

**Indian Council of Philosophical Research  
Sponsored National Seminar**

**Mystic Philosophies of Kashmir: Reconciliation of Theory and Practice  
(3-5 November 2017)**

Concept Note

All Philosophies are only a pursuit to re-discover the 'self' and this Philosophy must be a step in the cultivation of man's life. To be at all fruitful, it must work in subordination to life. The desire to know our real nature and its relation to Supreme (कोऽहम्) is the root of development of all philosophical investigations. To know the 'self' is an arduous task and remains a mystery. Each Philosophy endeavours to unfold this mystery.

The stream of Philosophy which emerges in Kashmir, commonly known as Kāsmīra Śaivism, is unique among the Indian Philosophies. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that Kāsmīra Śaivism evinces an extraordinary entanglement of self-consciousness (*sva-samvit*), true logic (*satarka*), and authoritative texts (*śāstra*). Its uniqueness also lies in the fact that it is not only an intellectual pursuit but also a way of self-realisation (*sāadhanā*).

Ācārya Abhinavagupta in his magnum opus *Tantrāloka* delineates the historicity of Śaivism. Searching for an earlier and earlier principle, we reach at that point where only one divine element Bhairava shines encapsulating all the *āgamas*. There is only one *āgama* known as Śaivāgama which is uttered by the Parama Śiva. All other *āgamas* like *vaiṣṇava-āgama*, *bauddha-āgama*, *pāñcarātra-āgama* are only the categorisation of this one Śaivāgama based on space (*deśa*), time (*kāla*), and eligible persons (*adhikārī*). Initially, this one Śaivāgama consists of nine crore of verses and Bhairava alone knew them. This one Śaivāgama lost in a bulk as it was handed down by one divine being to the next. In this way, Abhinavagupta establishes the centricity of all *āgamas*. The oral tradition inseparable from the doctrines communicated in Śaivāgama was uttered by Śiva. The first recipient of the tradition is his consort Devī, or one of his divine manifestations; in few texts this order has been reversed. In the meantime, the various *āgamas* are disappeared with the growing influence of the *kali* age and with the gradual disappearance of the *ṛṣis*. The disappearance of the *āgamas* would make the world in spiritual darkness, Śiva in the form of Śrī Kaṇṭha instructs the sage Durvāsā to spread these *āgamas* in the world. Durvāsā ordered his three mind-born (*mānasa putra*) sons, namely, Tryambaka, Āmardaka and Śrinātha, to propagate *āgama* with respect to three aspects of *abheda*, *bheda*, and *bhedābheda*. There is one more branch known as Ardhatryambaka which was propagated by a descendant of Tryambaka on the side of his daughter. In this way, there are historically the four streams of thought in Kāsmīra Śaivism, namely, the Tryambaka Krama, the Āmardaka Krama, the Śrīnāth Krama, and the Ardhatryambaka Krama. Tryambaka Krama is also known as *trika*. The literature of the *trika* may be further divided under the three heads: *Āgama Śāstra*, *Spanda Śāstra*, and *Pratyabhijñā Śāstra*. Vasugupta's *Śivasūtra* stands at the fountainhead of the non-dual Kashmir Śaivism. *Spanda-Sūtra* (also known as *Spanda-Kārikā*) is the leading text of *Spanda*

*Śāstra*. Somānanda, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta are the leading thinkers of the *pratyabhijñā* stream. *Pratyabhijñā* stream represents the epitome of the whole Kāśmīra Śaivism, since it provides a framework in which the whole thinking of Śaivāgama can be systematized.

Śaivāgama is unique in the sense that it bestows both the *siddhi* and the *mukti*. In this stream, *siddhi* is also known as *bhukti*. Śaivāgama represents a harmonious state of *siddhi* and *mukti*. In this system, human body (*deha*) becomes important and it is the uniqueness of *āgama* to establish *deha* in the centre. This centrality of *deha* interlinks the two modes of thinking, namely, philosophy and aesthetics.

Mahāmāhopādhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj Ji draws our attention towards fundamental differences between the two streams of Indian culture. He had the view that Vedic stream is exclusive whereas Tantric stream is inclusive. To accept 'life' in its holistic form is the special characteristic of the tantric stream. Epistemological, the Vedic stream is *adhyavasāna mūlā* while the tantric stream is *anusandhāna mūlā*.

Every Philosophy has its own vision of reality. The other streams of Indian Philosophy, namely, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, focuses to explicate the physical world by means of excessive use of epistemological procedures and prescribe their own methods for the attainment of the Supreme element. But Kāśmīra Śaivism blends epistemological procedures with a deep sense of *sādhanā*. Kāśmīra Śaivism conceives the descent of divine *anugraha* on the individual aspirant (*sādhaka*) from the highest plane of Reality (Paramaśiva). The descent of divine *anugraha* (*śaktipāta*) marks the beginning of the process of divinization of the aspirant. The concept of *śaktipāta* is essential to Śaivāgama and also in *baudhāgamas*. Through *sādhanā*, the aspirant purifies his *mala* which envelops him. Śaivāgama also develops the concept of *samāveśa* (divine union) which is fruit of *sādhanā*. In this way Kāśmīra Śaivism represents a reconciliation point of rigorous theory (*siddhānta*) and practice (*sādhanā*).

Kashmir represents a long and cumulative chain of philosophers like Somānanda, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja etc. who codifies their theories and practices taking inspiration from Śaivāgama. These leading thinkers of Kashmir have delineated various concepts in their respective works which encompass a deep mystery even today. We can enlist some of the concepts as below:

- The concept of *anuttara*
- The concept of *Āgama*
- The concept of *sādhanā*
- The concept of *bhoga*
- The concept of Tantra and its practices
- The concept of *śaktipāta*
- The concept of *dīkṣā*
- The concept of *saundarya* and its experience

Around 14<sup>th</sup> Century, the tradition of Sufism gradually marks the valley with arrival of a famous saint named Syed Ali Hamadani. Lalleswari (commonly known as Lal Ded), Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali (also known as Nooruddin Rishi or Nunda Rishi), Resh Mir Saeb and Rupa Bhawani were the main ascetics of Sufism who spent their lives wandering and singing around the valley. Sufi tradition refers these social thinkers as *ṛṣi*. Lal Ded sung in form of verses commonly known as *vakhs* and the importance of these *vakhs* consist in the fact that these are not a systematic expose of Śaivism on the lines laid down by its philosophers who preceded her, but illustrate the Śaiva religion to common people. These *vakhs* are highly mystical and also philosophical. We may see one of the *vakhs* to illustrate this fact.

Slowly, slowly, did I stop my breath in the bellows-pipes of my throat?  
Thereby did the lamp of (knowledge) blaze up within me, and then was my true  
nature revealed unto me,  
I winnowed forth abroad my inner light,  
So that, in the darkness itself, I could seize (the truth) and hold it tight.

-translated by George Grierson (fourth *vakh*)

The element of *bhakti* of Kāsmīra Śaivism has a significant role in the development of Sufism in Kashmir. Theories of Sufism can be located in the broader perspective of Kāsmīra Śaivism.

Overall, Kashmir has a significant contribution in various domains of Indic knowledge systems, namely, aesthetics, metaphysics, epistemology, phenomenology of consciousness, architecture, historiography and many more. No serious attempt has been made to examine rationally the truths inaccessible to ordinary men what we call *mystery* in these intellectual manifestations.

The proposed three day National Seminar entitled **Mystic Philosophies of Kashmir: Reconciliation of Theory and Practice** aspires to unfold a collective journey of self-discovery what we possess through the deep philosophical insights of Kashmir thinkers. The proposed Seminar would invite eminent scholars of the field who would investigate the following broad themes.

- Āgamic tradition of Kashmir
- Facets of Trika Philosophy
- Ṛṣi-tradition of Kashmir: philosophical foundations
- Development and Status of Sufism in Jammu & Kashmir and its different versions
- Impact of Islam on Philosophy and Practices of Jammu & Kashmir
- Mystic Philosophies of Kashmir: Reconciliation of Theory and Practice: a panorama

**\*The venue of the Seminar would be at Srinagar, Kashmir. Invited scholars and participants would be provided hospitality and travel as per ICPR rules.**