PREFACE

Tantrism, right from the time immemorial, gained extensive reach throughout the subcontinent with a wide range of esoteric practices, literary records and through a variety of sects. As a whole still it remains as a system which cannot be introduced by a precise definition, authentic chronology or history. Being most confusing and structurally complex, the sorting out of its sub-systems along with their branches also persists ambiguous. Among the numerous streams of Tantrism, the one which devoted to Śiva (Śaivism) holds high significance. Śaivism never has been a monolithic system since it is flourished across the Indian subcontinent through various sub-streams. The unique sub-stream having the peculiar religious philosophical character, produced by Śaivism was the one which originated in Kashmir and generally called as Kashmir Śaivism.

Kashmir Śaivism is a developed philosophical doctrine which is encompassed with different concepts. Among these concepts, Śakti is the most important one. The present study entitled ‘Principle of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism- Function and Evolution’ attempts to analyze the shift occurred in the prominence of the principle of Śakti in the sub-streams of Kashmir Śaivism.

The present thesis is comprised of seven chapters inclusive of Introduction and Conclusion. The first portion of the present thesis, Introductory Remarks, evaluates these heterogeneous approaches
persisting in the field of Śaivism and tries to configure such an outline of Tantric systems, especially of Kashmir Śaivism that would act as a proper prologue to the key discussion of the study. **The Form and Functions of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism** - the second chapter - begins with the discussion of the wider aspect of the traditional Indian notion of power i.e. Śakti. Further the enquiry focuses on the history of formation of the very concept. It also suggests the untenability of the theory of semantic as well as conceptual origin of Śakti from Vedas to which similar etymological enquiries normally go back and get stopped. The deliberations on Śakti in this chapter lead to the assertion that the forms of Śakti in Pratyabhijñā doctrine as the nature of supreme Śiva are in a subordinate position.

The third chapter **Evolution of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism** is devoted for an in-depth analysis of the process of Śakti’s evolution. The examination starts with the earliest tradition called Kula, where Śakti is characterized as a semi-divine entity (viz. Khecarī) that has attained supernatural powers. The later conceptions of Kula are the divinized forms of Śakti which include Varṇadevatā-s (Mālinī and Mātrkā) and Trikadevatā-s (Parā, Parāparā and Aparā). In the subsequent stream Krama, Śakti is represented as the divine form for death and fear. Further, Spanda originates as a new stream which by deteriorating the position of Śakti, conceives the male principle Śiva as the supreme reality. Nevertheless Spanda shows an unconscious allegiance to Śakti; whereas Pratyabhijñā, the fourth system upholds the state of Śakti in its multifarious doctrinal concepts in accordance with the metaphysics of
the theory of recognition. The fourth chapter **Causes of the Evolution**
explains how the process of de-Śāktisation was an appropriate and
effective method for the same.

**Impacts of the Evolution** which is the fifth chapter tries to
explore the after effects of the change in the position of Śakti, including
in the new de-Śaktised concepts, notions and schools in the realm of
Kashmir Śaivism. It finds that it was the exegetical techniques that made
this process successful. The sixth chapter, **Social and Philosophical
Implications of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism**, explores how the Śakti
oriented concepts highlighted the religious and philosophical
prominence of the non-dual Śaivism in the later period. It suggests that
the divergent roles of Śakti- including the linguistic, aesthetic, gnostic
and categorical aspects- in the aforesaid domain could be viewed as the
patterns of structural replication. The chapter finally concludes that in
the interpretative contexts, this process of replication is an essential
element called ‘disclosure of Śakti’.

The final chapter, **Conclusion**, highlights the significant points of
discussion and the position on which the issues are to be examined. It
also enumerates the main observations and findings formed through
this study.

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