Walled off by stupendous mountains and endowed with unparalleled natural beauty, Kâśmîr, the 'Bhusvarga' of India, was always a land of religion and philosophy. The geographical position of the valley though saved it from external affections, it seems that the different religious and philosophical tendencies reached there from outside without any hindrance. Various evidences point to the fact that the inhabitants of Kâśmîr professed, from the earliest times, both Aryan and non-Aryan beliefs which prevail even at the present day. According to Nilamata-purâṇa, there existed in Kâśmîr, from the dawn of history, a polytheistic religion, which included, among many primitive types of worship of the non-Aryan spirits like Nikumbha and his followers (ghosts), Nilanāga, the serpent lord, birds, such as, crows, the linga of Śiva on Śivarātri and other festivals, Ganeśa, Vināyaka, Gandharvas and Pīśācás etc., the worship of the Vedic and Paurāṇic gods, and even that of the Buddha as an avatāra (629, 635, 674, 681, 1049 ft). Scholar like S.C.Roy also admits that the earliest inhabitants of Kâśmîr probably had some
non-Aryan beliefs, the details of which are not traceable now. The snake cult or Nāga worship seems to have been established in the Valley from a very early period and had undoubtedly been one of the earliest religions of the land. But it appears that in the third century B.C. Buddhism was dominant and submerged the Nāga cult. Mr. Roy opines that among Hindu gods, Śiva either originated or entered the Valley (Kāśmīr) sometimes before the faith of the Śākya prince made its entrance.

The history of the introduction of Śaivism in Kāśmīr is shrouded in mystery. It is not known whether the Śiva of Kāśmīr was an immigrant from the neighbouring Indus Valley or was of local origin. Kalhana in his 'Rajatarangini' also admits that when Buddhism entered into Kāśmīr sometimes before the reign of Asoka (272-232 B.C.), there already existed a religion, the prominent feature of which was the worship of God Śiva in company of His female consort Pārvatī or Śakti. Thus God Śiva and Śakti adored as father and mother of all creation, symbolize the two generative principles of the Universe viz. male and female cosmogenic principles and closely associated with one another and was well-known in the name of Śiva-Śakti cult.

This Śiva-Śakti cult was prevalent in almost every part of India long before the Vedic age. And in course of time there grew a mass of literature of this cult, known as Āgamas and Tantras, independently of the Vedic Scriptures. Consequently there developed some schools within the ambit of Śaiva fold
called the Āgama-vādīns of Śaiva School. They were divided into different Schools viz. Mahāpāśupatas, Śaiva Siddhānta, Kāśmīr Śaiva, Vīra Śaiva and so on. They hold varied philosophical theories such as, Dvaita, Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaitādvaita like those in the Vedic fold. All of them emerged before the arrival of Śaṅkara on the religious plinth.

Kāśmīr Śaivism is a complete form of Śivādvaitavāda which is the most consistent form of Śaivism in India and is popularly known as Pratyabhijñā Philosophy. Dr.K.C.Pandey and others, of course, do not prefer to call this system Pratyabhijñā but like to use the word 'Trikā' as this Śaiva monism of Kāśmīr includes many important branches or systems, the Pratyabhijñā being one of them. K.C.Pandey says, "It is a misnomer to call this System of Philosophy 'Pratyabhijñā' or 'Spanda' as much as it would be to call India 'Calcutta' or 'Bombay' "'. He points out that there are three clearly distinct branches of thought within Kāśmīr Śaivism viz. Krama, Kaula and Pratyabhijñā. The Krama system emphasizes the worship of 'Śakti', the Kaula emphasises upon the 'will' but the Pratyabhijñā does not lay any such emphasis with regard to the object of worship as well as the means to be adopted for it (worship). Mādhavacārya in his 'Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha' calls this system 'Pratyabhijñā Darśana' and even some modern writers such as, Dr.Radhakrishnan, call it in the same name."
But whatever that may be, the Saivism of Kāśmīr is the latest and the most consistent and perfect form of the idea of Saiva religion and philosophy. It stands on three legs — the Āgamas, the Sūtras and the Philosophy. The Āgamas are believed to be of divine origin like the Vedas and are as revered and respected as the Śruti itself. These are believed to be handed down by the Lord Śiva and His consort Pārvatī to the graced disciples. The Sūtras were originated by Somānanda and developed by Utpaladeva. The philosophy was worked out in details by the great Abhinavagupta and others.

The Saiva Absolutism of Kāśmīr is based upon the 64 monistic Saiva Āgamas. It is difficult to determine the exact nature of the development of monistic Saivism at present, as many of these Āgamas are not available. It can only be said that Somānanda, the author of 'Śivadṛṣṭi' is the pioneer of this system and worthy to be called the founder of the same. He did this towards the end of the 9th century A.D. In his 'Śivadṛṣṭi' he calls the system 'Śaiva-darsāna'. Utpaladeva, the disciple of Somānanda, formulated the doctrine, taught by his Guru in his 'Īśvara Pratyabhijñā Kārikā'. It was from the title of Utpaladeva's work that the system came to be called Pratyabhijñā-darsāna, whereas it was still known as Śaiva-darsāna in Somānanda's time, as it is apparent from the title of his work. It is Utpaladeva who may be called the systematiser of this philosophy as Vadarāyana was the
systematiser of the Vedāntic doctrines of the Upaniṣads. Finally, the great Abhinavagupta made this system of philosophy intelligible in his two commentaries on Pratyabhijñā Kārikā. He is, therefore, the expounder of the system as Śaṅkara holds the position in the doctrine of the Vedānta.

Besides Āgamas, this systematic school of Śaivism is indebted to so many systems of Indian Philosophy and was greatly influenced by them for its emergence on the philosophical plinth. The complete impressions that we find here are the Vedāntic Absolutism, Sāmkhya dualism and the Buddhistic nihilism. The ideas of all these systems have been compromised in a unique way in this form of Śaivism.

In the Vedāntic Advaitism it is shown that there is only one Reality, Brahman. He alone is immutable and imperishable and all the world of manifold appearances are nothing but māyā. They are, therefore, erroneous. The jīvas are but Brahman. It is due to their ignorance that the difference is imagined and they suffer. This avidyā or ignorance can only be purged out by the attainment of knowledge or vidyā. Thus throughout this system we find a vigorous search for this knowledge. It is the knowledge of 'one' by knowing which everything else becomes known. Thus the Vedāntic Absolutism emerged within the orthodox Vedic tradition and sacrificed the devotion of general devotees at the alter of knowledge. The original defensive position of the theists thus crumbled down before the powerful
attack of the Advaitins' logic and hence they awoke from their dogmatic slumber and tried to compromise between the Philosophical Absolutism of The Vedānta and Religious Perso-
nalism of the theistic thinkers.

The Sāmkhya impact was not also less important. The supporters of this system believe in the two divisions of reality, one is comprising prakṛti, the primordial matter from which the world of objects evolves in gradual succession and the other the self or puruṣa, the subjective counterpart of Prakṛti which serves the positive background of the changing world of experience in its different gradations. Thus Prakṛti, according to this system, forms the material basis of this world. It evolves into diversities for the sake of puruṣa or spirit, which, though not by itself evolving, puts the former into action, and thus playing the role of an efficient cause in the reproduction of this world. Thus Sāmkhya self is con-
ceived to supplement the inadequacies of Prakṛti in represent-
ing reality in its completeness. In this way they form a dualism of spirit and matter and fail to make a unity between them. They thus lead to an atheism. This theory of Sāmkhya dualism help the Śiva-dvaitīns to form the two ideas of Śiva and Śakti. The Śakti has been described here as the active force, like prakṛti, in the manifestation of the universe, while Śiva has been conceived to be a mere witness as the puruṣa in Sāmkhya philosophy. But they unite the two ideas
into one and make an Absolutistic philosophy exempted from the idea of dualism.

Thirdly, Buddhists philosophy also helped to mould the theory of Śivādvaita. Buddhists believe in the theory of impermanence (anitya-vāda) and nihilism (Śūnya-vāda). All things, mental and physical, are transitory. Nothing is permanent. There is neither being nor non-being but only becoming. The world is a succession of transient phenomena. All individuals are series of momentary states of consciousness. Hence there is no permanent soul behind the series of momentary psychoses. There is no supra-mundane reality or God. Reality is pure change or flux having neither a past, nor a future, but only a point instant (Kṣanika). Hence everything is particular and discrete, nothing is universal. The Buddhists thus emphasise the Becoming eternal or prakṛti of the Sāmkhya philosophers as the sole pattern of reality and denies the reality of permanent spirit, the Being Eternal or Ātman.

The above 'ātma-anātma controversy' of the Vedānta and the Buddhism greatly influenced the logical formulation of the Śaiva Absolutism. The two extremes are perfectly harmonised in the integral vision of the Śaivites. They find that the Ānātmaśādins begin with the basic assumption that the discrete and momentary alone are real, the identical and permanent are unreal. But in the end they have to take the help of avidyā in order to account for the experience of continuity
and permanence. The Ātmavādīns, on the contrary, start with the assertion of the reality of permanent and deny the phenomenality and change. But here they also have to take recourse to the theory of māyā (avidyā) in order to avoid the difficulties in trying to explain the phenomenal appearances. Thus both of them ultimately arrive at a similar conclusion and really end in absolute 'void' (śūnya), which is expressed only through complete silence. They could explain neither the practical life, nor the ultimate (paramārtha) without taking the help of the theory of avidyā. Indeed, they oscillate between the paramount of dualism of self and not-self. Thus they fail to attain the true vision of the Absolute and their theory is as untenable as the dualistic hypothesis. The Śaiva Absolutists, therefore, carefully avoid this dualism and harmonize the duality of the above into integral unity (sāmarasya). They realize that the 'śūnya' itself is 'māyā'.

Māyā, is nothing but the inscrutable and mysterious power (Śakti) of the absolutely indeterminate or pure Śiva, which is inseparable from Him as the heat is inseparable from fire and both are, therefore, real, but not mithyā.

By using the 'logic of identity' they try to convince the Buddhists that the discrete and unique or the point instant cannot be satisfactorily explained without recognising
'unity' and 'identity'. Against the Ātmavādīns they point out that there will be no possibility of knowledge or experience if we do not accept the discrete or the varying. If the multiplicity and change were unreal even the existence of the eternal self cannot be established. Hence both Being and Becoming are real as Reality is the integral unity of both of them. It is the Supreme equilibrium or perfect identity (pūrṇa-sāmarasya) of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Reality is prakāśa-vimarsa or eternal and self-becoming. It is Parama-śiva in which the eternal is temporal and the temporal is the eternal.  

We shall now review briefly the previous schools of Śaivism in order to elucidate the emergence of Śaiva Absolutism. There we shall show that the Absolutistic school of Śaivism is not quite foreign to the earlier Śaiva schools. The germ is already found there in a latent or potent form. So this monistic school of Pratyabhijñā or Kāsmir Śaivism is also no less indebted to those schools of the earliest times and periods. 

The earliest form of Śaivism (i.e., the Pāṣupata Śaivism) is pluralistic in nature under the influence of Śāmkhya and the Nyāya-Vaiśāšika. There, the Lord (Śiva) is admitted as the Supreme cause—the creator, the helper and the destroyer of the world. He does function out of His nature as a playful being. He is the eternal ruler and sādya i.e. naturally powerful.
Besides Lord, the ultimate cause, the principles of Prakṛti and puruṣa are also admitted. But like the Sāṃkhyas they are not the causes but the effects (kārya). Though they are effects, they are eternal as they are eternally associated with the Lord.

The second form of Śaivism (i.e., the Śaiva Siddhānta) has a tilt towards monism. It has united all the different aspects of the universe to the concept of Śiva and Śakti. They again are not completely dual in nature but inseparably connected, apṛthakasiddha, Śakti, according to the Siddhāntins, is the active aspect of Śiva. Śiva operates through this Śakti or power as His instrumental cause. This power is not unconscious, but the conscious energy — the body of the Lord. Pauṣkara Āgama mentions this Śakti as kuṇḍalinī (the coiled) or suddha-māyā by which Śiva derives His functions and in which His being is grounded. Śakti is the intermediate link between Śiva, Pure consciousness, and matter, the unconscious. Śakti which is often called Umā, is but the reflex of Śiva, and not an independent existence but related to Him. Thus Śiva and Śakti, according to the Siddhāntins, are dual principles inseparably connected, but not identical.

The souls again are of the nature of Śiva. They become Śiva when the pāśas removed. In liberation they attain perfect resemblance to Śiva, though the three functions, of
creation, maintenance and destruction etc., are reserved for Lord only. Hence monism is found in Śaiva Siddhānta in slightly qualified form which means not oneness (ekatva) but inseparability.

In the Vīra Śaivism we find a clear unification and it was clearly a form of viśiṣṭādvaita, not exactly of the Rāmānuja type but standing between Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. The Ultimate Reality refers to here as 'Sthala' which is the cause of all things and beings. Everything comes out of it and merges into its bosom at the time of dissolution. The jīvas here though ontologically based on Śiva yet this school of Śaivism holds a difference between the two. This difference is due to the limiting conditions or aupādhika. But upādhi is not treated here as anirvacanīya māyā or false appearance like Śaṅkara, but it is real. The difference of Śiva and jīva (liṅga and aṅga) are, of course, conceived in the line of Advaita as mahākāśa and ghatākāśa. The ghata here represents the upādhi. But it is real as it is the manifestation of Śakti. The Śakti is again not different from Śiva. To the Vīra Śaivas, Śiva is pūrṇāhanta. He is the permanent ground of all existence and is endowed with power or śakti. The Lord is pure cit and hence the power is inherent in Him. The Śaivas use the word 'Sāmarasya' and 'Jāmala' to understand the relation between the Śiva and Śakti. The world is the manifestation of Śakti and not produced out of nescience, so it is real. It is posited as emanating in the basic
substance (Śiva), but not that the Lord transforms into it (world). Thus the traces of Vivarta vāda are not found even in Vīra Śaivism.

Before the emergence of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy Śaṅkara's māyā-vāda already appeared in the scene and swept the intellectual horizon of the country. It was the most rigid form of monism or non-dualism in which the multiplicity of the world as well as of the jīvas were explained away as being false appearances and subject to cancellation on self-realization. It was a form of pure Idealism.

In this context appeared the Pratyabhijñā. As an alternative to both Pariṇāma-vāda and Vivarta-vāda it formulated the doctrine of Ābhāsa-vāda which avoided the difficulties of the two other doctrines. The appearances are manifestations not false and yet leaving the ultimate Reality unmodified. Śiva, the Ultimate Reality, is absolutely independent, and creates all that exists by the mere force of His will. He makes the world appear in Himself as if it were distinct from Himself, though not really so; even as objects appear in a mirror. Śiva or God is unaffected by the objects of His creation as the mirror is by the images reflected on it. This doctrine was, therefore, a Realistic Idealism as contrasted with pure Idealism. It was realistic as the manifestations were considered real as the status of the Absolute.
It was idealistic as the entire manifestation was that of the Lord who is essentially consciousness and bliss.

The concept of force or Śakti was considered as essentially internal to the consciousness. Consciousness is also conscious of itself and this is its aspect of Śakti or Vimarśa.

Thus by the introduction of the concept of 'Śakti' which appears also in the Upaniṣads, but not very much appreciated by the Śaṁkarites as being the real power of the Lord, bridged the gulf between Impersonalism and Personalism. The impersonal by virtue of Śakti is personal and the personal by virtue of the identification of force with consciousness remains impersonal. Hence there is a co-ordination of Absolutism with Theism. Thus we find that Śaivism took a pyramidal shape of which Pratyabhijñā is the appex and Nakulīśa Pāśupata is the base.
References


2. Ibid.


7. Pauṣkarāgama - ii/I.