O Goddess, be gracious, protect us always from the fear of enemies, just as you have now promptly saved us from bondage by the Asuras.

Quickly may you bring the sins of all the worlds to tranquility, and the great calamities born of the ripening of portents:\(^2\)

This prayer invoked by Gods after the killing of Sumbha, King of Asuras by Goddess Kātyāyanī (Caṇḍikā), still echoes each and every comer of India.

Despite tremendous achievements of science and technology, the tragedy of the present day civilization compels the masses to say this 'prayer'.

Now we live in the age of Science and Technology, Trade and Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, Power and Politics and Transition and Crisis. In spite of last technological developments, advancement of science, network system of information technology, economic reforms in the name of liberalization, privatization and globalization, increase in mass literacy, introduction of scientific education system, improvement of the average standard of living, Indian masses are getting bewildered and hesitant in every sphere of life.

1. ŚC, 11/34.
2. DM, 11/34
The youth, the backbone of society, having been frustrated on all fronts are in a state of utter despair and confusion. They are, as if, at the cross-road of history and know not what is stored for humanity in the future.

Moreover, India is torn by communalism, casteism, female infanticide, terrorism, over-population, regional imbalance, pollution, provincialism, pseudo-secularism, over-secularism, health and economic problems. Frustrated, bewildered people rush towards the so-called supermen, pseudo-Tantrics and fake religious teachers in search of peace.

The traditional values of what is called genuinely Indian have scanty or no appeal to the present day Indian mind. On the other hand, there is a dearth of intellectual defenders in India. Frawley observes 3

'Hindus today have failed perhaps more than any other group to create a defense for their culture in the media world. Hindus are routinely portrayed through stereotypes of caste, dowry deaths, widow burning, strange cults, poverty and superstition. The worship of Shiva appears in the New York Times as the phallic cult of the Hindu God of destruction. Krishna is portrayed in Western Universities as an erotic God with questionable morals. Brahmins appear in the Western media as rich landowners oppressing their poor slave Shudras.'

Now vital questions are – how to get rid of the present-day malady, how to solve the transitional crisis, what contribution can the Philosophy of Tantra make to solve the present day impasse?

The last point is very important.

Has Tantra such potency to solve the present-day impasse?

Our answer is in affirmative in spite of the present position of Tantra in India.

In spite of Tantra’s rich cult, vast literature, contemporary philosophical encyclopaedic nature and universal appeal, Tantra has been forgotten rather neglected. Shivachandra Vidyarnava, famous Tantra scholar and Sadhaka, regrets.4

"In this great festival, in this ancient Durga festival of India, astrological philosophy, Smriti, Purana, Vedas, Vedanta and many other musical instruments are playing in the extensive courtyard of the universe. But we are grieved to find that the great instruments of the Tantra Shastra, in which all other instruments are included on which all other instruments depend, and which is the source of all yantras and mantras are today silent".5

Despite its gloomy position, we are to search the only ‘panacea’ in Tantra to the country’s social, religious and cultural ills.

One may wonder at our assertion when the very word ‘Tantra’ causes curfew, scholars shrink, readers bewilder, researchers hawk, students startle, orthodox curse, intellectuals roar and philosophers disgust.

Scholars have already sorted out the main causes of the present neglected rank of Tantra.6

“Want of proper appreciation, actual abuse of its injunction, dread of spiritual practices, impact of Western civilization are responsible for the mass ignorance of the Tantric Cult which once illumined the whole of Indian intellectual and spiritual horizon.

It is the duty of all Tantra scholars to think of placing Tantra in its proper rank by removing all the defects for which Tantra is outranked and convincing the present

5. POT, Preface
6. CPI, ii, p. 2.
generation of its utility in this Computer Age. Our close scrutiny of Tantra Literature
confirms our inference that important elements of all the modern subjects dealt with in
modern India are scattered over the pages of Tantra. We should pick out those useful
elements from the vast Literature of Tantra and apply those elements either in original
form or refined form, if necessary, to the required field along with the modern scientific
elements.

The world witnesses the revival of old tradition in all countries. The
re-discovering of the ancient cult is a remarkable trend recently marked throughout the
world -

"We are also beginning to witness the revival of native and Pagan religions that
under medieval rule and colonial domination were suppressed. There is a return to
polytheism, accepting many names and forms for Divinity and the worship of the
Goddess."

The revival of Tantra in other countries of the world is observed.

"The past decade has shown a tremendous revival in Tantrism among Western
countries probably on account of the psychological and extra-sensory implications."

Now the question arises why we should search through the pages of only Tantra
for the 'panacea' for India's social, cultural and religious ills when the cultural heritage of
India is enriched with the Vedas, the Smṛtis, the Purāṇas and other philosophies.

Let us now look at the division of period for the right answer to this pertinent
question.

According to Indian tradition, there are four ages collectively called a
Mahāyuga, namely the Satyayuga or Golden Age, the Tretā Yuga, the Dvāpara Yuga
and the present Kali Yuga. According to this doctrine, each Yuga has its appropriate

7. AB, p. 207.
scripture, designed to meet the requirements and needs of men of each Yuga in their effort to attain liberation.⁹

The Hindu śāstras are classed into (i) śruti, (ii) smṛti, (iii) purāṇas, and Tantra. For each of these Yugas a suitable śāstra is given.¹⁰

Tantra is for the Kali Yuga. Lord Śiva¹¹ says –

\[ \text{kālaśvāনntamya gatapraṇāḥ manavā hīnatejasah} \]
\[ \text{teṣām hi tāya kalyāṇi kuladharmo nīrūpitaḥ} \]

For the benefit of men of the Kali Age, men bereft of energy and dependent for existence on the food they eat, the Kaula doctrine, O auspicious one! is given.

Woodroffe asserts¹² – If there is one method that enables man to rise Phoenix-like from the dead ashes of the animal passion, it is the irreproachable Tantra.

Matsya Sūkta proclaims¹³ – Viṣṇu is the greatest of all gods. A sea is the biggest of all lakes. The Gāṅgā is the holiest of all the rivers. The Himalayas are the highest of all the mountains. The Peepul is the tallest of all trees. Indra is the greatest of all kings. Durgā is the greatest of all goddesses. Brāhmaṇa is the most superior of all castes. Tantra is the best of all śāstras.

In the following sections and chapters we shall try to draw out the profound wealth, immortal principles, scientific features, omnivorous nature, historical significance, philosophical importance, cultural influence, ethical value, aesthetical beauty and unifying character of Tantra. It will be our attempt to show Tantra’s relevance to modern times.

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10. IT, p. 40.
11. MN, 9/12.
12. TART, Preface, XVIII.
"In India there are also those who are finding in the way of Tantra, a new hope for the future".14

Our present thesis ‘Tantra – its relevance to modern times’ is exclusively based on the Tantric Cult and Tantra Literature related only to Hindu Tantra, specially Śākta Tantras, though relevant Tantra works of Āgama, Sāṁhitā, Yāmala and Dāmara classes are also referred to and given much importance in course of discussion.

B. MEANINGS AND DERIVATIONS OF THE WORD ‘TANTRA’

Various derivative meanings and many definitions are given to the word Tantra and for the term Tantra respectively. In Sanskrit lexicons the term Tantra has been used in many senses.

According to Amarakoṣa, Tantra means Siddhānta which is really a system of doctrines’, principal matter, a loom or paraphernalia:

\[
\text{tantram pradhāne siddhānte sūtravāye pariṣṭhitem.}^{15}
\]

Various synonyms of the term are given in A Sanskrit English Dictionary.16

Loom, the leading or principal part, main point, characteristic feature, type, system etc.

A Dictionary English and Sanskrit17 gives its meanings as ‘a religious treatise generally in the form of a dialogue between Siva and Durga, teaching peculiar and mystical formulae for the worship of the deities, or the attainment of super-human powers.

15. Amarakoṣa as quoted in AŚAK, p. 420.
16. SED, p. 436.
17. DES, p. 795.
The Compact Oxford Reference Dictionary\textsuperscript{18} defines it as a Hindu or Buddhist text dealing with mystical or magical practices.

According to International Encyclopaedia,\textsuperscript{19} Tantra is the name of the sacred works of the worshippers of the female energy of God Śiva.

Sabdakai Padrum\textsuperscript{20} a Sanskrit Dictionary of the South, gives the meaning of the term in which it declares Tantra as medicine and doctrine.

The \textit{Ṛgveda}\textsuperscript{21} uses it in the sense of ‘loom’

\begin{quote}
\textit{sirīḥ tantrāin tantrat}\textit{vate}
\end{quote}

Female persons weave their thread.

Tantra is also used in the sense of ‘farming.’\textsuperscript{22}

In the \textit{Yajurveda} it means ‘The Sun’.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{quote}
\textit{tantrāyine namāṅg dyāvāprthābhhyām}
\end{quote}

Salutations to the Sun and heaven and earth.

The \textit{Atharvaveda} employs this word in the same sense.\textsuperscript{24} In ancient works like the \textit{Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa} and the \textit{Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa} ‘Tantra’ has been used to denote the chief portion or essence of a thing.

\footnotesize

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{18} CORD, p. 855.
\item \textsuperscript{19} International Encyclopaedia, 1894 as quoted in TGU, p. 283.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Sabdakai Padrum as quoted in ET, ii, p. 5.
\item \textsuperscript{21} RV, X. 71.9.
\item \textsuperscript{22} NVS, p. 424.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Yajurveda, 38/12, as quoted in TMV, p. 180.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Atharvaveda X.7.42 as quoted in HOD, v, ii, 1032.
\end{enumerate}
In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* the word Tantra is used to mean 'a line of descendants'.

Pāṇini uses the word ‘Tantraka’ in the sense of ‘an unbleached cloth’.

\[\text{tantrādacīrāpahrte}\]

‘Tantraka” means ‘a cloth just taken off the loom’.

The 15th Adhikarana of *Arthasastra* bears the title ‘Tantrayukti’ meaning canon or propositions of principles of exposition of a Śāstra.

Kautilya also uses it in the sense of ‘administration’.

Kātyāyana and Patañjali have used the word ‘Tantra’ in the sense of a system of study or a school of discipline.

The *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇini IV, 2, 60 and *Vārtika* ‘sarvasāderdvigovadcalah’ notes ‘sarvatantraḥ’ and ‘dvitantraḥ’ as examples meaning ‘one who has studied all the Tantras’ or ‘one who has studied two Tantras’.

Śaṅkarācārya speaks of the Sāṁkhya system as Sāṁkhya Tantra –

\[\text{smṛtiśca tantrākhyā paramarśipraṇītā}\]

Śabara in his Bhāṣya on *Jaṁini śāstra* remarks that when anything or act once done, becomes useful in several matters, that is called Tantra.

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27. AŚP. i, V. II, 70.
28. ART (B). Vinayādhikarana, Pt. 1, Ch. 1.
29. Ibid (K), 8.3.54.
30. STM, p.2.
31. HOD, v, ii, p.1032.
32. Śaṅkarabhāṣya as quoted in BD, p. 433; TMV, p. 171.
33. HOD, v, ii, p. 1032.
In the *Pañcatantra* of Viṣṇusarmā the word Tantra is used in the sense of administration.

\[
tatah prabhṛtyetam pañcatantrakām nāma
nīṭsāstrīn bālavabodhanārthāṁ bhūtāle pravṛttam.
\]

Since then this Nītiśāstra (Ethics) consisting of five chapters emerged on earth for making children understand (different subjects).

Kālidāsa uses Tantra in the sense of administration:

\[
athavā aviśramo 'yain lokatantrādhiḥkāraḥ
\]

Or perhaps, without repose is this office of ruling a people.

Again,

\[
prajāḥ prajāḥ svā iva tantrayitvā
niśevate śrāntamānā viviktaṁ.
\]

His majesty, who having governed his subjects as his own offspring is enjoying repose with a wearied mind in solitude.

In the *Kālikā Purāṇa* it is mentioned that the works of Usanas and Brhaspati Rājanīti are called Tantras.

\[
usanā rājanīthinām tantrāṁ tu brhaspatiḥ
\]

*Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* is also called Tantra.

\[
viṣṇudharmottare tantre bāhulyaṁ sarvataḥ punah.
\]

*Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* uses Tantra in the sense of medicine.

34. PAT, p. 236.
35. ASAK, 5th Act, p. 418.
36. Ibid, p. 418
37. KPU, 84/133.
38. Ibid, 91/2.
39. BRV, p. 53.
Bhaskar Rai, great Tantra scholar and commentator, refers to Mīmāṃsā philosophy as Jaimini Tantra in his commentary on Devīmāhātmya.  

Great ancient physicians have spoken of Āyurveda as Tantra.  

The scientific treatises composed in India are generally known as Tantras. Their sections and sub-sections also bear the same title.

Tantra is also used in the sense of philosophical book on Lokayata

lokāyataṁ nāma nāstikāṁ tantrāśastram

In Gṛtagovinda, Tantra is used in the sense of principal doctrine

kokila - kala - rava - kūjitaya

jīta - manasiya - tantravicāram

When I sing like the sweet voice of the cuckoo, He defeats me by the principal doctrine of Kāmasāstra.

According to M.M. H.P. Shastri,

The word Tantra means shortening abbreviation, i.e. reducing into something like algebraic forms, mantras or formulae that would otherwise run to score of syllables.

Tantra also means ‘procreation’.

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40. HTR. p. 20.  
41. CPI, ii, p. 1.  
42. HTR, pp. 19-20.  
43. TOS, p. 1.  
44. GG, 2/6/15  
45. H.P. Shastri, Notices of Sanskrit Manuscript, 1, Preface as quoted in TMSB. p 1  
46. LOK, p. 322
Tantra means 'a system, a method, a discipline.'

A simple meaning of Tantra is 'a kind of bodily exercise.' In some sense, every system of religious worship is Tantra.

Various meanings of Tantra are mentioned in *Vācaspatyam*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prabandha (Composition)</th>
<th>Udbhayārtha-prayoga (Serving both purposes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grha (House)</td>
<td>Śapatha (Oath)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kula (Family)</td>
<td>Rāṣtra (state)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svarāstracintā (Thought on own state)</td>
<td>Dhana (Wealth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oṣadhi (Herbs)</td>
<td>Hetu (Cause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paricchada (Dress)</td>
<td>Pradhāna (Principal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tantuvāya (Loom)</td>
<td>Śrutisākha (Branch of the Veda)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vayana (Weaving)</td>
<td>Iti Kartavyatā (Set of duties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saiva Āgama</td>
<td>Kutumbakṛtya (Duty of relatives)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tantra denotes injunctions (Vidhi), regulations (Niyama), Śāstra generally or treatise.

A secular writing may be called Tantra.

Tantra is used as a system of Yogic practices used by its devotees to swim across the stormy sea of human experience.

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47. CHI, iv, p. 240. Article - Tantra as a way of realization.
48. ITHI, p. 92.
49. CSH, pp. 88-89.
51. ŚAŚ, p. 34.
52. Ibid, p. 34
53. TAN, p. 23.
Tantra stands for 'Sāstra meaning a code which is meant to govern the activities of men in all their aspects.54

Tantra also means 'that body of religious scriptures which is revealed by Śiva to Pārvatī for the good of all people living in this wicked Iron Age.55

Tantra also refers to texts which expound non-Vedic doctrines, especially the Śākta variety.56

The most popular sense in which the term Tantra is used in the present days is to denote a class of literature dealing with mystical and magical worship.57

Derivation and Meaning

It is difficult to give a general definition of Tantra. We have seen the different meanings of Tantra in the light of the opinions of the lexicographers, grammarians, poets and scholars. Now we are going to place the derivations of Tantra and derivative meanings as given in different books.

Kāmik Āgama of the Śaiva Siddhānta gives the derivative meaning. According to this Āgama, the word Tantra is derived usually from 'vātan' ‘to spread’ and 'śrāvān' ‘to save’. It dilates upon many matters including the tattvas and mantras and affords protection. Therefore it is called Tantra.58

\[
tanoti vipulānarthaḥ tattva-mantra – samanviṣān
tṝṇāṇaṇa kurute yasmāt tantramāt yahāḥ bhūhīyate\]59

54. TPS, p. 22.
55. MT, vii, p. 1. Introduction.
56. THIC, p. 1.
57. TSRL, p. 1.; COD. P. 1463.
58. ŚAŚ, p. 34.
59. Kāmik Āgama as quoted in BD: p, 432; TMV: p. 171; MAH: Introduction, p. 6
According to the interpretation of Kasikavrtti, the word Tantra has been derived from the ‘√ tan’ meaning ‘to expand’ –

\[ \text{tanu vistâre}^{60} (\text{sarvadhântubhyaḥ stran upâdi śūtra}) (608) \]

\[ \text{tanyate vistāryate jñānamanena iti tantram}.^{61} \]

Tantra refers to those sacred scriptures which lead to the expansion of knowledge.\(^{62}\)

According to some scholars\(^{63}\), the word Tantra is derived from the root ‘\(\text{tr}\)’ with the suffix ‘\(\text{stran}\)’. The meaning of the root is ‘to extend, to spread’. Spreading what? Extending what? Primarily the human family, the number of children. So Tantra’s derivative meaning is ‘to propagate’.

According to Pingala Mata\(^{64}\), Tantra is what spreads and saves

\[ \text{tanute trāyate nityāṁ tantramithyāṁ vidurbudhāḥ} \]

It is also derived thus:

The word Tantra is derived from the ‘√ tan’ ‘to spread’ and the agential suffix ‘\(\text{tr}\)’ ‘to save’ meaning that knowledge which is ‘spread to save’\(^{65}\).

According to some scholars, Tantra is derived from two roots the ‘\(\text{tan}\)’ meaning ‘expansion’ and ‘\(\text{vitrāi}\)’ meaning ‘liberation or protection’.\(^{66}\)

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60. Kasikavrtti as quoted in TMV, p. 171; JKT: p. 15.
61. TMV, p. 171.
62. ASAS, p. 62.; BTV. P. 100.
63. LOK, p. 321.
64. Pingala Mata Tantra as quoted in MAH, Introduction, p. 6.
65. HPH, p. 13.
66. ET, ii, p. 4; JKT, p. 15, AAT, p. 25.
Tsana Misra derives the word from the root ‘अत्रि’ meaning ‘to understand’. 'अत्रि' dhātorīha dharmartha

Some derive the word from the root ‘अत्रि’ of ‘तात्रि’ in the sense of Vyutpādana, origination of knowledge. In a special sense it means ‘the scripture by which knowledge is spread’. It is a cultural discipline in a wide sense. It is also spiritual knowledge of a technical nature. 68

According to another opinion 69, ‘अत्रि’ means ‘to draw out’ or ‘to spread’. The significance is clearly brought out by the words like ‘तात्र’ what is spun out becomes thread, a strand, and ‘तात्र’, the body, in which the spirit has spread out or revealed itself.

Tantra is also defined thus: 70

‘अत्रि’ jādyāt tārayet yastu sa tantraḥ pariśākṣēt

That which redeems human beings and paves the way for their emancipation from the bondages of staticity is called Tantra.

In a looser sense, the term Tantra is used as a label for any form of expanded literature that is remotely, if at all, associated with the doctrines of Tantra. 71

It is also defined 72 - ‘Tantra is that which spreads, which disseminates that knowledge that saves mankind.’

68. STUT, p. 6, Article – Evolution of Tantras.
69. ŚCAI, p. 148.
70. DOT, ii, p. 36.
71. TW, p. 9.
72. RET, p. 5.
Another scholar defines\(^{73}\) - The word Tantra implies a process of weaving and expansion. The inner and outer worlds, microcosm and macrocosm, are like the two sides of a fabric. This fabric composed of all the elements and energies of the universe, may be consciously ‘woven’ by the practice of Tantra Yoga.

According to a famous historian\(^{74}\), - In its present widely sense, Tantra means a literature which spreads knowledge and particularly knowledge of profound things, with the help of mystic diagrams (Yantra) and words possessing esoteric meanings (Mantra), and helps the attainment of salvation.

Probably no other word in the Sanskrit language is defined so differently as Tantra. Perhaps no other word in Philosophy has been able to draw the attention of a large section of scholars for its meaning and definition as Tantra. All the meanings and definitions of Tantra carry appropriateness. Judging and analyzing all the definitions and meanings of Tantra we may conclude that the concept of Tantra is like a diamond which appears to be a different colour when seen from a different angle.

**C. FOUNDER OF TANTRA**

Scholars differ from each other on the question of the authorship of Tantra. Most of the scholars are in favour of the divine origin of Tantra.\(^{75}\) Only a few are in favour of the divine authorship of some Tantric texts and of the human authorship of some Tantric texts.\(^{76}\)

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73. TY, Ch. 1, p. 1.
74. Al, p. 667.
75. TSRL, p. 19; TMSB, p. 9; TRSM, p.101.
76. Ibid, p. 25.
In India, however, Philosophy, whether Vedic or Tantric had its origin in Revelation. Revealed truths are classified under two heads\textsuperscript{77} – (i) Vaidika Śruti and Tantrika Śruti.

\textit{Śrutiśca dvividhā – vaidikī tantrīki}\textsuperscript{78}

Kullukabhaṭṭa\textsuperscript{79}, commentator of \textit{Manu Śrīrī}, quotes it from Hārīta\textsuperscript{80} in order to establish the divinity and antiquity of Tantra.

Tantra’s divine origin is asserted as Tantra is termed as Āgama\textsuperscript{81} and Nīganṭa. The word Āgama consists of three letters – ā, ga, ma. These three are the initial letters of three words Āgata (coming from), Gata (going to) and Mata (approved) respectively.

\textit{āgataṁ śivavaktrebhyo gataṅca girijānane}
\textit{mataṁ vāsudevasya tenāgama iti smṛtah.}\textsuperscript{83}

The science which comes from the mouth of Lord Śiva, goes to the mouth of Pārvaṭī and is approved by Lord Kṛṣṇa is called Āgama.

It is quoted with slight variation\textsuperscript{84}

\textit{āgataḥ śivavaktrebhyo gataṅca girijāmukhe}
\textit{mataḥ śrīvāsudevasya tasmādāgama ucyate.}

\textsuperscript{77}. CPI, ii, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{78}. Kullukabhaṭṭa as quoted in TMV, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{79}. HTR, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{80}. BD, p. 441.
\textsuperscript{81}. TSO, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{82}. ĀS, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{83}. RUY, Introduction.
\textsuperscript{84}. Ibid, Introduction.
Nigama is composed of three initial letters, ni, ga and ma, of three words Nirgata (coming from), Gata (going to) and Mata (approved by).

\[ \text{nirgata ī girifāvakrāt, gata ī śivamukheśu yat} \]
\[ \text{mata ī śrīvāsudevasya nigamastena kīrtitah.} \]  

The science which comes from the mouth of Parvati and goes to the mouth of Lord Śiva and is approved by Lord Kṛṣṇa, is called Nigama.

It is also quoted with slight variation\(^\text{86}\)

\[ \text{nirgataḥ śāṅkarīvakrāt gataśca giriśanāne} \]
\[ \text{mataḥ śrīvāsudevasya tasmānnigama ucyate} \]

Tantra's divine authorship is confirmed by Tantra texts. Devī says to Śiva\(^\text{87}\) -

\[ \text{tvayā kṛtāni tantrāṇi jīvoddhāraṇaheśa} \]

By Thee also have been spoken for the good and liberation of men the Tantras.

Lord Śiva also says\(^\text{88}\) -

\[ \text{tantrāṇi bahudhoktāni rūnākhyānānvitāni} \]

From my mouth have issued the several Tantras with their sacred legends.

Lord Śiva himself authored Tantra in different forms and different parts for various purposes and caused Tantra seers reveal Tantra for the benefit of human kind.

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85 Ibid, Introduction.
86 SARU, 1/15.
87 MN, 1/49.
In Paramananda Tantra Devi says ⁹⁰—

tvanmukhātu maṇḍā deva tantrāṇi bahūṣaḥ purā
vaisāvāni ca saivāni saura-gānapatāni ca
śaktāṇyanekarūpiṇi vividhācārakāṇyapi
saimūrtāni ........................................

Many Tantras concerned with Tantra sects, i.e., Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Saura, Gānapatya, Śākta etc. were revealed to me by you in the past.

In Mahēśvara Tantra, Lord Śiva tells Pārvati⁹¹—
guhyāt guhyatarair āśtramidūktam

This most secret Śāstra (Tantra) issues from me.

In Yōgini Tantra, Lord Śiva says⁹²—

adhunā śṛṇu devēśi tantrarajāṁ sudurlabham

O Goddess! now I speak to you of the rare Tantra, king of all Tantras.

In the concluding chapter of Kularṇava, Lord Śiva expresses.⁹³

kularṇavamidāṁ āśtram yōginiṁ āṁ hṛdi sthitam
prakāśitaṁ maṇḍā cādya gopanīyain pratyatnāṁ

Now I brought to light this Kularṇava Tantra from the heart of Yōgini. It must be kept secretly. Only truth, which cannot be created, is revealed. Truth always exists.

Lord Kṛṣṇa reminds⁹⁴—

nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ
ubhayorapi dṛṣṭo 'ntastvanayostattvadarsābhīḥ

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⁹⁰. PRT, 1/2-4.
⁹¹. MAH, 1/64.
⁹². YOG, 1/1/22.
⁹³. KNT, 17/102.
⁹⁴. BG, 2/16.
The unreal has no existence, and the Real never ceases to be; the reality of both has thus been perceived by the seers of Truth.95

Truth has only seers and prompters. In that context, Tantra is Apauruséya96 and is not authored by any human being.97

Tantra is eternal and emanated from Lord Śiva Himself.98

Śaṅkarācārya confirms99 –

\[ \text{caturśaṣṭya tantraiḥ sakalamabhisandhāya bhuvanam} \]
\[ \text{sthitastatt-siddhi-prasava-para-tantraḥ pāṣupatiḥ} \]

O! Mother! sixty four Tantras emanate from Pāṣupati (Śiva) for which He becomes omniscient by knowing all this universe.

In Mahāsvacchanda, it is said100

\[ \text{guru-śiṣya-pade sthitvā svayaṁ devaḥ sadāśivah} \]
\[ \text{praśnottara-padairvākyaiṣtantraṁ samavāśrayat} \]

Lord Śiva Himself emanated Tantra in the form of questions and answers.

Tantra is revered101 as the ‘Revealed Word of God’.

In this context, we may also note the valuable opinion of John Woodroffe.102

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95. BG (G), 2/16
96. ĀŚAS, p. 61.; KĀM, p. 7.
97. CC, p. 5; ŠRK, iii, p. 50.
98. MT, VII, Introduction, p. 12
99. SL, 31 sl..
100. Mahāsvacchanda Tantra as quoted in TSO, p. 10.
101. LOT, p. 3.
102. POT, p. 71.
so the Tantras also have not, according to the Shastra, any author but have merely emanated from the mouths of Shiva.

It is also seen that some of the detractors of Tantra rites reluctant to recognize the divine origin and sanctity of Tantra have expressly declared their human origin and consequent unauthoritativeness.

According to M. Winternitz, "Tantras are the work of inferior writers." Some scholars assert that Tantras are the work of great scholars, prophets and Sādhanas. It is to be specially pointed out that all of them cannot claim to have the status of Sruti or revealed truths.

It is also claimed that a few Tantra texts are authored by human personalities because of their association with human names.

Sanat Kumar, Dattatreya, Aṣṭavakra and Bharadvāja are considered as authors of Tantra texts.

Whitney also observes - "Their (Tantra) authorship is sometimes ascribed to Dattatreya."

Sage Durvāsā is also considered to be one of the founders of Tantra.

Besides Durvāsā, Vāsugupta, Śrī Kaṭṭhaṭhā, Matsyendranātha, Pippalādāmuni, Śivagiri, Candradatta, Śivarāmayogīndra, Ratnadeva, Vāsudeva Kavikānkan, etc.

103. HIL, I, p. 579.
105. ET, ii, p. 9.
106. TSRL, p. 25.
107. Century Dictionary and Cyclopaedia, Vo. IX, p. 378, 1903. as quoted in IITO.
108. As quoted in PPG, p.4.
are considered as authors of Tantra texts.\textsuperscript{109}

In conclusion, we may quote Yogi Amrtananda\textsuperscript{110}

\begin{align*}
\textit{vimarsarūpini saktirasya viśvaguroḥ sadā}
\textit{parisphurati saikāpi nārabhāvārtha-rūpiṇī}
\end{align*}

Lord Śiva who is the Master of the Universe always reveals Tantra, which is the only power in the form of Vimarśa having different meanings.

We may sum up it by referring the story of the appearance of Tantra on this earth.\textsuperscript{111} One day Lord Śiva advised Śrī Ganeśa to write down Tantra emanated from Him and Pārvatī and go to Siddhāśrama where sages well-versed in the Vedas lived...

\begin{align*}
idām mahāsusandarbham mama vaktrādvīnirgatam
nirgatāṁ pārvatīvaktrāṁ tantrāṁ paramadurlabham
vilikhya bahuyatnena gaccha siddhāśramāṁ suta
yatru tiṣṭhanti munayo vedavedāṅgapāraṇāḥ.
\end{align*}

Śrī Ganeśa wrote down with four hands and did what Lord Śiva had said.

Thus Tantra came down on this earth.

\textsuperscript{109} TSRL, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{110} Yogi Amrtananda as quoted in TSO, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{111} Gandharva Tantra, 10th Brahmana Patal as quoted in PT, 1st Khaṇḍa, 9th Paricchnā.
D. DATE OF TANTRA

Tantra as a cult is very old.\textsuperscript{112} No perfect historical evidence can be produced to ascertain the exact time of the inception of the Tantra Cult.\textsuperscript{113} Sakti Cult which is prehistoric\textsuperscript{114} and Pre-Aryan\textsuperscript{115}, is an inseparable part of Tantra.\textsuperscript{116} This cult was practised in a much earlier age.\textsuperscript{117} It belongs to a type of thought that is primitive.\textsuperscript{118} Rites\textsuperscript{119} similar to many of these prescribed in Tantra were quite well-known among primitive peoples of the countries. It is inferred\textsuperscript{120} that if traces of the Tantric Cult are found among the Indus Valley ruins, then its history in India is not less than five thousand years.

Most of the scholars\textsuperscript{121} view that Tantra as literature has been in prominence after a later date than that of the Vedas.

But contradictory opinions cover the whole gamut of Tantra’s antiquity and its exact period of emergence. Pages and pages are written on the question of Tantra’s pre-Vedic or Vedic origin. Defenders of both the pre-Vedic and the Vedic origin of Tantra display irrefutable arguments in support of their views. It is not possible for us to discuss

\textsuperscript{112} PBS, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{113} HPH, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{114} FC, I, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{115} ITHI, p. 93.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, p. 92
\textsuperscript{117} LOK, p. 322.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, p. 322.
\textsuperscript{119} TSRL, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{120} LOK, p. 323.
\textsuperscript{121} SCAI, p. 149.
those arguments now for want of space. We only place the views of some scholars to show the antiquity and probable date of Tantra.

The Tantric Cult's ancientness is also proved from the fact that elements of the various Tantra rites are found in the earliest of the Vedic works, in the Buddhist canonical texts and in the Jaina canonical works. Many a Purāṇa work, some Dharmaśāstras, early secular works and classical literature of India are also found to refer to Tantra rites.

Many seers like Durvāśa, Vyāsa, Bāsiṣṭha, Parāśara, Bhardvāja, Dakṣa, Kāśvana, Yamadagni, Bhṛgu, Dātiṭreya, Viśvamitra and incarnators Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were initiated into The Tantric Cult.123

Even many Devatas124 were also initiated into The Tantric Cult.

In the religious and cultural history of India, no legendary figure can escape from being initiated into The Tantric Cult.125

Tantra Literature's most ancient form is unknown to us. In the Vedic and the post-Vedic literatures, references of Tantra are made.126

But Tantra Literature is not older than the Tantric Cult.127 It is difficult to determine the exact time when the word Tantra came to be employed in the sense of Tantra Literature.128 So it is not possible to fix with any finality the date of the inception of the vast Literature of Tantra.

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122. TSRL, pp. 10-17.
123. Kulacūḍāmaṇi as quoted in TTT, pp. 74-75.
124. TSO, p. 16
125. TTT, p. 75.
127. PBS, p. 182.
128. ŠTM, p. 3.
Hundreds of Tantra texts are mentioned in different lists and although many are lost forever, a large number of Tantra texts still survive. Only a few of these authorities can be dated with any certainty, but there are a number of Tantra texts more whose date can be approximately discerned.129

As Tantra Literature took a long period to develop, no particular date can be assigned definitely.130

Despite controversial opinions, it is a common acceptance that some Tantra texts are fairly old131 and some132 are obviously modern.

According to some scholars, the earliest of Tantra works may possibly belong to the beginning of the Christian era, if not earlier, the latest of them came down as late as ever the 18th or the 19th century.133

Some opine that many Tantra texts are not earlier than first four centuries before Christian era.134

The earliest Nepalese manuscripts of Tantra works date from the seventh to the ninth century and it is not very likely that this literature originated further back than the fifth or sixth century.135

In the History of Hindu Chemistry, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy, while dealing with ancient Indian Alchemy, has fixed the Tantric Ayurvedic Period from 800 A.D. to

129. ORL, p. 199.
130. TW, p. 10.
131. TSRL, p. 25.
132. TIB, p. 39.
133. TSRL, p. 19.
135. HIL, i, p. 578.
1300 A.D. and commented—

"Tantric Cult came in vogue since the decline of Buddhism in India and exercised a considerable influence on the society till the middle ages, circa 1300 A.D. Others view that the history of Tantra goes back to the 7th century and continued down up to 19th century.  

It is obviously correct that centuries elapsed between the period of the origin of Tantra ideas and their codification. Abundant evidence is available to prove that Tantra reached the Zenith of popularity in the period between the seventh and the twelfth century A.D. or possibly peaked around 1000 A.D.  

It is also believed that the period from the eighth or ninth century to the fourteenth century was a "time of flourishing Tantric tradition, both textual and artistic. Tantric Hinduism was then in full bloom." 

According to a famous historian, Tantra as a special religious or philosophical concept gradually came into use from about fifth or sixth century A.D. From the seventh century, it continued to hold ground throughout the middle ages."

In this context the following observation by some scholars is remarkable:

Many look upon the Tantras as a revolt against the Vedas and some consider them to be even anterior to the Vedas, embodying the primary teachings of the pre-Aryan.

136. HCAM, p. 114.
137. SCAI, p. 150.
138. HOD, v, ii, p. 1073.
139. THIC, p. 4.
140. A. Padoux’s Tantrism as quoted in THIC, p. 4.
141. AI, pp. 667-669.
142. STUT, p. 39. Article – The Spiritual Heritage of India.
Civilization, though the literature known by this name does not appear to be very ancient from the point of view of language and style or diction.

We may, therefore, sum up it with the following conclusion of a scholar: 

‘In the matter of the origin of this class of literature, we must guard against the two extremes of too high antiquity and too late a period. May be that Tantric ideas were current in hoary antiquity, but systematic works did not perhaps originate earlier than the fifth century A.D’.

E. ORIGIN PLACE OF TANTRA

(I) Two theories

There are conflicting theories with regard to the place of the origin of Tantra. In the midst of conflicting views and claims, we can clearly notice that scholars are sharply divided into two on the question of the origin place of Tantra. Two theories have come into our notice – (i) Extra-Indian Origin Theory and (ii) Indigenous Origin Theory.

(II) Causes of the arising of two theories

We have come across several references in foreign as well as Indian sources which confirm intimate relations between India and other foreign countries in ancient times, during the Tantric Period. So cultural exchange and assimilation of cultural elements were common to India and other countries. As a result, foreign elements into Indian Tantra might enter and vice-versa. It is therefore, very difficult to find out the borrowed elements, if any, in Tantra. They are so well-fitted into the system that they have lost their exotic character. Yet some stray references may be discovered in Tantra to the

143. TIB, p. 41.
144. TMSB, p.5.
145. HAI, Pt. II. 99.
borrowing of foreign modes of \(S\)adhan\(\bar{a}\). Hence these two theories have come to life.

Moreover, historical evidences show that the Tantric Cult was practised in Minor, Creta, Egypt, China besides India.\(^{146}\)

_Sammohan Tantra\(^{147}\) _speaks of the Tantric culture of foreign countries like Bāhlika, Kiri\(\tilde{a}\)ta, Bho\(\tilde{a}\), Cīna, Mahācīna, Pāraśīka, Airāka, Kamboja, Hū\(\tilde{n}\)a, Yavana, Gāndhāra and Nepāla. This does not mean that the Indian Tantras were prevalent in all these countries, though we know that they were prevalent in some of them.

Probably for these reasons the two theories of origin place of Tantra emerged. Let us place some views of the scholars in connection with these theories.

(III) Extra-Indian Origin Theory

M.M.H.P. Shastri opines that the priests of Turkistan introduced Tantra into India when Islam\(^{148}\) ousted the local religion of the place.

Some view that Tantra is of trans-Himalayan origin.\(^{149}\) The Cult of Tāntric claimed to have been originated in Tibet or Bho\(\tilde{a}\).

Vāsi\(\tilde{t}\)ṣṭha's visit to Mahācīna is mentioned in _Rudrayāmala._\(^{150}\)

\(jagāmā c\)ī\(n\)abhīm\(ā\)au ca yatra buddhāḥ pratiṣ\(\tilde{t}\)hati. Va\(\tilde{s}\)i\(\tilde{t}\)ṣṭha went to China where Buddha remained.

A Tantra narrates\(^{151}\)

\[tato gārvā mahācīnadeśe jñānamaye muniḥ\]

\[dadaṛśa himavat parśve sādhakeśvarasvāte\]

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146. Gopinath Kaviraja's view as quoted in TOS, p. 3; TW, p. 12.
147. CHI, iv, p. 225, Article-Evolution of the Tantras.
149. TMSB, p. 6.
150. RUY, 17/125.
151. MCKC, 2/2
Sage Vasīṣṭha went to Mahācāna enriched by greatest sages and adjacent to the Himalayas.

Tārā Tantra, adopted both by Hinduism and Buddhism... says that the cult of Cinacara came from Mahācāna. Vāsiṣṭha was well-versed in the Tantric Cult. He went to the country of Mahācāna to learn this particular mode of Sādhanā. It was not to be found either in India or Tibet. So Vāsiṣṭha had to go to Mahācāna, where he was initiated by Buddha into the secret doctrines of Cinācāra. He subsequently came to India and propagated them.

It is believed that some Tantra texts were brought to India. One of them was Kubjikā Tantra.

Some consider South Asia the origin place of Tantra.

According to some Tantra was brought into India from Chadel or Ākādyapa.

These evidences show that a number of foreign elements were introduced in Tantra, most probably, between the eighth and the twelfth century, when communication with Tibet, China and Mangolia became brisk. But these cults lost their exotic character as they fitted well in logical consequence into a completely integrated system.

152. RUY, 17/108.
153. CHI, iv, p. 225.
154. TSO, p. 23
155. DOT, ii, p. 61.
156. SAS, p. 19.
(IV) Indigenous Origin Theory

A good number of scholars including Swami Vivekananda\textsuperscript{158}, M.M. Gopinath Kaviraja\textsuperscript{159} and M. Winternitz are in favour of some Tantra's Indian origin.

Scholars again differ from each other on the point of the exact place of the origin of Tantra in India.

Winternitz infers\textsuperscript{160}—

"Their (Tantras) original home seems to have Bengal, whence they spread throughout Assam and Nepal and even beyond India to Tibet and China through the agency of Buddhism."

A verse of unknown origin affirms\textsuperscript{161}

\textit{gauḍe prakāśītā vidyā maithilaiḥ prabaliktā}

\textit{kvacit kvacinmahārāṣṭre gurjare pralayaṁ gātā}

The Vidyā (Tantra) first appeared in Bengal, became very strong in Mithila, some traces of it were to be found in Maharastra, while it met its end in Gurjar or Gujarat.

Some scholars believe that Tantra of Āgama type may have originated in KāśmiR and Śākta Tantra may have sprung up in Bengal.\textsuperscript{162}

In both Hindu Tantra Literature and Buddhist Tantra Literature, Kāmarūpa occupies the most important place as a center of the Tantric Cult. Hence it is natural for the scholars to think that Kāmarūpa is the birth place of Tantra. Many scholars like Wilson and Gait support this view.\textsuperscript{163}

\textsuperscript{158} SVBR, Vol.6, p. 313 and Vol. 9, p. 417.
\textsuperscript{159} M.M. Gopinath Kaviraja as quoted in TOS, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{160} HIL, i, pp. 464-465.
\textsuperscript{161} R.P. Chanda, Indo-Aryan Races, p. 81 as quoted in TMSB, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{162} TIB, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{163} AŚAS, p. 69.
According to Jayaratha,\textsuperscript{164} great commentator of Tantrāloka, Kaula Tantras said to have issued from Kāmarūpa.

\begin{center}
\textit{kāmarūpe mahāpīthe maccha\textit{b}dена mahā\textit{t}manā}
\end{center}

In this context White's observation is worth mentioning. According to him, Indian Tantra may have first appeared at the points of contact with Taoist China.\textsuperscript{165}

The principal Sino-Indian points of contact in this period of exchange were (i) the mountain passes located in the North-Western region of the sub-continent (Himalaya, Pakistan and Afghanistan) and (ii) Assam to the east – these being the two regions through which the Indian spurs of the Silk Road passed – as well as (iii) the major seaports on the coastlines of Tamilnadu and Gujarat which linked India to China and the West via the maritime routes of the day.\textsuperscript{166}

He (White) thus concludes this point\textsuperscript{167}:

'So, it was that when Indian Tantrism was first introduced into China in the eighth century by the Buddhist monks Subhakar Simha, Vajrobyodhi and Amoghvajra, a certain number of its techniques were merely 'returning' to their country of origin from which they had been exported but a few centuries earlier.'

M.M. Gopinath Kaviraja opines\textsuperscript{168} –

Probably during the reign of Jayverma II (About 1200 years ago) many Tantric...
books were exported to Kamboja or Cambodia from India. Those Tantra texts were not Buddhist Tantras, but were Hindu Brahmanical Tantras which were included in Śaivāgama. The names of some of these Tantra texts are (i) Nayottara, (ii) Śiraschada, (iii) Vinayaśīla and (iv) Sammoha.

Some authors consider Assam and Bengal to have been the original home of Tantra.169

Careful observation of these two theories makes us feel that both the theories have strong arguments. But the views of supporters of the Indigenous Origin Theory of Tantra seem to be more convincing. In this context the view of M.M. P.V.Kane is more acceptable. According to him, Tantra originated in India, but Vāmācāra and Kulācāra might have originated abroad and have been brought to India. But there is no positive evidence of the Tantric system as a whole arising outside.170

F. TANTRIC ZONE

Springing up in India, flowing through the heart of the land, creating different zones and gaining immense popularity, Tantra took its seat with the Vedic Cult and ran parallelly. During its peak period Tantra won the heart of millions and millions of people, crossed the borders and gave birth to separate Tantric Zones.

Some scholars identify a special Tantric Zone consisting of the Trans-Himalayan Range including Kashmir, Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan, Kamarupa and Bengal.172

169. THIC, pp. 35, 75.
170. M.M.P.V. Kane as quoted in TIB, p. 35.
171. BD, p. 446; TSO, p. 16.
172. BSS, p. 12.
The Tantric zone is divided into two regions\textsuperscript{173} according to (i) Kādi and (ii) Hādi methods of worship followed in these regions.

In \textit{Sammoha Tantra} an enumeration of the Tantric Zone is found. The countries in which the Kādi mode is in vogue are the following.\textsuperscript{174}

\begin{itemize}
  \item An̄ga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Kerala, Kaśmīra, Kāmārūpa, Mahārāṣṭra, Saurāṣṭra,
  \item Drāvīḍa, Tālliṅga, Malayāḍri, Kan̄āṭa, Avanti, Vairāhabha, Ābhīra, Mālava, Caula, Cola,
  \item Kamboja, Videha, Bāhlīka, Kirāta, Kaikaṭa, Aiūkī, Bhoṭa, Cīña, Mahācīna, Nepāla,
  \item Śīlaḥṭa, Gaṇḍa, Kośala, Magadhā, Snotkala (Utkala), Kūntala, Hūṇa, Kaṅkana, Kekaya,
  \item Śūrasena, Kaurava, Śīṁhala, Puliṅda, Kaccha, Madra, Sauvīra, Lāṭa, Barbarā, Mātsya and
  \item Sindhu.
\end{itemize}

The countries in which the Hādi mode is in vogue are as follows.\textsuperscript{175}

\begin{itemize}
  \item An̄ga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Suviraka, Kaśmīra, Kamboja, Saurāṣṭra, Magaṇḍa,
  \item Mahārāṣṭra, Mālava, Nepāla, Kerāla, Cola, Cals, Gaṇḍa, Malay, Śīṁhala, Voṅka, Vīḍa,
  \item Vyonda, Kaṅṭa, Lāṭa, Malāṭa, Panaṭa, Andhaka, Pulindaka, Hūṇa, Kaurā, Gandhāra,
  \item Vidarbhā, Videha, Bāhlīka, Barbarā, Kekaya, Kośala, Kūntala, Kirāta, Surasena, Sevūla,
  \item Banaṭa, Taṅkaṇa, Kaṅkana, Mātsya, Madra, Maida, Saindhava, Pārśvākika, Dyorāṭa,
  \item Yavana, Jala, Jalandhara, Salva, Sindhu.
\end{itemize}

These two Kādi and Hādi modes were practised in 56 countries.\textsuperscript{176} All these countries were situated in and around India save a few.

\begin{footnotes}
\item 173. GOT, p. 326; ROT, p. 48.
\item 174. ST, p. 47.
\item 175. Ibid, p. 47.
\item 176. TSO, pp. 22-23.
\end{footnotes}
In the east – Áṅga, Vaṅga, Kaliṅga, Videha, Kāmarūpa, Utkala, Magadha, Gauḍa, Śilahattra, Kaikāta, etc. In the south – Kerala, Drāvida, Tailingga, Malayādri, Cauca, Siṅhala etc. In the north – Kāśmīra, Śurasena, Kirāṭa, Kośala etc. In the middle part – Mahārāṣṭra, Vaidarbha, Mālava, Avanti etc.\(^{177}\)

An analysis of the list shows that a number of countries beyond India are enumerated and described as the centers of the Tantric Culture. These are Bhāhika, Kamboja, Bhoṭa, Cīna, Mahācīna, Nepāla, Hūṅa, Kekaya, Maida, Yavana, Ainika, Gandhāra and Pārśvakika.\(^{178}\)

Within the limits of India some non-Aryan groups of people like Pulinda, Kirāṇa, Barbara, Taṅkana, Ābhīra, Kuntala etc. are connected with that particular culture.\(^{179}\)

In the Nepala Cataloguei, 71, mention is made of worship called Khādī.\(^{180}\)

Another mode called Kahādī\(^{181}\) is mentioned in the Kālikhaṇḍa.

According to another tradition, the Tantric world is divided into three Krānta regions or Zones known as Viṣṇukrānta, Aśvakrānta, and Rathakrānta.\(^{182}\)

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177. Ibid, p. 23.
178. ST, p. 47.
179. Ibid, p. 47.
180. ROT, p. 49.
181. Ibid, p. 49.
182. PBS, p. 183.

LG, p. 63.
ST, p. 46.
POT, p. 87.
JKT, p. 16

CHI, iv, p. 241, Article – The spirit and culture of the Tantras.
Visnukrānta comprises the region from the Vindhyas to Chattala (Chittagong).

Aśvakrānta comprises the region from the Vindhyas to Mahācīna including Nepal.

Rathakrānta comprises the region from the Vindhyas to the Great Ocean, including Kamboja and Java.186

According to Śaktimaṅgala Tantra187 the region extending from the Vindhyas to Chittagong is known as Viṣṇukrānta, the region from the Vindhyas to the Cape Comorin (Kanyā Kumārikā) is Aśvakrānta, while the region from the Vindhyas to Cīna is Rathakrānta.

Mahā siddhasāra Tantram188 agrees with it as to Viṣṇukrānta and Rathakrānta, but makes Aśvakrānta extend from the Karatoya River to Java.

The Tantric Zone is also divided as follows.189

(i) Viṣṇukrānta – from the Vindhyas to Java in the far east.

(ii) Rathakrānta – from the Vindhyas to the north comprising Nepāla and Mahācīna.

(iii) Aśvakrānta or Gajakrānta – from the Vindhyas to the west comprising Persia, Nepal and Mahācīna.

Undoubtedly the scheme is based on the Vindhyas as the cardinal point. It shows further that the horizon of Tantra extended beyond India. According to Sumanāda...

183. CPI. ii, p. 90.
184. ST, p. 47.
185. POT, p. 87.
186. ST, p. 47.
187. Śaktimaṅgala Tantra as mentioned in ROT, p. 49.
188. Mahāsiddhasāra Tantram as referred to in POT, p. 87.
189. TIB, p. 2.
190. JKT, p. 16.; ROT, p. 50.
Tantra, Cīna possesses 100 primary and 7 subsidiary Tantras.\textsuperscript{191}

It is curious that the above three zones do not include South East Asia\textsuperscript{19} where Tantra had been prevalent in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century.

Some scholars\textsuperscript{193} locate the Krāntās on the basis of the Tropical Zone i.e. the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.

These three Krāntās or Zones bear much significance in the Tantric Cult. At the time of the Mṛttikāśāna these names are uttered.\textsuperscript{194}

\begin{quote}
āśvakraṇte rathakraṇte viṣṇukrānte vasundhare
mṛttike hara me pāpam yanmayā duṣkṛtām kṛtam
\end{quote}

In the Cakrapūja\textsuperscript{195} of the Ēaktas, these three Krāntās are located in the Yantra

\begin{quote}
bhūpurāṁ cāśvakraṇtaṁ ca dalacakraṁ rathabhūtām
yantra-kendraṁ trikoroṁ ca viṣṇukrāntam athocyate
\end{quote}

Among the places located in these three Tantric Zones, the most important Tantric centers where the Tantric Cult is still prevalent are Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Mahārāṣṭra, Kāśmīra, the foothills of the north western Himalayas, Rājasthāna and part of South India.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{191} ST, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{192} ROT, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{193} TSAS, pp. 26-27.
\textsuperscript{194} As quoted in PBS, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{195} As quoted in TSAS, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{196} TW, p. 13.
Studies of the history of Philosophy and Religion of the world reveal that whenever any of the major philosophies and religions of the world completed the successful culmination of a long campaign, there was an emergence of different schools and sects for some reasons. Thus the world has witnessed the division of the Jainas into (i) Svetambara and (ii) Digambara; the division of the Buddhists into (i) Hinayana and (ii) Mahayana; the division of the Christians into (i) Catholic (ii) Orthodox and Protestant; the division of the Islamists into (i) Sunni-ul Jamat and (ii) Shia-ul Jamat and Hindu Cult is mainly divided into (i) Vaidika and (ii) Tantric, though the present Hindu Cult is a mixture of the Vaidika and the Tantric Cults.

Tantra's mystic practices and fragrance attracted all - from Sannyasins to Householders, from Philosophers to Laymen, from Gurus to Siyasas, from Kings to Subjects, from Bhogins to Yogins, from the Rich to the Poor, from Landlords to Peasants, from Teachers to Students, from Males to Females and from Brahmausahaan to Sudras.

197. CSIP, p. 68.
BHAi, p. 146.
IIP, p. 74.
OG, p. 171.
CSIP, p. 75.
BHAi, p. 188.
OG, pp. 82-83.
199. MEU, p. 171.
200. OG, p. 97.
MDL, pp. 4-5.
201. CC, p.5.
PPG, Pt. 10, p. 1.
This entry of the great number of masses resulted in the emergence of different sects according to the modes of worship and the deities worshipped.\textsuperscript{202}

In course of time many of the sects lost\textsuperscript{203} their identities. But it is very difficult to ascertain the exact number of Tantra sects once appeared and disappeared.\textsuperscript{204}

It cannot be said that all the sects were rich in their respective literature.\textsuperscript{205} A few of the Tantra works of different sects are now available. On the other hand, no literary works of many Tantric sects can be found. Only their names are referred to other Tantra works. All these sects were more or less, worshippers of Śakti.\textsuperscript{206} But they accepted Śakti according to their own conception about Śakti. This also caused the birth of different Tantric sects based on Śakti. As a result of it, the Tantric Cult is divided into many sects and sub-sects.\textsuperscript{207}

In spite of the basic unity of the fundamental principles of all the Tantric sects, the divisions\textsuperscript{208} among them also happened for the difference of time, space and geographical area in addition to the differences of modes of worship and the deities worshipped.

\textsuperscript{202} TSO, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{203} BD, p. 445.
\textsuperscript{204} TSO, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{205} HP, p. 222.
\textsuperscript{206} TSO, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{207} TAD, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid, p.35.
\textsuperscript{208} TP, Introduction.
Saktisangama Tantra\textsuperscript{209} refers to the sects of the Vais\ṣṇavas, the Gāṇapatyas, the Śaivas, the Svāyambhuvas, the Cāndra, the Pāśupatas, the Cīnas, the Jainaś, the Kālāmukhas and the Vaidikas.

Most of the scholars classify Tantra into three\textsuperscript{210} main sects – (i) Śaivas – worshippers of Lord Śiva, (ii) Vaisṇavas – worshippers of Lord Viṣṇu, (iii) Śaktas – worshippers of Śakti or the Divine Mother.

Besides these, (iv) Sauras – worshippers of the Sun and (v) Gāṇapatyas – worshippers of Lord Gaṇeśa - are two minor sects.\textsuperscript{211}

Śaiva Sub-Sects

Various Śaiva sub-sects are referred to\textsuperscript{212} Tantra, Purāṇas and other scriptures. They are named as Kāruṇika Siddhāntins, Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, Sāmānya Śaiva, Purāṇa Śaiva, Miśra Śaiva, Śuddha Śaiva, Vāma, Soma, Lāṅgala, Bhairava, Kāpāla, Nakha, Bharata, Bhakta, Laṅgika, Sīddhāntāgama, Vīra-Śaiva or Lingayat.

Madhvacārya\textsuperscript{213} refers to the four schools of Śaivism – (i) Nakulīśa - Pāśupata, (ii) Śaiva, (iii) Pratyabhijñā, (iv) Rasēśvara.

Vaisṇava Sub-sects

The Pañcarātra School\textsuperscript{214} occupies a very important position among the Vaisṇavas.

\textsuperscript{209} Saktisangama Tantra as mentioned in TMSB, p. 114

\textsuperscript{210} PPG, Pt. 10, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{211} TSRL, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{212} Ibid, pp. 50-51; PRP, p. 19; SIV, pp. 78-80.

\textsuperscript{213} SDS, pp. 144, 154, 167, 178.

\textsuperscript{214} TSRL, p. 57.
Vaiṣṇava sects are also divided into many sub-sects. A few of them are connected with esoteric practices. Some of them are known as Āul, Kartābhajā, Bāṇa, Bījamārgī, Sahajyā etc.\textsuperscript{215}

**Śākta Sub-sects**

The sub-sects of the Śakti worshippers are also numerous and bewildering.\textsuperscript{216}

Important Śākta sects\textsuperscript{217} are known as Daksīṇa, Vāma, Madhyama, Gīna, Kūla, the Gauḍa Way, the Kerala Way, the Kāpālikas, the Digambaras, the Kṣapāṇakas. Divisions Vira, Paśu, Sāmaya forms of worship, the Pārāṇanda school, Kādimata, Hādimata.

**Sanat-Kumāra-Samhita\textsuperscript{218}** speaks of six sub-sects – (i) Kaula, (ii) Kṣapāṇaka, (iii) Kāpālika, (iv) Digambara, (v) Itihāsaka and (vi) Vāmaka.

M.M. Gopinath Kaviraja has given a list of Tantric sects.\textsuperscript{219}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i)</th>
<th>Kulamārga</th>
<th>(ii) Pasupata</th>
<th>(iii) Lākula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(iv)</td>
<td>Kāpālika</td>
<td>(v) Souma</td>
<td>(vi) Mahāvrata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vii)</td>
<td>Jaṅgama</td>
<td>(viii) Kāruṇika</td>
<td>(ix) Kālānala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(x)</td>
<td>Kālāmukha</td>
<td>(xi) Bhairava</td>
<td>(xii) Vāma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xii)</td>
<td>Bhāṭṭa</td>
<td>(xiv) Nandikesvara</td>
<td>(xv) Rasesvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(xvi)</td>
<td>Siddhānta (Śaiva)</td>
<td>(xvii) Siddhanta (Raudra).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of differences, they are not divergent paths, but different phases of the ascent of consciousness.\textsuperscript{220}

\textsuperscript{215} ORP, pp. 92-96.
\textsuperscript{216} TSRL, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid, pp. 52-53.
\textsuperscript{218} TANS, pp. 40-41.
\textsuperscript{219} TAD, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{220} TMSB, p. 129.
We are going to give a very short description of these three major schools to show their organic unity despite differences.

**Śaiva School**

According to this school, the whole universe has been evolved from one singular reality. Śiva is omnipotent, omniscient, gracious and transcendental existence. He carries the five fold function of creation, preservation, destruction, concealment and bestowing of Grace. Soul is Śiva, but its true being remains concealed by three Mālas (impurities) i.e. Āṇava, Kārma, and Māyika. The individual souls are called Paśu that is bound by three-fold Pāśa – Avidyā, Kārma and Māyā.

In order to obtain release, soul has to get rid of these three impurities. And for this God’s grace is absolutely essential. Divine Grace is there for all without asking for it for Lord Śiva desires that all souls should know Him. After the removal of the Pāsas soul becomes one with Śiva. It attains the status of Śiva. Meykandar says that just as salt dissolves into water and becomes co-pervasive with it, similarly the liberated soul merges in God and becomes co-pervasive with Him.

The relation of Śiva and Śakti is that of identity though it is the power of the Lord Śiva.

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224. TL, II Part, 4th Āhnika, sls. 55-56.
225. CSIP, p. 388.
226. Vijnāna-bhairava as quoted in NET, p. 16.
Vaiṣṇava School.

Śakti is the immanent principle of Viṣṇu. She is the eternal coeval of Nārāyaṇa. She is known as Nārāyaṇī. She is the divine consort of Viṣṇu. The two entities are inseparable. Vaiṣṇava Tantra is, however, different in the form and content of Śādhanā from the devotional Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja.227 Pāṇcaratra Āgama is the basis of Vaiṣṇavite Tantrism.

Śākta School

Śakti is the force of the cosmological order. Śiva is inactive, while Śakti is productive and the universal material cause.228 Hence Śakti is, in a sense, superior to Śiva. Śiva is a corpse without Śakti.229

yasmin vyaktā mahākālī śaktihīnaḥ sadāśivah
śaktyā yukto yadā devī tadaiva sivarūpakaḥ
śaktihīne śavaḥ sāksāt puruṣatvāṁ na muñcati.230

When Mahakali (Śakti) appears in the gross form, Śiva becomes powerless. When Śiva unites with Śakti He becomes the Lord of the Universe. He is a corpse without Śakti.

Saundaryalaharī says,231

śivaḥ śaktyā yukto yadi bhavati śaktah prabhavitum
Śiva with Śakti becomes active. Śiva, when He is united with Śakti, is able to create, otherwise He is unable to move.

227. TMSB, p. 119.
228. CHI, iv, p.52, Article –Evolution of Religio-philosophic Culture in India.: TC, p. 167
SIP, p. 165
229. Kubjika Tantra as quoted in TMSB, p. 115.
230. TOD, 1/24.
231. SL, 1. sl.
The highest goal of Śākta Śādhanā is to get merged into Devī, that is, become one with the Absolute. The esoteric identification with Devī can be attained through the Grace of Devī and by the use of Mantra Śādhanā. Śakti resides in the body in the form of Kuṇḍalinī in Mūlādhāra. Śiva resides in Sahasrāra. By the application of Mantra Śādhanā under the guidance of Guru, Śādhaka unites Śakti with Śiva, becomes one with Śiva-Śakti and is liberated.

H. DIVISION OF TANTRIC LITERATURE

The Tantric Cult’s unbound popularity gave birth to the vast literature of Tantra. Almost all the Tantric sects preached Tantric philosophy by compiling Tantric works. Tantric sects contributed much towards the compilation and composition of Tantric Literature. But scholars often are mistaken in thinking that Tantra Literature is only Śākta Literature.

Maurice Winternitz writes:

’When we speak of ‘Tantras’ we think primarily of the sacred books of the Śāktas, i.e., the worshippers of Śaktis or energizes are conceived as female deities.’

Monier Williams also comments:

’The Tantras practically constitute a fifth Veda for the ‘Śāktas’ or worshippers of the active energizing will (Śakti).’

Tantra is not only the contribution of the Śāktas but also of other sects; through the greatest contribution is of the Śāktas.

232. KUT, 6/61-62.
233. TOḍ, 7/29.
234. HIL, i, p. 564.
235. Monier Williams as quoted in ITHI, p. 92.
All the Tantra texts are mainly divided into\(^{236}\) (i) Āgama and (ii) Nigama.

Āgama\(^{237}\) is that body of literature which comes from Śiva, goes to Pārvatī, and is approved by Vāsudeva.

Nigama\(^{238}\) is that body of literature which comes from Pārvatī, goes to Śiva, and is approved by Vāsudeva.

But this distinction between Āgama and Nigama is rather artificial and is not strictly followed everywhere. Bhaskar Rai hints at another meaning of the term 'Nigama' as denoting only those Tantras which conform to the Vedas.\(^{239}\)

Many scholars call the Veda 'Nigama' and Tantra 'Āgama'.\(^{240}\)

Some most modern scholars divide Tantra into\(^{241}\) – (i) Traditional Hermetic/Occult (iii) Pop, (iv) New Age and (v) Life style.

Tantra is also divided into – (i) Śākta Āgama (ii) Śaiva Āgama, (iii) Vaiṣṇava Āgama.\(^{242}\)

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236. PHS, p. 274.
   TIB, p. 2
   HP, p. 225.
   DOT, ii, p. 67.
237. HTD, pp. 13-14; Rudrayāmala as quoted in ŚĀKT, 2/2; TTT, p. 52.
238. TTT, p. 52.
   RUY, Introduction.
239. STUT, p. 40, Article – The Spiritual Heritage of India.
240. TMV, pp. 32, 176.
   CC, p. 5.
   BD, p. 438.
241. InternetKheper.net.
242. ŚĀŚ, p. 35.
   HED, p. 121.
Scholars divide Tantra into three broad classes - (i) Āgama, (ii) Śaṁhitā, and (iii) Tantra. The Tantric works of the Śaivas are called Āgama. The Tantric works of the Vaiṣṇavas are called Śaṁhitā. The Tantric works of the Śāktas are called Tantra.243

Other scholars also divide Tantra into three main classes244 – (i) Āgama, (ii) Yāmala, and (iii) Tantra.

Some also divide Tantra into four classes245 – (i) Āgama, (ii) Dāmarā, (iii) Yāmala, and (iv) Tantra.

Āgama is said to be three – the fourth one is Aīśvara. As Kalpa is of four kinds – Kalpa, Āgama, Dāmarā, Yāmala, so is Tantra – Āgama, Dāmarā, Yāmala and Tantra. Tantra is again classified into Pañcasrotas246 – (i) Urdha, (ii) Pūrva, (iii) Dakṣiṇa, (iv) Uttara and (v) Pāścima.

Some divide Tantra into Dakṣiṇa, Vāma and Madhyama.247

Tantra is again grouped under Vaidika248 and Aवaidika. Tantra is also classed

243. HIL, I, p. 559.
   HPH, p. 16.
244. BTS (U), Introduction, p. 1
246. TANS, p. 15.
247. Brahmayāmala as mentioned in TANS, p. 23
   STUT, p. 14, Article - Evolution of the Tantras.
248. ŠAŚ, p. 35
   TTV, p. 22.
under four heads on the basis of Pīṭha.249 (i) Vidyāpīṭha, (ii) Mantrapīṭha, (iii) Mudrāpīṭha, and (iv) Maṇḍalapīṭha.

There is another division of Tantra according to the geographical position on which they prevailed. They are (i) Kerala, (ii) Kāśmīra, (iii) Gandharva and (iv) Vīlāsa.

Division is also made on the basis of three zones.251 (i) Viṣṇukrānta, (ii) Aśvakrānta, and (iii) Rathakrānta.


Tantra is also divided into (i) Śaiva, (ii) Vaiṣṇava, (iii) Gāṇapatya. (iv) Saura.

According to *Kāmika Āgama*254 Tantra is of five kinds – (i) Laukika, (ii) Vaidika, (iii) Ādhyātmika, (iv) Atimarga, and (v) Mantrātmaka.

It is also divided into Pañca Āmnaya255

\[
\begin{align*}
mama \ \text{pañcāmnayasya} & \ \text{pañcāmnayāḥ} \ \text{samudgatāḥ} \\
pūrvāśca \ \text{paścimāścaiva} & \ \text{daksīṇaścottarastathā} \\
\text{ūrdhāmnayāśca} \ \text{pañcaite} & \ \text{mokṣamārgāḥ} \ \text{prakṛitiḥ.}
\end{align*}
\]

Pañcāmnaya issues from my five faces. Pūrva, Paścima, Dakṣīna. Uttar and Īrdha – these five Āmnayas are called mokṣamārga.

Tantra is also classed as256 Sadāgama and Asadāgama.

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249. TANS, p. 23.
252. TANS, p. 18.
254. Kāmikāgama as quoted in TANS, p. 15.
255. KNT, 3/7.
256. TIB, p. 3.
Tantra is also divided into\textsuperscript{257} i) Tantra, ii) Yāmala, and iii) Dāmara.

Tantra is also classified as\textsuperscript{258} i) Āgama ii) Yāmala iii) Dāmara

Tantra is also divided into\textsuperscript{259} – i) Pañcarātra Saṁhitā, ii) Saiva Āgama, and iii) the Tantra.

Synonymous words for Tantra are Āgama, Nigama, Dāmara, Yāmala, Rahasya, Āmnāya,\textsuperscript{260} Sūtra,\textsuperscript{261} Saṁhitā, Arṇava\textsuperscript{262} and Fifth Veda.\textsuperscript{263}

Some scholars make distinctions between Āgama and Tantra on the basis of a geo-religious sense. In this context Alper comments,\textsuperscript{264}

"If a distinction between Āgama and Tantra makes any sense, it makes no rough social, or perhaps 'geo-religious' sense. What in the Northern two-thirds of India come to be called the Tantras, trend in South India to be known as the Āgamas. This suggests the unrealistic division between North and South India."

Out of all these classes, the division of Āgama, Yāmala, Dāmara and Tantras is widely known.

Let us have a bird’s eye view of the definitions of these classes.

According to \textit{Vārāhi Tantra}, Āgama is that class of Tantra where \textit{Srisvānasvata} (creation), Pralaya (destruction), Devatārcanā (worship of Gods), Sādhanā (penance),

\textsuperscript{257} TSAS, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{258} CPI, ii, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{259} IP, ii, p. 662.
\textsuperscript{260} KNT, p. 279.
\textsuperscript{261} TANS, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{262} PBS, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{263} Niruttar Tantra as quoted in STUT, p. 7, Article – Evolution of the Tantras.
\textsuperscript{264} UM, pp. 417-418.
Purāścarāṇa (repetition of Mantra), Śaṭkarma Śādhanā (magical performance), caturdhyānayoga (four kinds of meditation) – these seven²⁶⁵ are dealt with.

srṣṭiṣca pralayaṇcaiva devatānāṁ yathārcaṇam
śādhanāṇcaiva sarveṣāṁ purāścarāṇameva ca
śaṭkarma-śādhanāṇcaiva dhyānayogaścaturvidhaḥ
saptabhirākṣaṇa-pairṣaṇamāṁ tadvidubdhaiḥ

Tantra²⁶⁶ is that class of literature which deals with Sarga (creation), Pratisarga (destruction), Tilōtanirṇaya (determination of Tantra or Mantra), Devasaṁsthana (position of Gods), Tirthāvārana (description of holy places), Āśrama Dharma (duties of Āśrama), Vīpra-Saṁsthana (position of the Brāhmaṇas), Bhūta-saṁsthana (position of five elements), Yantraṇirṇaya (determination of Yantra), Vibudha-upatti (appearance of the learned), Taru-upatti (creation of plants), Jyotiṣa (Astrology and Astronomy), Puranakhyana (Mythology), Kosa (lexicon), Vrata (vows), Sauca – Asauca-akhyāna (purities and impurities), Haracakra, Śṛṇ-pūṁsalakṣaṇam (signs of male and female), Rājadharma (duties of king), Dānadharmā (rules of endowment), Yuga-dharma (duties in a Yuga), Vyavahāra (Law), Ādhyatmavārṇana (description of spiritualism) etc.

Yāmala²⁶⁷ is that class of literature that deals with eight subjects, i.e., Sūstāttva (Theory of Creation), Jyotiṣa (Astrology and Astronomy), Nityakṛtya (daily duties), Krama-Sūtra, Varṇabheda (caste system), Jātibheda (classes), Yugadharma (duties in a Yuga).

srṣṭiṣca jyotiṣākhyāṇāṁ nityakṛtya pradīpanam
kramasūtraṁ varṇabheda jātibhedadasthaiva ca
yugadharmaṁ saṁkhyāto yāmalasyaṣṭa-lakṣaṇam

²⁶⁵. Vārāhītantra as quoted in BTS(U), Introduction (1).
²⁶⁶. As quoted in BTS(U), Introduction (2)
²⁶⁷. As quoted in Ibid, Introduction (2).
Śiva-spoken Sāstra is called ‘Ḍāmara’.

We find similarities of signs of Āgama, Yāmala and Tantra. These signs cannot be found compactly and perfectly in all Tantra works. Moreover, there is no clear line of demarcation between the terms and the expressions. Tantra is frequently used as general terms for all these classes of Tantric Literature.

268. PBS, p. 184.