CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
Tantra is a topic of utmost importance in the researches on India’s cultural and religious history and in South Asian studies. The Sanskrit word ‘tantra’, derived from the root ‘tan’ - has been widely used right from the Vedic period in distinct meanings such as a product coming from the loom, a philosophical system, medicine, or remedy. It has gone through different stages of interpretations, misinterpretations, correct and incorrect representations by both the eastern and western scholars in the last several centuries. This fact is attested by the observation of Hugh. B. Urban who says, “Surely no aspect of South Asian Religion has generated more confusion, controversy, or misunderstanding than the complex body of texts and traditions known as Tantra.”

The tradition of Tantrism being a complex system within itself has been made more complicated by the approaches of colonial authorities, western orientalists, Hindu nationalists and also by the modern scholarly world. In the colonial period, orientalists and many European scholars believed that Tantrism was the most degenerated and worst tendency of religious philosophical stream which caused the decline of Hinduism in India. Popular writers on the other hand, from early period to the present age, celebrated it as the most reliable source of sexuality and pleasure.

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Tantra is an all comprehensive idea of a wide range of textual materials, ritual traditions and manifold practices that flourished since the hoary past throughout the subcontinent. It developed through diverse streams in its history and different sects like Pāśupata, Pāñcarātra, Kāpālika, Kaula, Nātha, Śrīvidyā and so on have been formed among the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain communities of India, China, Japan and Tibet. A large number of works have been composed in each sect in different period. These literary works and the age old beliefs and practices observed by the followers of Tantrism provide ample material for the study of the themes and issues of the divergent streams of Tantrism.

The literature of Tantra cannot be considered in a uniform way because many of them reproduce the textual knowledge and try to keep the tradition intact. Some other sources, whereas, are solely concerned with the knowledge of Tantrism which was prevalent in the time of their composition. Taking this aspect into account Teun Gaudriaan classifies the whole Tantric literature into two distinct types as ‘Original Tantra-s’ and ‘Secondary works.’

2 "The original tantras are anonymous and written in dialogue form; their Sanskrit is often inferior, their style mediocre, sometimes even awkward; their method of presentation is repetitive, associative and non-systematical. The digests are of known authorship; their language and style are much better; their setup is more systematical. The digests are of known authorship; their language and style are much better; their setup is more systematical; they abound in references to and quotations from older authorities. The authors where in overwhelming majority Brahmans, but other social groups are also represented, among them ruling aristocrats. The terminology adopted here should not be taken to imply that the original tantras are always older or of more fundamental importance than the secondary nibandhas: the reverse is often the case." Teun Gaudriaan and Sanjukta Gupta (Eds.), Hindu Tantric and Śākta Literature, Otto Harassowits, Wies Baden, 1981, p. 4.
on the nature of presentation of the themes, style of language, method of description and the social background of their authors.

The term ‘tantra’ is generally used with the name of treatises which are having a Śakti-orientation. Whereas, Śaiva texts which also are the integral part of Tantra literature, are known as Āgama-s while the Tantric treatises of Vaiṣṇavites are called Saṃhita-s. Āgama-s give emphasis on the subjects traditionally coming under the aspect of Kriyā (and caryā) which consist of the topics like the construction of temples, installation of images, temple worship, ceremonial bathing, public festivals, cosmogony, mantra etc. The Tantra-s on contrary to this, mostly deal with more esoteric subjects like the speculations on the nature of the absolute, cosmogony, the creative nature of sound and word, micro-macro cosmic equivalence, the powers of speech, communication and handling of mantras, symbolic interpretations of words and names, construction of maṇḍala-s and initiation into the worship of deities.

Śaivism- one of the important streams of Tantrism- is popularly accepted as the religious philosophical outgrowth of ancient phallus (the form of Śiva) worship. Its existence is evidently established even in the early stages of the rise of human civilization. The artifacts obtained from the excavations including the famous proto-Śiva figure

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3 Though this image has been widely accepted as the Paśupati- Śiva, Geoffrey Samuel presents four reasons for not considering the very figure as Śiva. He argues that, later Śaiva iconography never follows such a sitting posture of Śiva; It is too unclear to identify the three
from Mohenjo Daro testify to the prevalence of Śiva worship even in the remote past. The references in the Vedic literature also indicate that Śiva was specifically addressed as Rudra, formerly as a dreadful deity and later as a benevolent god. Descriptions on Rudra Śiva in the Veda-s beyond doubt prove that Śaivism in India had grown as a cult in that age. According to D. B. Sensharma, not only the Veda-s but the supplementary literature of the Vedic corpus like Brāhmaṇa-s and Upaniṣad-s are also containing mention about the Rudra. So the Śaiva Āgama-s are considered as comprising the essence of Veda-s, by many contemporary scholars like K. C. Pandey.

B. N. Pandit traces back the history of the origin of monistic Śaivism to the Indus valley civilization. He says,

As for the basic pre-historic origin of that monistic Śaivism, it can be discovered in the remains of the Indus Valley civilization which proves it beyond doubt that Śaivism as a religion of a highly civilized nation, well versed in the arts of reading and writing, had attained remarkable development in its aspects of ritual and higher theology in India in the third millennium B.C. It appears that the Indus Valley people were highly advanced in spiritual philosophy as well. The realization of the theistic and monistic absolutism of spiritual philosophy cannot be an out-come of mere mental thinking of wise thinkers. It can be the result of only an intuitional realization of the truth, developed and attained by the means of practice in such a system of yoga that leads a

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heads of the present figure; in later age never Śiva is seen with the horned headdress; and it is not necessary to read animals as the forms of man-figures. Further he provides some distinct readings of this figure made by the scholars like Alf Hildebeital and Herbert Sullivan, and concludes that “The only reasonable conclusion is that we do not actually know how to interpret the figure, nor do we know what he or she represents.” Geoffrey Samuel, *Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 4.
practitioner to a psychic state that transcends even the state of the highest dreamless sleep, shining in the *Nirvikalpa samadhi* of the yoga of Patañjali.\(^4\)

The proto-Śiva through many sectarian developments and philosophical modifications reached the concept of absolute Śiva as taught by Abhinavagupta. The theological intricacies, the density of rituals and the yogic and Tantric complexities are the results of ambiguous changes happened to the entire system through centuries.

Śaiva systems are classified into eight schools viz., Pāśupata, Siddhānta Śaiva, Lakulīśa Pāśupata, Viśiṣṭādvaita Śaiva, Vīra Śaiva, Nandikeśvara Śaiva, Raseśvara Śaiva, and Advaya Śaiva, which can be headed under three philosophical aspects as dualism, non-dualism and dualist-non-dualism. These systems were based upon ten, eighteen and sixty four Śaivāgama-s respectively. The monistic Śaivism originated in Kashmir is generally addressed with the phrase, Kashmir Śaivism.

Monistic Śaivism of Kashmir is a unique school of thought that differs widely from the other Śaiva philosophical streams. It tries to approach the problems by conjoining both the practical and theoretical aspects of Tantrism. And hence it could neither be viewed as an idealistic nor as a realistic system of thought. Important thing to be

\(^4\) B.N. Pandit, *History of Kashmir Śaivism*, Motilal Banarsidass, Varanasi, 1989, p.xii. The very assertion leads to a claim that the monistic Śaivism was picked up practiced and assimilated by the Vedic people from Indus valley, and they expressed its essence in the later portions of Veda-s and in Vedic texts such as Upaniṣad-s. See, *Ibid.*, p.xiii.
noticed is that Kashmir Śaivism is not a Śaivite replica of Advaitavedānta. P. M. Ortega shows the causes of this as, the Kashmir Śaivism is a completely Āgamic system which refutes the theory of vivartas as propounded by the Advaitavedānta. It accepts Māyā as the divine power- the character of Brahman and not as the tool. Śaivites were householders, rather than ascetics the practice tradition of whom was known to Vedāntin-s. Śaivism was against the suppression of emotions and it accepted the enjoyment- just like liberation- as the aim of life. He continues,

... (8) Taking a pragmatic view of life, Saivism does not adopt any negative attitude towards world. (9) It takes Advaita Vedānta as a theory that comes very close to Buddhist nihilism. (10) Important authors of Kashmir Saivism do not refer to any teachers of Advaita Vedānta nor quote passages from their works. (11) Saṅkaradigvijaya, being mere poetry based much more on fiction than on facts, is not at all dependable. Saṅkaravijaya of Anantānandagiri is sufficiently dependable. (12) The account of Sankara’s Kashmir visit is therefore highly doubtful. (13) As authenticated by an ancient graveinscription, the present day Sankaracharya temple at Srinagar did not bear such name before the Dogara rule in Kashmir. (14) There was no trace of the Sannyasa system of Sankaracharya in Kashmir before the rule of Dogara kings. (15) Most of the ancient Kashmirian Vedantins adhered to Vaiṣṇavite theism and not to Vivartism of Sankaracharya.  

Numerous classification methods are available regarding the sub-schools of Kashmir Śaivism. One of the most familiar classifications of is the threefold division as Āgama, Spanda and Pratyabhijñā. Kula,

Krama and Pratyabhijñā is another triad of sub-schools. It is also classified as Kula, Trika and Krama. Alexis Sanderson divided the entire Śaiva teachings into two great branches termed as Atimārga and Mantramārga. The former is accessible only to ascetics, while the latter is open to all. Atimārga has two divisions as Pāśupata and Lākula. Pāśupata tradition believes in Paśupati- a form of Rudra. Lākula ascetics were developed from Pāśupata tradition.

The origin of Mantramārga is historically later than Atimārga and is associated with the feminine power Śakti. Śaiva Siddhānta, Kāpālikā Śaivism, Cult of Svacchandabhairava, Cult of Yoginī, Cult of Kālī, Kaula Trika, Krama, Kubjikā etc. are the sub streams that come under Mantramārga division of Śaivism. As Harvey. P. Alper suggested, the division of schools or sects of Kashmir Śaivism has some sort of rigidity. He spots it as,

For example, one has merely to examine the TA to see that Abhinavagupta freely intermixes doctrines drawn from the Krama and the Kula lineages. There seems to have been only limited adversarial argumentation between these groups, and initiates into one tradition apparently often complemented their practices with techniques drawn from other groups. Natural groupings probably occurred simply as a result of adherence to one or another teacher and his lineage. Yet the case of Abhinavagupta is particularly interesting, for he participated in one way or another in all of these Shaivite groups. Consequently, scholars of non-dual Kashmir Shaivism often have great difficulty in specifying what

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the particular doctrinal and practical differences might be between a text that avows its allegiance to the Krama lineage and one which declares itself as belonging to the Kaula tradition. A review of the history of the tradition shows that a Spanda group occurs as well as a Pratyabhijna group; and we learn that Abhinavagupta was taught Kula, Krama, Mata, and Trika *darsana*. The lines of demarcation that exist between these groups are only very slowly emerging now.\(^7\)

Swami Lakshman Joo says that the Trika philosophy of Kashmir is comprised of four sub-systems; Pratyabhijñā, Kula, Krama and Spanda. The present study wishes to follow the very classification in a different order as Kula, Krama, Spanda and Pratyabhijñā. Among the several modes of classifications, these particular sub-streams are accepted to address the problem related to the shift of the principle of Śakti from the prominent to a subordinate position.

**Relevance and Nature of the Research Problem**

The current trends in South Asian Studies—through the disciplinary, interdisciplinary and comparative researches—try to propose new perspectives on the religious philosophies. Through the analysis of aesthetic, linguistic, emotional, metaphysical and ontological categories they aim to explore the contribution of Indian intellectual culture centered on the experience. In this regard, Tantric Buddhism and Tantric Śaivism are said to be the most dynamic areas of scholarship in South Asian religious studies.

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\(^7\) *Ibid.*, p.34.
However, an essential point to be noted is that there are only a few studies which examine the deeper theoretical frame work of the entire system. Similarly, the study of feminine principle of Tantrism is confined to the explanation of manifestations of the ‘divine feminine’. It hardly shows any difference from the usual Indian mother goddess concepts which had been appropriated by the orthodox dogma. Accordingly they were taken into the sphere of ‘thealogi’cal approaches which has been traditionally employed for the justification of the feminist studies of religion.

The concept of Śakti, the feminine principle, makes Tantra a significant discipline in the academia. In the early strata of Kashmir Śaivism, Śakti has numerous forms including divine, semi-divine and human. The later developed systems reveal its highly philosophized nature rather than its femininity. Although reviews on Śakti as a religious principle and as a pure philosophical concept are available separately, the nature of Śakti as a feminine religious philosophical principle in Kashmir Śaivism has not yet been discussed in detail with due importance.

It may well be said that without a thorough interrogation into the nature, function and evolution of this feminine principle called Śakti, the understanding of Tantrism, Śaivism and the history of philosophic systems of India would be incomplete. Hence, the present
study entitled Principle of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism- Function and Evolution is an endeavor to analyze this issue.

Hypothesis of the Study

The present study which mainly interrogates the trajectories of evolution of the principle of Śakti in the four major sub-streams of Kashmir Śaivism, also presupposes that in the process of evolution the Śakti principle has moved to a subordinate position from the prominence it had in the earlier phase of Tantrism and Kashmir Saivism. Such a supposition is pertinent for thinking divergently from the tendency to define the very concept as an affirmative and emancipatory ideal for women.

Methodology of the Study

The studies in South Asian religions have been carried out with diverse methodological perspectives including that of history, theology, philosophy, literature and so on. However, the focal point of the present study is the analysis of the historical evolution of the religious philosophical principle called Śakti. The primary resource in this endeavor is the authentic literature of the four sub-streams of Kashmir Śaivism. The commentaries of later teachers of the system and the later works authored by their successors also are taken in to account in the same category. The history of the formation of various other sub-streams and the attitudes it had to face is examined with the
help of the works of modern scholars. Since the pioneers in the studies on Tantra and Kashmir Śaivism are western scholars frequent visits to their works is likely in this venture. The works analyzed here include that of academicians and practitioners as well. In many aspects the present study deviates from the approach and observations of other scholars. They include the issues regarding chronology, fundamental source, nature of Śakti principle, relation of Kashmir Śaivism with Sanskrit aesthetics, the methods of appropriation of the tenets of monistic Śaivism by Brāhmaṇism etc. The present researcher has tried maximum to provide satisfactory evidences and arguments in support of her observations.

Thus the present study which mainly interrogates the trajectories of evolution of the principle of Śakti in the four major sub-streams of Kashmir Śaivism, also presupposes that in the process of evolution the Śakti principle has moved to a subordinate position from the prominence it had in the earlier phase of Tantrism and Kashmir Śaivism. Such a hypothesis is necessary to think divergently from the tendency to define the very concept as an affirmative and emancipatory ideal for women. As the study focuses also on the causes and impacts of the process of decline of Śakti’s prominence, it is hoped to be of help for similar investigations in the present day academia.