created for the four purohitas mentioned above; Rig for hota, Sama for udgata, yajur for adhvaryu and Atharva for Brahma.

**Brahmana Granth**

These Granthas explain the mantras of the Vedas. In Brahmana Granth the description of the method and required material for Yajna is described in detail. Mantras are only poetry but the Brahmana Granthas are prose writings. In the collection of Mantras are prayers for gods whereas in the Brahmana Granthas different methods of performing the Yajnas are given. These Granthas treaties explaining theology of the ‘Rik’ Samhita and these Granthas are distinctly different having a literary style. These prose writings explain sacred significance of rituals of vedic yajnas for those who are not already familiar with them. To quote Prof. Macdonell, “they reflect the spirit of an age in which all intellectual activity is concentrated on the sacrifice, describing
its ceremonies, discussing its value, speculating on its origin and significance.”¹

These works are full of dogmatic assertions, fanciful symbolism and speculations of an unlimited imagination in the field of sacrificial details. Says S.N. Dasgupta, “The sacrificial ceremonies were probably never so elaborate at the time when early hymns were composed. But when collection of hymns were being handed down from generations to generations the ceremonials became more and more complicated which required the distribution of different sacrificial functions among several distinct classes of priests.² One may imagine that it was a period when the caste system was getting established and sacrifice and elaborate rituals required to engage wise and religious minds who belonged to higher castes only. In fact, speculative thinking and philosophical understanding was thus subordinated to service of the sacrifice and as a result the production of most fanciful sacramental and symbolic system unparalleled anywhere was evolved. The closing period of Brahman treatises is believed to be not later than 500 BC.³

Some famous Brahmana Granthas are Aitreya Brahmana, Taittariya Brahmana, Gopath Brahmana, Shatpath Brahmana etc. **Aranyaks and Upnishads**

When Brahmana Granthas were compiled explaining the details of ritualistic worship, the further development came into being in the form of ‘Aranyaks’ or ‘forest treatise’. One could
imagine that probably these works were composed for old men who had retired to the forests and were thus unable to perform elaborate sacrifices requiring a lot of energy and articles to be used and in the forests the people were unable to procure them as well. Now the great merit was derived from the meditations on certain symbols and for example the manas (mind) was taken in place of the horse to be sacrificed (Ashawmedh Yajna).

There are directions for meditating upon the dawn as the head of horse, the sun as the eye of the horse, the air as its life and so on. Dasgupta further holds “This is indeed a distinct advancement of the claims of speculations and meditations over the actual performance of complicated ceremonials of rituals.”

This trend shows that amongst a certain section of intelligent people the ritualistic ideas began to give away and philosophical speculations about the nature of Truth gradually substituted the gross animal sacrifices.

Upanishads are 108 in number but the Chief Upanishads are supposed to be 11 only on which the Great Shankcharya has produced his commentaries. These Upanishads are: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundak, Mandukya, Taitraiya, Aitraiya, Chandogya, Brahadaranyaka, Shvetashvatar. In the Upanishads the thoughts pertaining to non-dualism in the Vedas have been expanded and developed. When the Brahman Granthas were in the process of formulation and the different explanations were given of the ritualistic worship, the philosophical thought of the Vedas was almost forgotten by the people.
The meaning of word Upnishad is ‘to listen to the teacher by sitting near him’. We all know that in the Brahman Granthas the methodology of the sacrifices is described but in the Aranyakas, the main ideas tell us as to how the original act of sacrifice got transformed into symbolic value system.

In *Brahdaranyaka Upnishad* it is seen that instead of sacrifice of horse the whole of universe has been transformed and imagined as a horse. By this time people started thinking that the real meaning of sacrifice in Yajna is totally dependent on the meditation or Samadhi. Now the rishis started making their disciples understand the importance of meditation and this way Upnishads came into being. Upnishads take people on the way of knowledge whereas the rest of Vedic literature takes man to the way of ritualism.

Detailed discussion about lower and higher knowledge has been taken up in Upnishads and at various places the rishis have very boldly declared Vedas, grammar, astronomy, art of pronunciation and similar branches of knowledge as the lower knowledge and have further told that that knowledge is higher which links human beings directly with the supreme being. In Upnishads the whole of the cosmos has been accepted as developed from the supreme Being who Himself is beyond all boundaries of time and space. Supreme element is known as Sati, Chitt and Ananda also. Objectively this supreme element is called Brahm and when seen subjectively the same has been
named as Atman. In Upnishads the five layers of human personality have been discussed which are known as Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanmaya and Anandmaya Koshas. Detailed discussions about transmigration and liberation are there in the Upnishads.

**Shastras**

Six systems in Indian philosophy are known as Shastras which are *Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshik, Purva Mimansa, Uttar Mimansa* or the *Vedanta*. It is difficult to decide about the dates and sources of these Shastras but one fact is definite that we find a penetrative philosophical inquisitive mind set in these writings. These *shastras* are written in such concise aphorisms, that for understanding them a lot of labour and devotional knowledge is required.

*Sankhya* is the theory concerning the origin of universe and Prakriti and Purusha are main characters responsible for evolutionary creation. One is the plurality of selves called Purusha, and the second is unlimited primal matter called Prakriti. Purusha is considered as pure consciousness but inactive and the second (Prakriti) is unlimited cosmic energy devoid of consciousness. The contact between the two gives rise to world of things and beings. Prakriti is said to be made up of three subtle elements Sativika (Virtues), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (dullness). These three elements enter in different portions into the material composition of all things and beings in the world, making each one different in nature and character.
The cause of soul’s misery and suffering according to Sankhya philosophy is its mistaken identification with the body, mind, intellect and ego. The dissolution of identification is necessary for liberation of self from bondage of material existence and as it is not so easy Sankhya suggested true knowledge of the true self as a means of salvation from non-self (comprising body, mind and intellect).

Kapil Muni is supposed to be the author of this *shastra*. The *Yoga shastra* is based on *Yoga sutras* of Patanjali, which have four cantos. The first being *samadhi Pad* dealing with nature and aim of concentration, explaining the means to realize this end. The second *sadhna Pad*, the third *vibhuti Pad* deals with supra-normal powers which can be acquired through Yoga and the fourth one *kaivalya Pad* describing the nature of liberation and the reality of transcendental self. Yoga Philosophy is not only theoretical but practical also which takes care of the final liberation of Purusha through eight fold path. Yoga with the growth of religious and philosophical ideas in Rig-Veda one finds that the religious austerities were generally very much valued. *Tapas* (asceticism) and *brahmacharya* (celibacy) were regarded as greatest virtues and considered as being productive of the highest power.

As these ideas of asceticism and self-control grew, the force of the growing passions was felt to be as uncontrollable, thus the word ‘Yoga’ which originally applied to the control of steeds began to be applied to the control of the senses. S.N. Dasgupta further elaborated the idea of connecting Sankhya philosophy with Yoga
with reference to Maitrayani in the conversation of Shakyayana and Brhadhratha “where we find that the Sankhya metaphysics was offered in some quarters to explain the validity of the yoga processes and it seems therefore that the association and grafting of the Sankhya metaphysics on the yoga system as its basis, was the work of the followers of this school of ideas which was subsequently systematized by Patanjali.” According to Patanjali, Yoga does not mean union but spiritual effort to attain perfection through control of the body, senses and mind and through right discrimination between Purusha and Prakriti.⁹

Nyaya Shastra belongs to Gotam who considers purusha as the efficient cause of creation but does not attribute him the quality of being the material cause. Vaisheshik is the creation of Rishi Kanad who counts different categories of matter. Both Nyaya and Vaisheshika are regarded as having similar philosophy. Both are complimentary to each other. Vaisheshika develops metaphysics and ontology and Nyaya develops logic and Epistemology. Both agree in viewing the earthly life full of sufferings as bondage of soul and in regarding liberation which is absolute cessation of suffering as the supreme end of life. Both agree that bondage is due to ignorance of reality and that liberation is due to right knowledge of reality. Vaisheshika takes up the exposition of reality and Nyaya takes up right knowledge of reality.¹⁰ Mimansa’s author Gemini has told that which Mantra is to be recited and which methodology to be used at what type
of sacrifice and Yajna. This Shastra tells that Vedas are not the creation of human beings. It is the doctrine of self validity of knowledge which forms the cornerstone in which the whole structure of Mimansa philosophy is based. It advocates that all knowledge excepting the action of remembering is valid in itself.\footnote{11} Vedanta is known after the name of Badrayan Vyas and in this Shastra the various thoughts pertaining to Upnishads have been cleared and reconciled by its learned author. These Sutras are known as \textit{Sharirik Sutra, Uttar Mimansa, Brahmsutras} and \textit{Vedanta}. The other prominent Vedantic philosophers (Acharyas) are Ramanuj, Madhva, Nimbark and Vallabha.

\textbf{Puranas}

These are 18 in number namely \textit{Brahm Purana, Vishnu Purana, Padam Purana, Vayu Purana, Bhagvata Purana, Naradiya Purana, Markandeya Purana, Agni Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Brahma\textit{v}aivarta Purana, Linga Purana, Kurma Purana, Varaha Purana, Matsya Purana, Skand Purana, Yamana Purana, Garuda Purana} and \textit{Brahmanda Purana}.

The number of Shalokas in all these puranas is supposed to be four lakh six hundred and out of these Brahm Purana is the oldest one. In almost all these Puranas cosmology, creation after dissolution, the geneology of sun and moon, gods and great deeds done by the dynasties of sun and moon are described. Because in these \textit{puranas} attractive stories are described, they are also known as Vedas of the masses.
**Tantra**

Tantras are also the ancient heritage of Indian subcontinent but in the tradition built by the Vedas, Shastras and Upnishads we find that great commentators and gramarians have flourished and by and large one can hold that they have tried their best to mould the concepts and rituals of the aborigines, directly or indirectly in their own thought frames and in this work they have succeeded also. The biggest example of this enterprise are the Tantra Granthas, which are mostly kept away from general masses by telling people that they are obscene and they pamper low instincts in the human beings. Perhaps that is why the Tantras are even today for most of the readers nothing but paradoxical literature which is just related to magic sorcery and occult powers. Many Indian and foreign scholars have written about the Tantras but whatever could come before the people is that *Tantras* do not teach us more than the supernatural powers and the maximum we know about them is that many a king had tantrics at their disposal for the sake of sex pertaining medicines and elixirs. Very little has been thought about the fact that what was the objectives of the scholars who presented the Tantras in such an abominable shape and in fact what is the meaning of Tantras. Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj, Sir John Woodroffe, P.C. Bagchi, S.N. Dasgupta, Harprasad Shastri, M.P. Pandit, Mercea Eliade and N.N. Bhattacharya, et.al. are such scholars who have deeply studied that heritage which is even older than the Vedas or at
least is a parallel heritage and they have given to the people the right perspective of the tantra and its role in the life of the masses. While discussing tantric doctrines Sir Charles Eliot avers that apart from the ceremonial which they inculcate, the general principles of Tantra breathe a liberal and intelligent respect. Caste restrictions are minimised; travelling is permitted; women are honoured; they can act as teachers; the burning of widows is forbidden, widow can remarry and murder of women is peculiarly heinous. Prostitution is also denounced. Whereas Christianity is sometimes accused of restricting its higher code to Church and sundays, the opposite may be said of Tantrism. Outside the temple its morality is excellent. A few important names of Tantra Granthis are Kularnava Tantra, Sharada Tilak, Mahanirvana Tantra, Tara Tantra, Hevjra Tantra, Rudrayamala Tantra and Yoni Tantra etc.

**Bhagvad Gita**

Gita also called ‘Gospel of Humanity’, ‘Lord’s Song’ is the most popular and sacred book of Hinduism contained in Bheeshma parva of Mahabharata, the greatest sanskrit epic. It is believed that Arjuna was horrified at the thought that he has to fight with his relatives and friends. When the refuses, Lord Krishna instructs him that it is his duty as a prince, as a warrior, as a righteous man to fight against evil and restore peace and order. Lord Krishna imparted him that soul is indestructible, eternal, immovable, unmanifest, immutable and only bodies are
destroyed, not the soul. Gita tries to build up philosophy of Karma based on knowledge and supported by Bhakti in a beautiful manner. And in the end when the teachings have been imparted the Lord simply says - Do as you please.’ In this way Gita represents a unique synthesis of Action, Devotion and Knowledge.

**SHRAMANIC TRADITIONS**

Religious history of India tells that *Shramanic* tradition was older than the Vedic thought which became prevalent in India with the entry of Aryans into this subcontinent. The seals and coins excavated at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa also tell that long before the advent of Aryans into India many Munis undergoing typical penances were the inhabitants of this land. Some evidences are available in *Rigveda (Keshi Sukta)* also, in which an Aryan holy man looks to be very much full of wonder on looking at a naked Sanyasi with long matted hair.

In Rigveda, it is shown that these naked ascetics actually not only belonged to *shramanic* culture but they were in fact native people who were conquered and vanquished by the hordes of Aryans flowing into India through Punjab.

With the establishment of Aryan dominance, it is needless to say that *shraminic* culture of this land had to maintain a very low profile. This culture again emerged in the times of Buddha and Mahavira who were contemporary of each other along with the Upnishadic period. Indian history tells that many Indian kings and Emperors like Ashoka were deeply influenced by the Non-
violence principle of this movement and did their best to spread Buddhism far and wide.

However, as we know that Vedic culture represented the fighting and imperialistic interests of Aryan culture but side by side we can feel proud of Vedic lore in which naturalism, pantheism, polytheism, monotheism, and even monism are abundantly available. Not only this, the Vedic thought envisaged in its texts inspired Govindpada, Gaudpada, Shankracharya of southern India around ninth century and needless to say that the Great Shankracharya upto this day is known as the main representative exponent of Advaita Vedanta. After Shankracharya we see the emergence of great thinkers like Ramanuj (Vishistadvaitvad), Madhavacharya (dvaitavad), Vallabha (Shudha dvaitavada) and Nimbarka (dvaitadvait vada). These great scholars and saints have made people even today, proud of their religious heritage which was brought to light by these great men of learning and sterling character.

Later on based on Vedic thought, various commentaries on Brahmutsras and the Gita etc. were written and further this Vedic thought inspired many others to write upon the Vedic lore.

Punjab was the main centre for the study of Vedic lore and history tells us that around 600 B.C. to 500 A.D. the Texla University situated in Gandhar province of erstwhile Punjab, was a great centre of education where the students from distant places such as Varanasi, Rajgriha, Pataliputra, Mithila, Ujjain,
etc. would come to learn about the literature, medicines and surgery. It is mentioned in Dhammpada that prisenjit the king of Koshal and a king of Lichhvi dynasty were classmates at Texla. Bimbsara the king of Maghdha sent Jivak Kumar Bharatya to learn about the medicine and the Kapal mochna Vidya (Head surgery). Everyone knows that Kautiliya also known as Chanakya is also supposed to have remained here as Professor of Political Science and from him Chandragupta Maurya learnt the art of militancy and diplomacy. It was Vedic lore which made India known to the whole world. Similarly, the Gita is also a product of Punjab and Vedic lore became the repository of doctrines of Gian (knowledge), Bhagati (devotion) and Karma (action). In this longer hymn the Great synthesis of all these three doctrines was made by Lord Krishna who ultimately prevailed upon Arjun for fighting the atrocities perpetrated by those who were cruel towards the “have nots”. It is the Gita which is also the fountain head of Indian mental make up showing the balance among the attachment, detachment and the righteous action. Hundreds of commentaries were also produced by great scholars on this great text.

Simultaneously Buddhism and Jainism representing the shramanic traditions were also emerging. These both religions were based on ethical values and their great exponents, the Buddha and Mahavira were contemporary of each other. Their thoughts were totally opposed to the Vedic violence and excessive
indulgence into ritualistic activities. Buddhism put greater emphasis on individual morality and revived that non-violent culture which was operative here even long before the advent of Aryans. Through their precepts Buddhist disciples not only talked about the religion of kindness, humanity and equality but also through their actions spread their religion which was precisely known after the name of Lord Buddha, Buddhism. Whereas the Vedic tradition sanctioned animal sacrifices to make happy their gods, on the other hand Buddhism stood firmly against such sacrifices. The chequered history of Buddhism puts forth, that, under the influence of Buddhist thought many kings abandoned violence and made Ahimsa (non-violence) as a guiding force of their life. Buddhism pondered upon the freedom from individual and collective suffering and the Bikshus of Buddhism after their master Gautama Buddha the Great, discussed about it when they met in their first and second councils at Rajgir and Vaishali. Here Buddhism got bifurcated into two bigger sections known as Hinayana and Mahayana having different views about teachings of Vinaya. They both were preaching Buddhism and authenticated their theories in the name of same Lord Buddha.

Buddhism produced great philosophers such as, Vasubandhu, Sanghabhadra, Kumarlat, Vasumitra, Asang, Dinnaga, Dharmakirti, Nagarjuna, Chandra Kirti et al. These philosophers contributed a lot for the development of Indian philosophy.
When Huns invaded India Buddhism suffered a serious setback and by seventh and eighth century A.D. the Vaisanava and Shaiva tradition of Indian subcontinent almost uprooted the Buddhist ideology from India and with the advent of Muslim invasions on India Buddhism was almost fully annihilated and a neo-Hinduism emerged in which many sects and religious groups came to the forefront.

However, one can not deny the fact that it was Lord Buddha alone on Indian soil who simply based on ethics and without the props of God and *atman* could establish such a strong tradition, which though was made null and void in India flourished in China, Japan, Sri Lanka and many other countries of world.

**SHAIVA AND SHAKTA TRADITIONS**

While discussing Shaiva Siddhanta and history of Tantras Prof. C.D. Sharma and Prof. Kamlakar Mishra both agree that the worship of Shiva or Rudra goes back to the Vedas\(^1\) and the tradition of Tantras (Agamas) enjoys the same status as the Vedas. Glorification of Rudra whose this whole universe has been accepted the manifestation is found in the Aranyakas, Mahabharta and some Puranas etc. The sacred literature of Shaivas puts forth four schools of Shaivism - Nakulish-Pushupati, Pratyabhijna and Raseshvara. Shaivism is further divided into *Virshaivism*, and *Shaiva Siddhanta*. Vir Shaivism is also known as *Lingayat* which is practised these days in Southern India. Pratyabhijna school or Kashmir Shaivism is known as the representative of *Northern*
Saivism. Kashmir Shaivism is known as most authentic and prominent with regard to interpreting the Tantras and the first name in the history of Kashmir Shaivism is Vasugupta who flourished in Eighth Century A.D. He discovered the Shivasutras which presents the gist of Shaiva sadhna based on non-dualistic philosophy of the Tantras. In Shaiva Siddhanta Shiva is supreme reality and is called ‘Pati’ or ‘Lord’ who possesses the attributes of being self existence, essential purity, intuitive wisdom infinite intelligence, freedom from all bonds, infinite grace or love, omnipotence and infinite bliss. As put up by C.D. Sharma, just as “the Potter is the first cause, his staff and wheel are instrumental cause and clay is material cause of the pot, similarly Shiva is the first cause, his Shakti is the instrumental cause and Maya is the material cause of this world.” The relation of Shiva and Shakti is known as that of ‘Identity’ though the shakti is the power of the Lord. The Shakti is consciousness, unchanging and eternal energy. In Shaiva Siddhanta the individual souls are called pashu, because like cattle they are bound by rope of avidya to this world. The bound souls mistake themselves as infinite and limited in the will, thought and action and in liberation are restored to their original nature - the Pati or the Lord. After the removal of bondage the soul becomes one with Shiva and shares His glory and greatness.

In Kashmir Shaivism Shiva is the only reality, “The one without a second.” He creates everything by mere force of his
will and He is the Subject as well as the object rather He makes the world appear in himself as if it was distinct from Him, though it was not really so. Shiva in Kashmir Shaivism, is known as the transcendental eternal background of this universe and in the immanent aspect, He is called Vishvatmic having in himself the Shakti conceived as a power of self consciousness by which Shiva manifested Himself as this universe on his own transcendent background. His shakti has many aspects such as chit (knowing), anandu (delight), ichchha (will), jnana (knowledge) and kriya (action). Maya in Kashmir Shaivism is neither the material cause of the universe nor the principle of illusion, it is that aspect of power (shakti) of Shiva through which He manifest Himself as many. For attaining liberation the recognition (pratibhijna) of this reality is essential. A love-sick woman cannot get any consolation and joy even though her lover may be present near her unless she recognises him. The moment recognition dawns she becomes all joy and puts off her all bondages and becomes one with Shiva.

The most important name in history of Kashmir Shaivism is Abhinava Gupta (between 10th and 11th Century) who wrote famous commentary Vimarshini on the Pratibhijna Karikas. His renowned work Tantraloka is a systematic and rational account of the tantric philosophy and religion, wherein one finds that Abhinava Gupta gives a complete picture of the Shaiva thought.

Prof. Kamalankar Mishra in detail has pondered upon the historicity as well as authenticity and the theory that the Tantra
is post Vedic in his work “Significance of Tantric Tradition”. He says “The language of tantrics is post Vedic Sanskrit which was systematized by Panini. Moreover there is an internal evidence, namely, that in Tantra itself their is mention of Veda. All this indicates that Tantra is post Vedic and therefore many scholars guess that the time of Tantra roughly ranges from 1000 B.C. to 500 A.D.\textsuperscript{16} There is another theory that the tantric system (Shaivism) originally belongs to Dravadians. Dravadians are considered as original natives of India prior to advent of Aryans.

They are said to have been worshipping Lord Shiva and were following tantric way of life. The Vedas were composed by Aryans who came later. In other words, the Vedas are of the Aryans and Tantras are of the Dravadian and since the Dravadian inhabited India before the advent of Aryans then, the Tantras have to be placed prior to the Vedas. Regarding language of Tantras one could say that the Tantra literature existed in the form of oral and practical tradition from the pre-vedic time and that it was put into writings only later\textsuperscript{17} (after the Vedas).

However, it is atleast certain that the tantric culture is a part of ancient culture of India and existed side by side with the Vedas. If study of ancient Indian culture may reveal the impact of Tantra on the Indian life, then if not older than Veda, we can accept that the Tantra (Shaivism) is as old as the Vedas.
YOGA TRADITION

The Upnishadic philosophy tried to prove that the knowledge of the Vedas and its allied literature is the lower kind and is known as the *apara vidya* - lower knowledge. They call only that *vidya*, *para vidya*, or true knowledge, which gives direct realisation of Absolute Truth and that is *yoga-vidya* - the spiritual approach to Absolute Truth. This spiritual approach covers those physical and psychical processes which are employed to discover man’s Supreme inner essence through *samadhi*. *Samadhi* is nothing but the realisation that the *jivatman* is Parmatman and yoga is not this *samadhi* or realisation, but the means by which it is attained.¹⁸

Medieval India consists of three types of people of which one were fanatical Muslims, second were orthodox Hindus and third were the yogis, who tended to threat the God fearing innocent Indians with their occult powers. Yogis had emerged on the ground of revolt against the stiff caste classification and orthodox attitude of society, but they too could not maintain any equality among themselves and with other fellow beings. Externally, the yogis struck at the caste system fiercely and rebuked the superiority derived out of it, but internally every follower of the *yoga-marga*, considered himself superior to the low creatures of society. He pitied the extroversion of others, ridiculed them through many complex dialogues and hoped that the people should feel taken
aback after seeing his magical feats. On the other hand, the 
devoted bhakta accepted wholeheartedly the four fold 
classification of society, and its hierarchy. He obligingly felt himself 
as a drowning passenger in the world-ocean and repented grossly 
for the sins committed by him. He was, however, hopeful that the 
all-pervading God might listen to his cry one day and liberate 
him from the bondage of the life. Among the yogi and the Bhakta 
one was proud of his knowledge and the other of his own 
ignorance. One was confident of his own self, the other relied on 
Rama. One considered love as a weakness, the other considered 
knowledge as harsh.¹⁹

These extremes were the fertile grounds for the suspicions 
and superstitions in society. People faced a spiritual and social 
loss and the result was not healthy. Two reactions of this were 
evident among the common men. A doubt was created in the 
heart of the devoted householder by the teaching of the yogis. 
The common man started thinking that maya is horrible, which 
in no way would free the mortals from bondage and the way of 
achievement is tedious; the man without yoga practice shall be 
led to tortures known only to God; God knows how long he would 
wander in the cycle of transmigration. The world-ocean is 
devouring us, illusions of maya are infinite and the way of practice 
(of yoga) is very rough and tough; the batallions of impediments
are there obstructing the way and the lot of the poor householder is bound to be hopeless. On the other side, the *bhakta* had made the common man totally carefree. Even by mistake if anybody happened to recite Hari-nama, he need not do anything else; the gates of heaven are obliged to be opened if once the mark of Vishnu is put on the forehead; if somehow you get the Tulsi beads, your place in *goloka* is reserved. *Kaliyuga* is the best of all the ages because mental sins breed no fruit in it, yet the mental sacrifices bring full harvest of happiness. Ram’s name is greater than Rama himself; hence there is no reason for any worry. Yoga left the householder to be more suspicious than required whereas *bhakti* made him excessively optimistic.\(^{20}\) Tulasi Das is also annoyed when be says that Gorakh gave the call for Yoga and thus forced *bhakti* to run away.\(^{21}\)

Dr. Radhakrishnan observes that according to the *Vedas* we find it necessary to meditate upon the Divine Light in order to attain sacredness. There is mention of Munis in the olden scriptures and in the *Atharvaveda* it is quite clearly stated that with practice of austerity, supernatural power can be attained.\(^{22}\) Indians have always remained eager for more and more knowledge and its assimilation in practical life. For this purpose thousands of people devoted their lives to this high deal. Ancient literature is replete with such descriptions of austere life and asceticism.
Mukti being the ultimate aim of Indian philosophy can be attained by two methods. One method takes recourse to knowledge and the other to action. The way of knowledge is a pure intellectual process which pushes man on the way of quietism and renunciation of action (sanyasa, vairagya). Yoga on the other hand in the Gita is supposed to be disciplined and unselfish activity, which is quite in contrast to quietism or the way of knowledge.

Unfortunately Yoga has been considered as mortification of body (flesh) only, which is not true, rather it was all about the control of body. The aim of Yoga was to set the individual free from Prakrti. The highest form of prakrti is chitta and yoga directs the way through which man can free himself from the bondages of chitta.  

Yoga gives the psychic power over the physical aspects, solitude, meditation and finally ecstasy is attained.

The Bhagvad Gita says that those who lack the higher plane of the intellect, should not be taken away from active life and they should not be confused by the elite. The scholar is urged to get engaged in desireless action and he should inspire others also for the same. But the yogis on the one hand, had bade goodbye to the struggles of life and on the other, prompted many kings also to leave their kingdoms and become Yogis. Raja Gopi
Chand and queen Mainamati of Bengal, Bhartrihari of Ujjain, Puran Bhagat (Chaurangi Nath) and king Rasalu of Sialkot are few examples of those who in spite of being kings and queens abdicated their thrones in favour of yoga-marga and Gorakh, Jalandhar, et al are said to be their initiators. Kings gave up their thrones to preach the doctrine of the Natha sect. The renunciation of king Gopi Chandra of Bengal, in the eleventh century created a sensation all over India, which even at the present time continues to be echoed in poems, dramas and popular ballads sung by minstrels amongst rural folk. Bhartrihari was initiated by Jalandhari who according to the traditions of the yogis was himself the prince of Hastinapur in Northern India. Chaurangi Nath, another Nath Yogi initiated by Matsyendranath, was the son of king Devapala of the Pal Dynasty of Bengal.\textsuperscript{26}

Yogis considered Kundalini as the source of shakti, which is to be awakened through six chakras and is considered as rare and most difficult practice. Guru Nanak also hinted in his hymns about these chakras.\textsuperscript{27} Guru had talked about the Naval Lotus which when illuminated ‘Niranjan’ is realized.\textsuperscript{28} Similarly in Raga Sorath in the Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev is surprised to see the vanished things that were great cause of his anxiety. Now he sleeps in peace as his inverted heart lotus has bloomed. In the heart (with the blooming of lotus) he has seen the Lord whose
knowledge is spoken of as unfathomable. The way of the blooming of this lotus is described by Guru Nanak by saying that when with the help of ‘Guru-Sabad’ (the precept of the Guru) the desires are spent and the mind becomes satiated, the lotus blooms. In Siri Raga it is said that the man by obtaining the water of God’s nama through the Guru, should quench the four fires of cruelty, worldly love, anger and greed and remain dead in life. Thus the heart lotus blooms and fills with nectar which makes one contented. The Guru inspires the followers to weed out evil, wickedness and sins. Leaving these, and becoming singleminded, one should meditate on the Lord and when Lord’s meditation, arduous service and control of evil passions become guides, then does the heart lotus bloom and nectar trickle. Obviously one finds here a direct and firm departure by Guru Nanak who never forgets ethical aspects of his theological doctrines.

These yogis in the Middle ages had attained many mental powers which were more or less misused by them. The yogis in the 14th and 15th centuries, whom Guru Nanak happened to meet at various places in India, had degenerated into the lowest ebb of their personal gratifications. These Natha and Siddha yogis were required to teach human society to value self-control as superior to physical enjoyment, self-sacrifice as superior to self-
aggrandisement, self-conquest as superior to the conquest of others, spiritual self-fulfilment as superior to materialistic advancement, but in the words of Bhai Gurdas, a learned Sikh theologian and a contemporary of the fifth Guru Arjan Dev, they (the yogis) had fled from society and hidden themselves in the mountains. They did not spare any opportunity of running down the other sects of the yogis as well as the general public in order to increase their own influence.33 Some of the Siddhas were trying their best to find out a rasayan which could make them immortal.34 Their position had greatly degenerated and they were more feared than respected.

Though Upnishadic philosophy had marked a shift of emphasis from practical aspect (reciting of Mantras and performance of various rituals) of Dharma to the philosophical reasoning. But these yogis never cared for the call of Upanishads that concentration upon the supreme is the best, indulgence only in Shastras is low, achievement through the mantras is still lower and wanderings from one place to another for these purposes is the lowest.35 The true delight as the Gita says, is enjoyed by that knower of the self who detaches the senses from the envy of and the attachment to the world.36 The yogis were unknown to that supreme bliss and were engaged in increasing their respective sects and followers. Their yoga was no more the efforts to meet
the Absolute Truth, rather they had left the world in order to save themselves from turmoils and labours of day to day life. *Karmayoga* of the *Gita* had very slight impact upon them.

This has been delineated by Guru Nanak in his *Sidh Gosti* when asked by Charpat, the Siddha, as to how this world ocean could be swum. Guru Nanak says that as the duck swims the water without allowing its feathers to get wet and as the lotus remains unaffected by water, similarly by remaining amidst the world but without becoming worldly and through the attention fixed on the ‘Sabad’ with the help of the Nama we can cross the world ocean.\(^37\) The yogis in the medieval period were wanting in this faculty. They only respected those who were superior to them on the basis of the miracles and *tantra-mantras*. That is why they were feared rather then loved.
References

6. Ibid., p.169.
7. Chhandogya, 111, 17.4.
13. Dhammpada, Translated by L.M. Joshi, p.35.
17. Ibid., p.94.
21. Tulasi Das, *Kavitavali*, Uttarkanda, 84... Gorakh, *jagayo jog bhagati bhagayo log nigam*...


25. Bhagwad Gita, 3.36.


35. Maitreyi Upanisad, 2.21.

36. Bhagwad Gita, 2.64.


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