

Chapter Three

What Are the Tantras and Their Significance?

A VERY common expression in English writings is "The Tantra"; but its use is often due to a misconception and leads to others. For what does Tantra mean? The word denotes injunction (Vidhi), regulation (Niyama), Shastra generally or treatise. Thus Shamkara calls the Samkhya a Tantra. A secular writing may be called Tantra. For the following note I am indebted to Professor Surendranath Das Gupta. "The word 'Tantra' has been derived in the Kashika-Vritti (7-2-9) from the root 'Tan' 'to spread' by the Aunadika rule Sarvadhathubhyah tran, with the addition of the suffix 'tran'. Vacaspati, Anandagiri, and Govindananda, however, derive the word from the root 'Tatri' of 'Tantri' in the sense of Vyutpadana, origination or knowledge. In Ganapatha, however, 'Tantri' has the same meaning as 'Tan' 'to spread' and it is probable that the former root is a modification of the latter. The meaning Vyutpadana is also probably derived by narrowing the general sense of Vistara which is the meaning of the root 'Tan'."

According to the derivation of 'Tantra' from Tan, to spread, Tantra is that (Scripture) by which knowledge (Jñāna) is spread (Tanyate, vistaryate jñānam anena, iti Tantram). The Suffix Tra is from the root 'to save'. That knowledge is spread which saves. What is that but religious knowledge? Therefore, as here and generally used, Tantra means a particular kind of religious scripture. The Kamika Agama of the Shaiva Siddhanta (Tantrantara Patala) says:

Tanoti vipulan arthan tattvamantra-samanvitan

Trananca kurute yasmat tantram ityabhidhyate.

(It is called Tantra because it promulgates great knowledge concerning Tattva and Mantra and because it saves.)

It is a common misconception that Tantra is the name only of the Scripture of the Shaktas or worshippers of Shakti. This is not so. There are Tantras of other sects of the Agama, Tantras of Shaivas, Vaishnavas and so forth. We cannot speak of "The Treatise" nor of "The Tantra" any more than we can or do speak of the Purana, the Samhita. We can speak of "the Tantras" as we do of "the Puranas". These Tantras are Shastras of what is called the Agama. In a review of one of my works it was suggested that the Agama is a class of Scriptures dealing with the worship of Saguna Ishvara which was revealed at the close of the age of the Upanishads, and introduced partly because of the falling into desuetude of the Vaidika Acara, and partly because of the increasing numbers of persons entering the Hindu fold who were not competent (Adhikari) for that Acara. I will not however deal with this historical question beyond noting the fact that the Agama is open to all persons of all castes and both sexes, and is not subject to the restrictions of the Vaidika Acara. This last term is a common one and comes from the verbal root char, which means to move or to act, the prefix 3 being probably used in the sense of restriction. Acara thus means practice, way, rule of life governing a Sadhaka, or one who does Sadhana or practice for some desired end (Siddhi).

The Agamas are divided into three main groups according as the Ishtadevata worshipped is Shakti, Shiva or Vishnu. The first is the Shakta Agama, the second the Shaivagama, and the third the Vaishnava Agama or Pancaratra. This last is the Scripture to which the Shrimad Bhagavata (X. 90. 34) refers as Sattvata Tantra in the lines,

Tenoktang sattvatang tantram yaj jnattva muktibhag bhavet

Yatra strishudradasanang sangskaro vaisnavah smritah.

Some Agamas are called Vaidik (Vaidika Agama) and some non-Vaidik (Avidika). The Kurma Purana (XVI.1) mentions as belonging to the latter, Kapala, Lakula, Vama, Bhairava, Purva, Pashcima, Pañcaratra, Pashupata and many others. Pashupata again is said to be both Vaidika and Avidika such as Lakula. Kurma Purana (Uttarabhaga, Ch. 38) says "By Me was first composed, for the attainment of Liberation, Shrauta (Vaidika) Pashupata which is excellent, subtle, and secret, the essence of Veda (Vedasara). The learned devoted to Veda should meditate on Shiva Pashupati. This is Pashupata Yoga to be practiced by seekers of Liberation. By Me also have been spoken Pashupata, Soma, Lakula and Bhairava opposed to Veda (Vedavadaviruddhani). These should not be practiced. They are outside Veda." Sanatkumara Samhita says:

Shrautashrautavibhedena dvidividhastu shivagamah

Shrutisaramapah shrautah sah punar dvidividho matah

Svatantra itarash ceti svatanthro dashadha pura

Tatha' shtadashadha pashcat siddhanta iti giyate

Itarah shrutisaras tu shatakoti-pravistararah.

(See also Vayu Samhita, Ch. I. 28

(Shaivagama is of two kinds, Shrauta and Ashrauta. Shrauta is Shrautisaramaya and of two kinds, Svatantra and Itara. Svatantra is first of ten kinds and then Siddhanta of eighteen kinds. (This is the Shaivasiddhanta Agama with 28 Mula Agamas and 207 Upagamas. It is Shuddhadvaita because in it there is no Visheshana). Itara is Shrutisara with numerous varieties. Into this mass of sects I do not attempt here to enter, except in a general way. My subject is the doctrine and ritual of the Shaktas. There are said to be Shaiva, Vaishnava, and Shakta Upanishads favoring one or another doctrine.

We must, however, in all cases distinguish between what a School says of itself and what others say of it. So far as I am aware all Agamas, whatever be their origin, claim now to be based on Shruti, though of course as different interpretations are put on Shruti, those who accept one interpretation are apt to speak of differing Schools as heretical. These main divisions again have subdivisions. Thus there are several Schools of Shaivas; and there are Shaktas with their nine Amnyas, four Sampradayas (Kerala, Kashmira, Gauda and Vilasa) each divided into two-fold division of inner and outer worship (Sammohana Tantra, Ch. V). There is for instance the Northern Shaiva School called Trika of Kashmir, in which country at one time Tantra Shastras were very prevalent. There is again the Southern Shaiva School called Shaivasiddhanta. The Shaktas who are to be found throughout India are largely prevalent in Bengal and Assam. The Shaktas are rather allied with the Northern Advaita Shaiva than with the others, though in them also there is worship of Shakti. Shiva and Shakti are one and he who worships one necessarily worships the other. But whereas the Shaiva predominantly worships Shiva, the Shakta predominantly worships the Shakti side of the Ardhanarishvara Murti, which is both Shiva and Shakti.

Mahavishnu and Sadashiva are also one. As the Sammohana Tantra (Ch. VIII) says, "Without Prakriti the Samsara (World) cannot be. Without Purusha true knowledge cannot be attained. Therefore should both be worshipped; with Mahakali, Mahakala." Some, it says, speak of Shiva, some of Shakti, some of Narayana (Vishnu). But the supreme Narayana (Adinarayana) is supreme Shiva (Parashambhu), the Nirguna Brahman, pure as crystal. The two aspects of the Supreme reflect the one in the other. The Reflection (Pratibimba) is Maya whence the World-Lords (Lokapalas) and the Worlds are born. The Adya Lalita (Mahashakti) at one time assumed the male form of Krishna and at another that of Rama (Ch. IX). For all aspects are in Mahakali, one with Bhairava Mahakala, who is Mahavishnu. "It is only a fool" it says, "who sees any difference between Rama and Shiva." This is of course to look at the matter from the high Vedantik standpoint of Shakta doctrine. Nevertheless separate worship and rituals exist among the Sects. A common philosophical basis of the Shaivas and those of Shaktas, who are Agamavadins, is the doctrine of the Thirty-six Tantras. These are referred to in the Tantra (Ch. VII) so well known in Bengal which is called Kularnava. They are also referred to in other Shakta works and their commentaries such as the Anandalahari. The Sharada Tilaka, a great authority amongst the Bengal Shaktas, is the work of Lakshmanacarya, an author of the Kashmir Shaiva school. The latter school as also the Shaktas are Advaitins. The Shaiva Siddhanta and Pancaratra are Shuddhadvaita and Vishishtadvaita respectively. There is also a great body of Buddhist Tantras of differing schools. (I have published one -- the Shricakra Sambhara Tantra as Vol. VII of Tantrik Texts.) Now all these schools have Tantras of their own. The original connection of the Shaiva schools is said to be shown amongst other things, by the fact that some Tantras are common, such as Mrigendra and Matanga Tantras. It has been asserted that the Shakta school is not historically connected with the Shaivas. No grounds were given for this statement. Whatever be the historical origins of the former, the two appear to be in several respects allied at present, as any one who knows Shakta literature may find out for himself. In fact Shakta literature is in parts unintelligible to one unacquainted with some features of what is called the Shaiva Darshana. How otherwise is it that the 36 Tattvas and Shadadhva (see my Garland of Letters) are common to both?

The Shaktas have again been divided into three groups. Thus the esteemed Pandit R. Ananta Shastri in the Introduction to his edition of Anandalahari speaks of the Kaula or Shakta Shastras with sixty-four Tantras; the Mishra with eight Tantras; and the Samaya group which are said to be the most important of the Shakta Agamas, of which five are mentioned. This classification purports to be based on the nature of the object pursued, according as it belongs to one or the other of the Purusharthas. Pancaratra literature is very considerable, one hundred and eight works being mentioned by the same Pandit in Vol. XIII, pp. 357-363 of The Theosophist. I would refer the reader also to the very valuable edition of the Ahirbudhnya Samhita by my friend Dr. Otto Schrader, with an Introduction by the learned Doctor on the Pancaratra system where many Vaishnava Tantras and Samhitas are cited. The Trika school has many Tantras of which the leading one is Malinivijaya. The Svachhanda Tantra comes next. Jagadisha Chandra Chattopadhyaya Vidyavaridhi has written with learning and lucidity on this school. The Shaivasiddhanta has twenty-eight leading Tantras and a large number of Upagamas, such as Taraka Tantra, Vama Tantra and others, which will be found enumerated in Schomerus' Der Shaiva-siddhanta, Nallasvami Pillai's Studies in Shaivasiddhanta (p. 294), and Shivajñanasiddhiyar (p. 211). The Sammohana Tantra (Ch. VI) mentions 64 Tantras, 327 Upatantras, as also Yamalas, Damaras, Samhitas and other Scriptures of the Shaiva class; 75 Tantras, 205 Upatantras, also Yamalas, Damaras, Samhitas of the Vaishnava class; numerous Tantras and other scriptures of the Ganapatya and Saura

classes, and a number of Puranas, Upapuranas and other variously named Scriptures of the Bauddha class. It then (Ch. VII) mentions over 500 Tantras and nearly the same number of Upatantras, of some 22 Agamas, Cinagama (see Ch. VI post), Buddhagama, Jaina, Pashupata, Kapalika, Pancaratra, Bhairava and others. There is thus a vast mass of Tantras in the Agamas belonging to differing schools of doctrine and practice, all of which must be studied before we can speak with certainty as to what the mighty Agama as a whole is. In this book I briefly deal with one section of it only. Nevertheless when these Agamas have been examined and are better known, it will, I think, be found that they are largely variant aspects of the same general ideas and practices.

As instances of general ideas I may cite the following: the conception of Deity as a supreme Personality (Parahanta) and of the double aspect of God in one of which He really is or becomes the Universe; a true emanation from Him in His creative aspect; successive emanations (Abhasa, Vyuha) as of "fire from fire" from subtle to gross; doctrine of Shakti; pure and impure creation; the denial of unconscious Maya, such as Shamkara teaches; doctrine of Maya Kosha and the Kañcukas (the six Shaiva Kañcukas being, as Dr. Schrader says, represented by the possibly earlier classification in the Pancaratra of the three Samkocas); the carrying of the origin of things up and beyond Purusha-Prakriti; acceptance at a later stage of Purusha-Prakriti, the Samkhyan Gunas, and evolution of Tattvas as applied to the doctrine of Shakti; affirmance of the reality of the Universe; emphasis on devotion (Bhakti); provision for all castes and both sexes.

Instances of common practice are for example Mantra, Bija, Yantra, Mudra, Nyasa, Bhutashuddhi, Kundaliyoga, construction and consecration of temples and images (Kriya), religious and social observances (Carya) such as Ahnika, Varnashramadharma, Utsava; and practical magic (Maya-yoga). Where there is Mantra, Yantra, Nyasa, Diksha, Guru and the like, there is Tantra Shastra. In fact one of the names of the latter is Mantra Shastra. With these similarities there are certain variations of doctrines and practice between the schools. Necessarily also, even on points of common similarity, there is some variance in terminology and exposition which is unessential. Thus when looking at their broad features, it is of no account whether with the Pancaratra we speak of Lakshmi, Shakti, Vyuha, Samkoca; or whether in terms of other schools we speak of Tripurasundari and Mahakali, Tattvas and Kañcukas. Again there are some differences in ritual which are not of great moment except in one and that a notable instance. I refer to the well-known division of worshippers into Dakshinacara and Vamacara. The secret Sadhana of some of the latter (which I may here say is not usually understood) has acquired such notoriety that to most the term "The Tantra" connotes this particular worship and its abuses and nothing else. I may here also observe that it is a mistake to suppose that aberrations in doctrine and practice are peculiar to India. A Missionary wrote to me some years ago that this country was "a demon-haunted land". There are demons here, but they are not the only inhabitants; and tendencies to be found here have existed elsewhere. The West has produced many a doctrine and practice of an antinomian character. Some of the most extreme are to be found there. Moreover, though this does not seem to be recognized, it is nevertheless the fact that these Kaula rites are philosophically based on monistic doctrine. Now it is this Kaula doctrine and practice, limited probably, as being a secret doctrine, at all times to comparatively few, which has come to be known as "The Tantra". Nothing is more incorrect. This is but one division of worshippers who again are but one section of the numerous followers of the Agamas, Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava. Though there are certain common features which may be called Tantrik yet one cannot speak of "The Tantra" as though it were one entirely homogeneous doctrine and practice. Still less can we identify it with the particular practices and theories of one division of worshippers only. Further the Tantras are concerned with Science, Law, Medicine and a variety of subjects other than spiritual doctrine or worship. Thus Indian chemistry and medicine are largely indebted to the Tantrikas.

According to a common notion the word "Tantra" is (to use the language of a well-known work) "restricted to the necromantic books of the latter Shivaic or Shakti mysticism" (Waddell's Buddhism of Tibet, p. 164). As charity covers many sins, so "mystic" and "mysticism" are words which cover much ignorance. "Necromancy" too looms unnecessarily large in writers of this school. It is, however, the fact that Western authors generally so understand the term "Tantra". They are, however, in error in so doing as previously explained. Here I shortly deal with the significance of the Tantra Shastra, which is of course also misunderstood, being generally spoken of as a jumble of "black magic," and "erotic mysticism," cemented together by a ritual which is "meaningless mummery". A large number of persons who talk in this strain have never had a Tantra in their hands, and such Orientalists as have read some portions of these Scriptures have not generally understood them, otherwise they would not have found them to be so "meaningless". They may be bad, or they may be good, but they have a meaning. Men are not such fools as to believe for ages in what is meaningless. The use of this term implies that their content had no meaning to them. Very likely; for to define as they do Mantra as "mystical words," Mudra as "mystical gestures" and Yantra as "mystical diagrams" does not imply knowledge. These erroneous notions as to the nature of the Agama are of course due to the mistaken identification of the whole body of the Scripture with one section of it. Further this last is only known through the abuses to which its dangerous practices as carried out by inferior persons have given rise. It is stated in the Shastra itself in which they are prescribed that the path is full of difficulty and peril and he who fails upon it goes to Hell. That there are those who have so failed, and others who have been guilty of evil magic, is well known. I am not in this Chapter concerned with this special ritual or magic but with the practices which govern the life of the vast mass of the Indian people to be found in the Tantras of the Agamas of the different schools which I have mentioned.

A Western writer in a review of one of my books has expressed the opinion that the Tantra Shastra (I think he meant the Shakta) was, at least in its origin, alien and indeed hostile to the Veda. He said: "We are strongly of opinion that in their essence the two principles are fundamentally opposed and that the Tantra only used Vedic forms to mask its essential opposition." I will not discuss this question here. It is, however, the fact now, as it has been for centuries past, that the Agamavadins claim to base their doctrine on Veda. The Vedanta is the final authority and basis for the doctrines set forth in the Tantras, though the latter interpret the Vedanta in various ways. The real meaning of Vedanta is Upanishad and nothing else. Many persons, however, speak of Vedanta as though it meant the philosophy of Shamkara or whatever other philosopher they follow. This of course is incorrect. Vedanta is Shruti. Shamkara's philosophy is merely one interpretation of Shruti just as Ramanuja's is another and that of the Shaivagama or Kaulagama is a third. There is no question of competition between Vedanta as Shruti and Tantra Shastra. It is, however, the fact that each of the followers of the different schools of Agama contend that their interpretation of the Shruti texts is the true one and superior to that of other schools. As a stranger to all these sects, I am not here concerned to show that one system is better than the other. Each will adopt that, which most suits him. I am only stating the facts. As the Ahirbudhnya Samhita of the Pañcaratra Agama says, the aspects of God are infinite, and no philosopher can seize and duly express more than one aspect. This is perfectly true. All systems of interpretation have some merits as they have defects, that of Shamkara included. The latter by his Mayavada is able to preserve more completely than any other interpretation the changelessness and stainlessness of Brahman. It does this, however, at the cost of certain defects, which do not exist in other schools, which have also their own peculiar merits and shortcomings. The basis and seat of authority is Shruti or experience and the Agama interprets Shruti in its own way. Thus the Shaiva-Shakta doctrines are specific solutions of the Vedantic theme which differ in several respects from that of Shamkara, though as they agree (I speak of the Northern Shaiva School) with him on the fundamental question of the unity of Jivatma and Paramatma, they are therefore Advaita.

The next question is how the experience of which the Agama speaks may be gained. This is also prescribed in the Shastra in the form of peculiar Sadhanas or disciplines. In the first place there must be a healthy physical and moral life. To know a thing in its ultimate sense is to be that thing. To know Brahman is, according to Advaita, to be Brahman. One cannot realize Brahman the Pure except by being oneself pure (Shuddhacitta). But to attain and keep this state, as well as progress therein, certain specific means, practices, rituals or disciplines are necessary. The result cannot be got by mere philosophical talk about Brahman. Religion is a practical activity. Just as the body requires exercise, training and gymnastic, so does the mind. This may be of a merely intellectual or spiritual kind. The means employed are called Sadhana which comes from the root "Sadh," to exert. Sadhana is that which leads to Siddhi. Sadhana is the development of Shakti. Man is Consciousness (Atma) vehicled by Shakti in the form of mind and body. But this Shakti is at base Pure Consciousness, just as Atma is; for Atma and Shakti are one. Man is thus a vast magazine of both latent and expressed power. The object of Sadhana is to develop man's Shakti, whether for temporal or spiritual purposes. But where is Sadhana to be found? Seeing that the Vaidika Acara has fallen in practical desuetude we can find it nowhere but in the Agamas and in the Puranas which are replete with Tantrik rituals. The Tantras of these Agamas therefore contain both a practical exposition of spiritual doctrine and the means by which the truth it teaches may be realized. Their authority does not depend, as Western writers and some of their Eastern followers suppose, on the date when they were revealed but on the question whether Siddhi is gained thereby. This too is the proof of Ayurveda. The test of medicine is that it cures. If Siddhi is not obtained, the fact it is written "Shiva uvaca" (Shiva speaks) or the like counts for nothing. The Agama therefore is a practical exposition and application of Doctrine varying according to its different schools.

The latest tendency in modern Western philosophy is to rest upon intuition, as it was formerly the tendency to glorify dialectic. Intuition has, however, to be led into higher and higher possibilities by means of Sadhana. This term means work or practice, which in its result is the gradual unfolding of the Spirit's vast latent magazine of power (Shakti), enjoyment and vision which everyone possesses in himself. The philosophy of the Agama is, as a friend and collaborator of mine, Professor Pramathanatha Mukhyo-padhyaya, very well put it, a practical philosophy, adding, that what the intellectual world wants today is this sort of philosophy; a philosophy which not merely argues but experiments. The form which Sadhana takes is a secondary matter. One goal may be reached by many paths. What is the path in any particular case depends on considerations of personal capacity and temperament, race and faith. For the Hindu there is the Agama which contains forms of discipline which his race has evolved and are therefore prima facie suitable for him. This is not to say that these forms are unalterable or acceptable to all. Others will adopt other forms of Sadhana suitable to them. Thus, amongst Christians, the Catholic Church prescribes a full and powerful Sadhana in its Sacraments (Samskara) and Worship (Puja, Upasana), Meditation (Dhyana), Rosary (Japa) and the like. But any system to be fruitful must experiment to gain experience. The significance of the Tantra Shastra lies in this that it claims to afford a means available to all, of whatever caste and of either sex, whereby the truths taught may be practically realized.

The Tantras both in India and Tibet are the expression of principles which are of universal application. The mere statement of religious truths avails not. What is necessary for all is a practical method of realization. This too the occultist needs. Further the ordinary run of mankind can neither apprehend, nor do they derive satisfaction from mere metaphysical concepts. They accept them only when presented in personal form. They care not for Shunyata, the Void, nor Saccidananda in the sense of

mere Consciousness -- Being -- Bliss. They appeal to personal Bodhisattvas, Buddhas, Shiva, Vishnu, Devi who will hear their prayer, and grant them aid. Next they cannot stand by themselves. They need the counsel and guidance of priest and Guru and the fortifying virtues of the sacraments. They need a definite picture of their object of worship, such as is detailed in the Dhyana of the Devatas, an image, a Yantra, a Mandala and so forth, a developed ritual and pictorial religion. This is not to say that they are wrong. These natural tendencies, however, become accentuated in course of time to a point where "superstition," mechanical devotion and lifeless formalism and other abuses are produced. There then takes place what is called a "Reform," in the direction of a more spiritual religion. This too is accentuated to the point of barrenness. Religion becomes sterile to produce practical result and ritual and pictorial religion recurs. So Buddhism, which in its origin has been represented to be a reaction against excessive and barren ritualism, could not rest with a mere statement of the noble truths and the eightfold path. Something practical was needed. The Mahayana (Thegpa Chhenpo) was produced. Nagarjuna in the second century A.D. (?) is said to have promulgated ideas to be found in the Tantras. In order to realize the desired end, use was made of all the powers of man, physical and mental. Theistic notions as also Yoga came again to the fore in the Yogacharya and other Buddhist systems. The worship of images and an elaborate ritual was introduced. The worship of the Shaktis spread. The Mantrayana and Vajrayana found acceptance with, what an English writer (The Buddhism of Tibet by L. Waddell) describes in the usual style as its "silly mummery of unmeaning jargon and gibberish," the latter being said to be "the most depraved form of Buddhist doctrine." So-called Tantrik Buddhism became thus fully developed. A Tantrik reformer in the person of Tsongkhapa arose, who codified the Tantras in his work Lam-rim Chhen-mo. The great code, the Kah-gyur, contains in one of its sections the Tantras (Rgyud) containing ritual, worship of the Divine Mothers, theology, astrology and natural science, as do their Indian counterparts. These are of four classes, the Kriya, Caryā, Yoga, Anuttara Tantras, the latter comprising Maha, Anu and Ati-Yoga Tantras. The Tan-ghur similarly contains many volumes of Tantras (Rgyud). Then, at length, Buddhism was driven from out of India. Brahmanism and its rituals survived and increased, until both in our day and the nearer past we see in the so-called reformed sects a movement towards what is claimed to be a more spiritual religion. Throughout the ages the same movements of action and reaction manifest. What is right here lies in the middle course. Some practical method and ritual is necessary if religion is not to be barren of result. The nature of the method and ritual will vary according to the capacity and development of men. On the other hand, the "crooked influence of time" tends to overlay the essential spiritual truths with unintelligent and dead formalism. The Tantra Shastra stands for a principle of high value though, like other things admittedly good, it is capable of, and has suffered, abuse. An important point in this connection should be noted. In Europe we see extreme puritan reaction with the result that the religious movements which embody them become one-sided and without provision for ordinary human needs. Brahmanism has ever been all-inclusive, producing a Sadhana of varying kinds, material and mental, for the different stages of spiritual advancement and exempting from further ritual those for whom, by reason of their attainment, it is no longer necessary.

Chapter Four Tantra Shastra and Veda

In writing this Chapter I have in mind the dispute which some have raised upon the question whether the Agamas, or some of them, are Vaidik or non-Vaidik.

I do not here deal with the nature and schools of Tantra or Agama nor with their historical origin. Something has been said on these points in the Introductions to the English translations of Pandit Shiva Chandra Vidyarnava's Tantra-tattva. I have also dealt with this subject in the two Chapters, "What are the Tantras and their significance?" and "Shakti and Shakta". I wish to avoid repetitions, except so far as is absolutely necessary for the elucidation of the particular subject in hand. On the disputed question whether the Agamas are Vaidik or non-Vaidik I desire to point out that an answer cannot be given unless we keep apart two distinct matters, viz., (1) what was the origin of the Agamas and (2) what they are now. I am not here, however, dealing with the first or historical question, but with the second so far as the Shakta Agama is concerned. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that (to take a specific example) worship of Kali and other Devis by the Shaktas indicates the existence of non-Aryan elements in their Agama. The question of real importance here, as always, is not as to what were the facts in remote past ages, but what they are now. The answer then is -- let it be as you will regarding the origin of the Shakta Agama; but at present Shakta worship is an integral part of the Hinduism and as such admits the authority of Veda, accepting, as later explained, every other belief held by the general body of the Hindu people.

In a recent prosecution under Sections 292, 293 of the Indian Penal Code against an accused who had published a Tantra (but who was rightly acquitted), an Indian Deputy Magistrate who had advised the prosecution, and who claimed to be an orthodox Hindu, stated (I am informed) in the witness box, that he could not define what the Tantra Shastra was, or state

whether it was a Hindu scripture of the Kali age, or whether a well-known particular Shastra shown to him was one of the Tantras. Such ignorance is typical of many at the present time and is a legacy from a vanishing age. How is it that a Shastra which has had its followers throughout India from the Himalayas (the abode of Shiva and of Parvati Devi) to Cape Comorin (a corruption of Kumart Devi) which ruled for centuries, so that we may speak of a Tantrik epoch; which even to-day governs the household and temple ritual of every Hindu; how is it that such a Shastra has fallen into complete neglect and disrepute amongst the larger body of the English-educated community? I remember a time when mention of the Shastra was only made (I speak of course of the same class) with bated breath; and when any one who concerned himself therewith became thereby liable to the charge of giving licentious sway to drink and women. The answer is both a general and particular one. In the first place the English-educated people of this country were formerly almost exclusively, and later to a considerable extent, under the sway of their English educators. In fact they were in a sense their creation. They were, and some of them still are, the Manasaputra of the English. For them what was English and Western was the mode. Hindu religion, philosophy and art were only, it was supposed, for the so-called "uneducated" women and peasants and for native Pandits who, though learned in their futile way, had not received the illuminating advantages of a Western training. In my own time an objection was (I am informed) taken by Indian Fellows of the Calcutta University to the appointment of the learned Pandit Candrakanta Tarkalamkara to a chair of Indian philosophy on the ground that he was a mere native Pandit. In this case English Fellows and the then Vice-Chancellor opposed this absurd and snobbish objection. When the authority of the English teachers was at its highest, what they taught was law, even though their judgments were, in respect of Indian subjects of which they had but a scant and imperfect knowledge, defective. If they said with, or in anticipation of, one Professor, that the Vedas were "the babbling of a child humanity" and the Brahmanas "the drivel of madmen," or with another that the thought of the Upanishads was so "low" that it could not be correctly rendered in the high English language; that in "treating of Indian philosophy a writer has to deal with thoughts of a lower order than the thoughts of the every-day life of Europe"; that Smriti was mere priestly tyranny, the Puranas idle legends and the Tantras mere wickedness and debauchery; that Hindu philosophy was (to borrow another English Professor's language concerning the Samkhya) "with all its folly and fanaticism little better than a chaotic impertinence"; and that Yoga was, according to the same man of learning, "the fanatical vagaries of theocracy"; that Indian ritual was nothing but superstition, mummery, and idolatry, and (Indian) art, inelegant, monstrous, and grotesque -- all this was with readiness accepted as high learning and wisdom, with perhaps here and there an occasional faint, and even apologetic, demur. I recollect in this connection a rather halting, and shamefaced, protest by the late Rajendra Lal Mitra. I do not say that none of these or other adverse criticisms had any ground whatever. There has been imperfection, folly, superstition, wickedness, here as elsewhere. There has been much of it, for example, in the countries, whence these critics of India came. It is, however, obvious that such criticisms are so excessive as to be absurd.

Even when giving an account of Eastern thought the Western is apt to take up a "superior" attitude because he believes himself to be superior. The Bishop of Durham very clearly reveals this sense of superiority (Christian Aspects of Life, by B. F. Westcott, 175) when after stating that the duty of the Christian missionary was to substitute for "the sterile theism of Islam and the shadowy vagueness of Hindu Philosophy a belief in a living and speaking God" he goes on to point out that "our very advantages" by way of "the consciousness of social and intellectual superiority with which we are filled" and "the national force which sets us as conquerors where we come as evangelists" constitute a danger in the mission field. It is this notion of "superiority" also which prevents a right understanding, and which notwithstanding the facts, insists on charges which, if established, would maintain the reputation for inferiority of the colored races. It is this reiterated claim to superiority that has hypnotized many persons amongst Eastern races into the belief that the European is, amongst other things, always a safe and learned critic even of their own beliefs and practices.

Raja Rammohan Roy was the first to take up the cause of his faith, divorcing it from the superstitious accretions which gather around all religions in the course of the ages. The same defense was made in recent times by that man of upstanding courage, Svami Vivekananda. Foreign criticism on Indian religion now tends in some quarters to greater comprehension. I say in some quarters; for even in quite recent years English books have been published which would be amazing, were one not aware of the deep ignorance and prejudice which exist on the subject. In one of these books the Hindu religion is described as "a mixture of nightmare nonsense and time-wasting rubbish fulfilling no useful purpose whatever: only adding to the general burden of existence borne by Humanity in its struggle for existence." In another it is said to be "a weltering chaos of terror, darkness, and uncertainty". It is a religion without the apprehension of a moral evolution, without definite commandments, without a religious sanction in the sphere of morals, without a moral code and without a God: such so-called God, as there is, being "a mixture of Beaches, Don Juan and Dick Turin." It is there further described as the most material and childishly superstitious animalism that ever masqueraded as idealism; not another path to God but a pit of abomination as far set from God as the mind of man can go; staggering the brain of a rational man; filling his mind with wild contempt for his species and which has only endured "because it has failed." Except for the purpose of fanatical polemic, one would assume that the endurance of a faith was in some measure the justification of it. It is still more wonderful to learn from this work (The Light of India written by Mr. Harold Begbie and published by the Christian Literature Society for India) that out of this weltering chaos of all that is ignominious, immoral and crassly superstitious, come forth men who (in the words of the author) "standing at prayer startle you by their likeness to the pictures of Christ -- eyes large, luminous and tranquil -- the whole face exquisite with meekness and majestic with spirit." One marvels how these perfect men arise from such a worthless and indeed putrescent source. This absurd picture was highly colored in a journalistic spirit and with a purpose. In other cases,

faulty criticism is due to supercilious ignorance. As another writer says (the italics are mine) "For an Englishman to get a plain statement of what Brahmanism really means is far from easy. The only wonder is that people who have to live on nine pence a week, who marry when they are ten years old, are prevented by caste life from rising out of what is often, if not always, a degraded state, have any religion at all." As the Bishop of Peterborough has recently said it is difficult for some to estimate worth in any other terms than g. s. d. It is to be hoped that all such snobbish materialism will be hindered from entrance into this country. These quotations reveal the depths of ignorance and prejudice which still exist. As we are however aware, all English criticism is not as ignorant and prejudiced as these, even though it be often marred by essential error. On the contrary there are an increasing number who appreciate and adopt, or appreciate if they cannot accept, Indian beliefs. Further than this, Eastern thought is having a marked influence on that of the West, though it is not often acknowledged. Many have still the notion that they have nothing to learn in any domain from this hemisphere. After all, what any one else says should not affect the independence of our own judgment. Let others say what they will. We should ourselves determine matters which concern us. The Indian people will do so when they free themselves from that hypnotic magic, which makes them often place blind reliance on the authority of foreigners, who, even when claiming to be scholars, are not always free from bias, religious or racial. Such counsel, though by no means unnecessary to-day, is happily becoming less needed than in the past.

There are, however, still many Indians, particularly those of my own generation, whose English Gurus and their teaching have made them captives. Their mind has been so dominated and molded to a Western manner of thinking (philosophical, religious, artistic, social and political) that they have scarcely any greater capacity to appreciate their own cultural inheritance than their teachers, be that capacity in any particular case more or less. Some of them care nothing for their Shastra. Others do not understand it. The class of whom I speak are, in fact, as I have said, the Manasaputra of the English in a strict sense of the term. The Indian who has lost his Indian soul must regain it if he would retain that independence in his thought and in the ordering of his life which is the mark of a man, that is of one who seeks Svarajya-siddhi. How can an imitator be on the same level as his original? Rather he must sit as a Cella at the latter's feet. Whilst we can all learn something from one another, yet some in this land have yet to learn that their cultural inheritance with all its defects (and none is without such) is yet a noble one; an equal in rank, (to say the least), with those great past civilizations which have molded the life and thought of the West. All this has been admitted by Indians who have discernment. Such value as my own remarks possess, is due to the fact that I can see and judge from without as an outsider, though (I will admit in one sense) interested observer -- interested because I have at heart Indian welfare and that of all others which, as the world now stands, is bound up with it.

As regards the Tantra Shastra in particular, greater ignorance prevailed and still exists. Its Vamacara practice however, seemed so peculiar, and its abuses were so talked of, that they captured attention to the exclusion of every thing else; the more particularly that this and the rest of the Shastra is hard to understand. Whilst the Shastra provides by its Acaras for all types from the lowest to the most advanced, its essential concepts, under whatever aspect they are manifested, and into whatever pattern they are woven, are (as Professor De La Vallee Poussion says of the Buddhist Tantra) of a metaphysical and subtle character. Indeed it is largely because of the subtlety of its principles, together with the difficulties which attend ritual exposition, that the study of the Tantras, notwithstanding the comparative simplicity of their Sanskrit, has been hitherto neglected by Western scholars. Possibly it was thought that the practices mentioned rendered any study of a system, in which they occurred, unnecessary. There was and still is some ground for the adverse criticism which has been passed on it. Nevertheless it was not a just appreciation of the Shastra as a whole, nor even an accurate judgment in respect of the particular ritual thus singled out for condemnation. Let those condemn this Shastra who will. That is their affair. But let them first study and understand it.

I have dealt with the subject of the Tantras in several papers. It is only necessary here to say that "the Tantra" as it is called was wrongly considered to be synonymous with the Shakta Tantras; that in respect of the latter the whole attention was given to the Vamacara ritual and to magic (Shatkarma); that this ritual, whatever may in truth be said against it, was not understood; that it was completely ignored that the Tantras contained a remarkable philosophic presentment of religious teaching, profoundly applied in a ritual of psychological worth; and that the Shastras were also a repertory of the alchemy, medicine, law, religion, art and so forth of their time. It was sufficient to mention the word "Tantra" and there was supposed to be the end of the matter.

I have often been asked why I had undertaken the study of the Tantra Shastra, and in some English (as opposed to Continental) quarters it has been suggested that my time and labor might be more worthily employed. One answer is this: Following the track of unmeasured abuse I have always found something good. The present case is no exception. I protest and have always protested against unjust aspersions upon the Civilization of India and its peoples. If there be what is blameworthy, accuracy requires that criticism should be reduced to its true proportions. Having been all my life a student of the world's religions and philosophies, I entered upon a particular study of this Shastra to discover for myself what it taught, and whether it was, as represented, a complete reversal of all other Hindu teaching with which I was acquainted. For it was said to be the cultivation or practice of gluttony, lust, and malevolence ("ferocity, lust, and mummery" as Brian Hodgson called it), which I knew the Indian Shastra, like all the other religious Scriptures of the world, strictly forbids.

I found that the Shastra was of high importance in the history of Indian religion. The Tantra Shastra or Agama is not, as some seem to suppose, a petty Shastra of no account; one, and an unimportant sample, of the multitudinous manifestations of religion in a country which swarms with every form of religious sect. It is on the contrary with Veda, Smriti and Purana one of the foremost important Shastras in India, governing, in various degrees and ways, the temple and household ritual of the whole of India to-day and for centuries past. Those who are so strenuously averse to it, by that very fact recognize and fear its influence. From a historical point of view alone, it is worthy of study as an important part of Indian Culture, whatever be its intrinsic worth. History cannot be written if we exclude from it what we do not personally like. As Terence grandly said: "We are men and nothing which man has done is alien to us". There are some things in some of the Tantras and a spirit which they manifest of which their student may not personally approve. But the cause of history is not to be influenced by personal predilections. It is so influenced in fact. There are some who have found in the Shastra a useful weapon of attack against Indian religion and its tendencies. Should one speak of the heights which Indian spiritual experience has reached, one might be told that the infamous depths to which it had descended in Tantra Shastra, the Pushtimarga, the Vaishnava Sahajiya and so forth were more certainly established. Did one praise the high morality to be found in Indian Shastra, it might be admitted that India was not altogether destitute of the light of goodness; but it might be asked, what of the darkness of the Tantra? And so on and so forth. Let us then grapple with and not elude the objection. There was of course something in all this. But such objectors and others had not the will (even if they had the capacity to understand) to give a true presentment of the teachings of the Shastra. But the interests of fairness require both. Over and above the fact that the Shastra is an historical fact, it possesses, in some respects, an intrinsic value which justifies its study. Thus it is the storehouse of Indian occultism. This occult side of the Tantras is of scientific importance, the more particularly having regard to the present revived interest in occultist study in the West. "New thought" as it is called and kindred movements are a form of Mantravidya. Vasikaranam is hypnotism, fascination. There is "Spiritualism" and "Powers" in the Tantras and so forth. For myself, however, the philosophical and religious aspect of the Scripture is more important still. The main question for the generality of men is not "Powers" (Siddhi). Indeed the study of occultism and its practice has its dangers; and the pursuit of these powers is considered an obstacle to the attainment of that true Siddhi which is the end of every Shastra. A subject of greater interest and value is the remarkable presentation of Vedantic knowledge which the Shakta Tantra in particular gives (I never properly understood the Vedanta until after I had studied the Tantras) as also the ritual by which it is sought to gain realization (Aparokshajñana). The importance of the Shakta Tantra may be summed up by the statement that it is a Sadhana Shastra of Advaitavada. I will develop this last matter in a future paper. I will only say now that the main question of the day everywhere is how to realize practically the truths of religion, whatever they be. This applies to all, whether Hindu, Mohammed or Christian. Mere philosophical speculation and talk will avail nothing beyond a clarification of intellect. But, that, we all know, is not enough. It is not what we speculate about but what we are, which counts. The fundamental question is, how to realize (Sakshatkara) religious teaching. This is the fruit of Sadhana alone, whether the form of that Sadhana be Christian, Hindu, Mohammed, Buddhist or what else. The chief Sadhana-Shastra for the orthodox Hindu is the Tantra Shastra or Agama in its varying schools. In this fact lies its chief significance, and for Hindus its practical importance. This and the Advaitavada on which the Shakta ritual rests is in my opinion the main reason why Shakta Darshana or doctrine is worthy of study.

The opinion which I had formed of the Shastra has been corroborated by several to whom I had introduced the matter. I should like to quote here the last letter I had only a month ago from an Indian friend, both Sanskritist and philosopher (a combination too rare). He says "they (the Tantras) have really thrown before me a flood of new light. So much so, that I really feel as if I have discovered a new world. Much of the mist and haziness has now been cleared away and I find in the Tantras not only a great and subtle philosophy but many of the missing links in the development of the different systems of Hindu philosophy which I could not discover before but which I have been seeking for, for some years past." These statements might perhaps lead some to think that the Shastra teaches something entirely, that is in every respect, new. As regards fundamental doctrines, the Tantra Shastra (for convenience I confine myself to the Shakta form) teaches much which is to be found in the Advaita Vedanta. Therefore those who think that they will find in the Shastra some fundamental truths concerning the world which are entirely new will be disillusioned. The observation does not apply to some doctrinal teaching, presentment, methods, and details, to which doubtless my friend's letter referred. He who has truly understood Indian Shastra as a whole will recognize, under variety of form and degree of spiritual advancement, the same substance by way of doctrine.

Whilst the Shakta Tantra recognizes, with the four Vedas, the Agamas and Nigaimas, it is now based, as are all other truly Indian Shastras on Veda. Veda, in the sense of Knowledge, is ultimately Spiritual Experience, namely Cit which Brahman is, and in the one partless infinite Ocean of Which the world, as a limited stress in Consciousness arises. So it is said of the Devi in the Commentary on the Trishati:

Vedantamahavakya-janya

sakshatkara-rupa-brahmavidya

She is Brahman-knowledge (Brahmavidya) in the form of direct realization produced by the Vedantic great saying

(Mahavakya) -- that is "Tat tvam asi" ("That thou art") and all kindred sayings, So'ham, ("He I am"), Brahmasmi ("I am Brahman") and so forth. In other words, Self-knowledge is self-luminous and fundamental and the basis of all other knowledge. Owing to its transcendency it is beyond both prover and proof. It is self-realized (Svanubhava). But Shruti is the source from which this knowledge arises, as Samkara says, by removing (as also to some extent reason may do) false notions concerning it. It reveals by removing the superincumbent mass of human error. Again, Veda in a primary sense is the world as Idea in the Cosmic Mind of the creating Brahman and includes all forms of knowledge. Thus it is eternal, arising with and as the Samskaras at the beginning of every creation. This is the Vedamurtibrahman. Veda in the secondary sense is the various partial revelations relating to Tattva, Brahman or God, and Dharma, morality, made at different times and places to the several Rishis which are embodied in the four Vedas, Rig, Yajus, Sama and Atharva. Veda is not coextensive therefore with the four Vedas. But are these, even if they be regarded as the "earliest," the only (to use an English term) revelations? Revelation (Akasha-vani) never ceases. When and wherever there is a true Rishi or Seer there is Revelation. And in this sense the Tantra Shastra or Agama claims to be a Revelation. The Shabdabrahmamurti is Nigamadishastramaya: it being said that Agama is the Paramatma of that Murti, the four Vedas with their Angas are its Jivatma; the six philosophies its Indriyas; the Puranas and Upapuranas its gross body; Smriti its hands and other limbs and all, "other Shastras are the hairs of its body. In the Heart-lotus are the fifty Tejomayi Matrika. In the pericarp are the Agamas glittering like millions of suns and moons which are Sarvadharmamaya, Brahmajñanamaya, Sarvasiddhimaya, and Murtiman. These were revealed to the Rishis. In fact all Shastras are said to constitute one great many-millioned collection (Shatakoti Samhita) each being particular manifestations to man of the one, essential Veda. From this follows the belief that they do not contradict, but are in agreement with, one another; for Truth is one whatever be the degree in which it is received, or the form in which the Seers (Rishis) promulgated it to those whose spiritual sight has not strength enough to discern it directly and for themselves. But how, according to Indian notions, can that which is put forward as a Revelation be shown to be such? The answer is that of Ayurveda. A medicine is a good one if it cures. In the same way a Shastra is truly such if the Siddhi which it claims to give is gained as the fruit of the practice of its injunctions, according to the competency and under the conditions prescribed. The principle is a practical and widely adopted one. The tree must be judged by its fruit. This principle may, if applied to the general life of to-day, lead to an adverse judgment on some Tantrik practices. If so, let it be. It is, however, an error to suppose that even such practices as have been condemned, claim to rest on any other basis than Veda. It is by the learned in Tantra Shastra said to be ignorance (Avidya) to see a difference between Agama and Veda.

Ignorant notions prevail on the subject of the relation of the Tantras to Veda and the Vedas. I read some years ago in a Bengali book by a Brahmo author that "the difference was that between Hell and Heaven". Now on what is such a condemnatory comparison based? It is safe to challenge production of the proof of such an assertion. Let us examine what the Shakta Tantra (to which allusion was made) teaches.

In the first place "Hell" recognizes "Heaven," for the Shakta Tantra, as I have said, acknowledges the authority of Veda. All Indian Shastras do that. If they did not, they would not be Indian Shastra. The passages on this point are so numerous, and the point itself is so plain that I will only cite a few.

Kularnava Tantra says (II. 85,140,141) that Kuladharmas is based on and inspired by the Truth of Veda. Tasmad vedatmakam shastram viddhi kaulatmakam priye. In the same place Shiva cites passages from Shruti in support of His doctrine. The Prapañcasara and other Tantras cite Vaidika Mahavakya and Mantras; and as Mantras are a part of Veda, therefore, Meru Tantra says that Tantra is part of Veda (Pranatoshini 70). Niruttara Tantra calls Tantra the Fifth Veda and Kulacara is named the fifth Ashrama (ib.); that is it follows all others. Matsyauktamahatantra (XIII) says that the disciple must be pure of soul (Shuddhatma) and a knower of Veda. He who is devoid of Vaidika-kriya (Vedakriya-vivarjita) is disqualified (Maharudrayamala, I Khanda, Ch. 15; II Khanda, Ch. 2; Pranatoshini 108). Gandharva Tantra (Ch. 2, Pranatoshini 6) says that the Tantrik Sadhaka must be a believer in Veda (Astika), ever attached to Brahman, ever speaking of Brahman, living in Brahman and taking shelter with Brahman; which, by the way, is a queer demand to make of those, the supposed object of whose rites is mere debauchery. The Kularnava says that there is no knowledge higher than that of Veda and no doctrine equal to Kaula (III. 113, Nahivedadhika vidya na kaula-samadashanam). Here a distinction is drawn between Veda which is Vidya and the Kaula teaching which he calls Darshana. See also Mahanirvana Tantra (I. 18, 19; II. 8-15). In Mahanirvana Tantra (III. 72) the Mantra Om Saccidekam Brahma is given and in the Prapañcasara (Ch. XXIX) this (what it calls) "Secret of the Vedas" is explained.

That the Shakta Tantra claims to be based on Veda admits of no doubt. In fact Kulluka Bhatta, the celebrated commentator on Manu, says that Shruti is of two kinds, Vaidik and Tantrik.

Vaidiki tantrams caviar dvividha shrutih kirtita

It is of course the fact that different sects bandy words upon the point whether they in fact truly interpret Shruti and follow practice conformable to it. Statements are made by opposing schools that certain Shastras are contrary to Shruti even though they profess to be based thereon. So a citation by Bhaskararaya in the Commentary to V. 76 of the Lalita sahasranama speaks

of some Tantras as "opposed to Veda" (Vedaviruddhani). The Vayu Samhita says: "Shaivagama is twofold, that which is based on Shruti and that which is not. The former is composed of the essence of Shruti. Shrauta is Svatantra and Itara" (v. ante, p. 19). Shaivagamo'pi dvididhah, shrauto' shrautash ca samsmritah Srutisaramayah shrautah svantrastvitaro matah.

So again the Bhagavata or Pancaratra Agama has been said to be non-Vaidik. This matter has been discussed by Samkaracarya and Ramanuja following Yamunacarya.

We must in all cases distinguish between what a school says of itself and what others say of it. In Christianity both Catholicism and Protestantism claim to be based on the Bible and each alleges that the other is a wrong interpretation of it. Each again of the numerous Protestant sects says the same thing of the others.

But is Shakta Tantra contrary to Veda in fact? Let us shortly survey the main points in its doctrine. It teaches that Paramatma Nirguna Shiva is Saccidananda (Prapañcasara, Ch. XXIX: Kularnava, Ch. I. vv. 6-7). Kularnava says "Shiva is the impartite Supreme Brahman, the All-knowing (Sarvajña) Creator of all. He is the Stainless One and the Lord of all. He is One without a second (Advaya). He is Light itself. He changes not, and is without beginning or end. He is attributeless and above the highest. He is Saccidananda" (I. 6-7. And see the Dhyana and Pañcaratnastotra in Mahanirvana Tantra III. 50, 59-63). Brahman is Saccidananda, Eternal (Nitya), Changeless (Nirvikara), Partless (Nishkala), Untouched by Maya (Nirmala), Attributeless (Nirguna), Formless (Arupa), Imperishable (Akshara), All-spreading like space (Vyomasannibha), Self-illuminating (Svyamjyotih), Reality (Tattva) which is beyond mind and speech and is to be approached through spiritual feeling alone (Bhavanagamyā). Kularnava I, 6-8; III. 92, 93; IX. 7). (Mahanirvana III. 50, 59-63, 67-68, 74; III. 12). In His aspect as the Lord (Ishvara) of all, He is the All-knower (Sarvajña), Lord of all: whose Body is pure Sattva (Shuddhasattvamaya), the Soul of the universe (Vishvatma). (Mahanirvana I. 61, III. 68). Such definitions simply re-affirm the teaching of Veda. Brahman is That which pervades without limit the Universe (Prapañcasara XXIX; Mahanirvana III. 33-35) as oil the sesamum seed (Sharada Tilaka I, Shaktanandatarangini I, Pranatoshini 13). This Brahman has twofold aspect as Parabrahman (Nirguna, Nishkala) and Shabda-brahman (Saguna, Sakala). Sammohana, a highly interesting Tantra, says (Ch. I) that Kubjika is of twofold aspect, namely, Nishkala when She is Candra-vaktra, and Sakala when called Paramukhi. So too is Guhyakali who as the first is Ekavaktra mahapashupatishi advaitabhavasampanna and as the second Dashavaktra. So the Kularnava says Shabda-brahmaparamabrahmabhedenā Brahmano dvaividyam uktam (Khanda V, Ullasa 1). The same Tantra says that Sadashiva is without the bonds (of Maya) and Jiva is with them (Pashabadho bhavej jivah pashamuktah Sadashivahi, IX. 42) upon which the author of the Pranatoshini, citing this passage says "thus the identity of Jiva and Shiva is shown (iti Shivajivayoraikyam uktam). The Shakta Tantra is thus Advaitavada: for it proclaims that Paramatma and Jivatma are one. So it affirms the "grand words" (Mahavakya) of Veda -- "Tat tvam asi," "So'ham," "Brahmasmi" (Mahanirvana VIII. 264-265, V. 105); Prapañcasara II; identifying Hrim with Kundali and Hangsah and then with So'ham. Yah Suksmah So'ham ib. XXIV, Jñanarṇava Tantra XXI. 10). As to Brahmasmi, see Kularnava IX. 32 and ib. 41. So'hambhavana pujayet. The Mantra "all this is surely Brahman (Sarvam khalvidam Brahma)" is according to the Mahanirvana (VII. 98) the end and aim of Tantrika Kulacara, the realization of which saying the Prapañcasara Tantra describes as the fifth or Supreme State (Ch. XIX); for the identity of Jivatma and Paramatma is Liberation which the Vedantasara defines to be Jivabrahmanoraikyam). Kularnava refers to the Advaita of which Shiva speaks (Advaitantu shivenoktam I. 108. See also Mahanirvana II. 33-34; I II. 33-35; 50-64; Prapañcasara II, XI X, XXIX). Gandharva Tantra says that the Sadhaka must be a nondualist (Dvaitahina). (See Ch. II. ib. Pranatoshini 108; Maharudrapamala I Khanda, Ch. 15; II Khanda, Ch. 2). It is useless to multiply quotations on this point of which there is no end. In fact that particular form of worship which has earned the Shakta Tantras ill-fame claims to be a practical application of Advaitavada. The Sammohana Tantra (Ch. VIII) gives high praise to the philosopher Samkaracarya saying that He was an incarnation of Shiva for the destruction of Buddhism. Kaulacarya is said to properly follow a full knowledge of Vedantic doctrine. Shiva in the Kularnava (I. 110) says "some desire dualism (Dvaita), others nondualism (Advaita) but my truth is beyond both (Dvaitadvaitavarjita)".

Advaitavedanta is the whole day and life of the Shakta Sadhaka. On waking at dawn (Brahmamuhurta) he sits on his bed and meditates "I am the Devi and none other. I am Brahman who is beyond all grief. I am a form of Saccidananda whose true nature is eternal Liberation."

Aham Devi na canpo'smi, Brahmaivaham na sokabhak,

Saccidanandarupo'ham nitpamuktasvabhavavan.

At noon again seated in Pujasana at time of Bhutasuddhi he meditates on the dissolution of the Tattvas in Paramatma. Seeing no difference between Paramatma and Jivatma he affirms Sa'ham "I am She". Again in the evening after ritual duties he affirms himself to be the Akhilatma and Saccidananda, and having so thought he sleeps. Similarly (I may here interpose) in the Buddhist Tantra -- the Sadhaka on rising in the state of Devadeha (hLayi-sku) imagines that the double drums are sounding in the heavens proclaiming the Mantras of the 24 Viras (dPahvo), and regards all things around him as constituting

the Mandala of himself as Buddha Vajrasattva. When about to sleep he again imagines his body to be that of Buddha Vajrasattva and then merges himself into the tranquil state of the Void (Shunyata).

Gandharva Tantra says: "Having saluted the Guru as directed and thought 'So'ham' the wise Sadhaka, the performer of the rite should ponder the unity of Jiva and Brahman."

Gurun natva vidhanena so'ham iti porudhasah

Aikyam sambhavayed dhiman jivasya Brahmano'pi ca.

Kali Tantra says: "Having meditated in this way, a Sadhaka should worship Devi as his own Atma, thinking I am Brahman." Kujjika Tantra says (Devi is called Kujjika because She is Kundali): "A Sadhaka should meditate on his own Self as one and the same with Her (Taya sahitam atmanam ekibhutam vicintayet)" and so on.

The cardinal doctrine of these Shakta Tantras is that of Shakti whether in its Svarupa (that is, as It is in Itself) as Cidrupini, the Paraprakriti of Paramatma (Mahanirvana IV. 10) or as Maya and Prakriti (see as to the latter the great Hymn to Prakriti in Prapañcasara, Ch. XI). Shakti as the Kujjika Tantra says (Ch. I) is Consciousness (Caitanyarupini) and Bliss (Anandarupini). She is at the same time support of (Gunashraya) and composed of the Gunas (Gunamayi). Maya is however explained from the standpoint of Sadhana, the Tantra Shastra being a Sadhana Shastra, and not according to the Mayavada, that is, transcendental standpoint, of Samkara.

What is there in the great Devi Sukta of the Rigveda (Mandala X, Sukta 125) which the Shakta Tantra does not teach? The Rishi of this revelation was a woman, the daughter of Rishi Ambhrina. It was fitting that a woman should proclaim the Divine Motherhood. Her Hymn says: "I am the Sovereign Queen the Treasury of all treasures; the chief of all objects of worship whose all-pervading Self all Devatas manifest; whose birthplace is in the midst of the causal waters; who breathing forth gives form to all created worlds and yet extends beyond them, so vast am I in greatness." (The full Hymn is translated in the French Edition of A. and E. Avalon's Hymns to the Goddess, Bossard, Paris.)

It is useless to cite quotations to show that the Shakta Tantra accepts the doctrine of Karma which as the Kularnava (IX. 125) says Jiva cannot give up until he renounces the fruit of it; an infinite number of universes, and their transitoriness (Mahanirvana III. 7), the plurality of worlds, Heaven and Hell, the seven Lokas, the Devas and Devis, who as the Kulacudamani Nigama (following the Devi-Sukta) says (Ch. I) are but parts of the great Shakti (Shaktanandarangim III). Being Advaitavada, Moksha the state of Liberation and so forth is Paramatma. It accepts Smriti and Puranas; the Mahanirvana and other Tantras saying that they are the governing Shastras of the Treta and Dvapara ages respectively, as Tantra is that of the Kaliyuga. So the Tarapradipa (Ch. I) says that in the Kaliyuga, the Tantrika and not the Vaidika Dharma is to be followed. It is said that in Satya, Veda was undivided. In Dvapara, Krishnadvaipayana separated it into four parts. In Satya, Vaidika Upasana was Pradhana, that is, prevailed; Sadhakas worshipping Indra for wealth, children and the like; though Nishkama Rishis adored the Sarvashaktiman (Devisukta is Advaitasiddhipurna). In Treta, worship according to Smriti prevailed. It was then, that Vashishta is said to have done Sadhana of Brahmavidya according to Cinacarakrama. Though in the Dvapara there was both Smriti and Purana, rites were generally performed according to the Puranas. There was also then, as always, worshippers of the Purnashaktimahavidya. At the end of Dvapara and beginning of the Kali age the Tantra Shastra was taught to men. Then the ten Samskaras, Shraddha and Antyeshtikriya were, as they are now, performed according to the Vaidikadharmas: Ashramacara according to Dayabhaga and other Smriti Texts; Vratas according to Purana; Disha and Upasana of Brahman with Shakti, and various kinds of Yoga Sadhana, according to the Agama which is divided into three parts Tantra (Sattvaguna), Yamala (Rajoguna), and Damara (Tamoguna). There were 64 Tantras for each of the three divisions Ashvkranta, Rathakranta, Vishnukranta.

Such is the Tantrik tradition concerning the Ages and their appropriate Scriptures. Whether this tradition has any historical basis still awaits inquiry, which is rendered difficult by the fact that many Tantras have been lost and others destroyed by those inimical to them. It is sufficient for my purpose to merely state what is the belief: that purpose being to show that the Tantra Shastra recognizes, and claims not to be in conflict with Veda or any other recognized Shastra. It accepts the six Philosophies (Darshana) which Shiva says are the six limbs of Kula and parts of his body, saying that he who severs them severs His limbs (Kularnava II. 84, 84-85). The meaning of this is that the Six Philosophies and the Six Minds, as all else, are parts of His body. It accepts the Shabda doctrine of Mimamsa subject to certain modifications to meet its doctrine of Shakti. It, in common with the Shaiva Tantra, accepts the doctrine of the 36 Tattvas, and Shadadhva (Tattva, Kala, Bhuvana, Varna, Pada, Mantra; see my Garland of Letters). This is an elaboration in detail which explains the origin of the Purusha and Prakriti Tattvas of the Samkhya. These are shown to be twin facets of the One, and the "development" of Shakti into Purusha-Prakriti Tattva is shown. These Tattvas include the ordinary 24 Prakriti with it, Gunas to Prithivi. It accepts the doctrine of three bodies (causal, subtle, gross) and the three states (Jagrat, Svapna Sushupti) in their individual and collective aspects. It

follows the mode of evolution (Parinama) of Samkhya in so far as the development of Jiva is concerned, as also an Abhasa, in the nature of Vivartta, "from Fire to Fire" in the Pure Creation. Its exposition of the body includes the five Pranas, the seven Dhatus, the Doshas (Vayu, Pitta, Kapha) and so forth (Prapañcasara II). On the ritual side it contains the commonly accepted ritual of present-day Hinduism; Mantra, Yantra, Pratima, Linga, Shalagrama, Nyasa, Japa, Puja, Stotra, Kavaca, Dhyana and so forth, as well 'as the Vaidik rites which are the ten Samskaras, Homa and the like. Most of the commonly accepted ritual of the day is Tantrik. It accepts Yoga in all its forms Mantra, Hatha, Laya, Jñana; and is in particular distinguished by its practice of Laya or Kundali-yoga and other Hatha processes.

Therefore not only is the authority of the Veda acknowledged along with the Agamas, Nigamas and Tantras but there is not a single doctrine or practice, amongst those hitherto mentioned, which is either not generally held, or which has not the adherence of large numbers of Indian worshippers. It accepts all the notions common to Hinduism as a whole. Nor is there a single doctrine previously mentioned which is contrary to Veda, that is on the assumption of the truth of Advaitavada. For of course it is open to Dualists and Vishishtadvaitins to say that its Monistic interpretation of Vedanta is not a true exposition of Vaidik truth. No Shakta will however say that. Subject to this, I do not know of anything which it omits and should have included, or states contrary to the tenor of Vaidik doctrine. If there be anything I shall be obliged, as a student of the Shastra, to any one who will call my attention to it. The Shastra has not, therefore, up to this point shown itself as a "Hell" in opposition to the Vaidik "Heaven."

But it may said that I have omitted the main thing which gives it its bad and un-Vaidik character, namely the ill-famed Pañcatattva or worship with meat, wine, fish, grain and woman. I have also omitted the magic to be found in some of the Shastras.

The latter may be first shortly dealt with. Magic is not peculiar to the Tantras. It is to be found in plenty in the Atharvaveda. In fact the definition of Abhicara is "the Karma described in the Tantras and Atharvaveda." Abhicara is magical process with intent to destroy or injure. It is Himsa-karma, or act injurious to others. There is nothing anti-Vaidik then in Magic. I may, however, here also point out that there is nothing wrong in Magic (Shatkarma) per se. As with so many other things it is the use or abuse of it which makes it right or wrong. If a man kills, by Marana Karma, a rival in his business to get rid of competition and to succeed to his clients' custom, he commits a very grave sin -- one of the most grievous of sins. Suppose, however, that a man saw a tiger stalking a child, or a dacoit about to slay it for its golden ornament; his killing of the tiger or dacoit would, if necessary for the safety of the child, be a justifiable act. Magic is, however, likely to be abused and has in fact been abused by some of the Tantriks. I think this is the most serious charge established against them. For evil magic which proceeds from malevolence is a greater crime than any abuse of natural appetite. But in this, as in other matters, we must distinguish between what the Shastra says and the practices of its followers. The injunction laid upon the Sadhaka is that he "should do good to other beings as if they were his own self". Atmavat sarvabhutebhyo hitam kuryat kuleshvari (Kularnava Tantra XII. 63). In the Kularnava Samhita (a different and far inferior work to the Tantra of that name) Shiva recites some horrible rites with the flesh of rat and bat; with the soiled linen of a Candala woman, with the shroud of a corpse, and so forth; and then he says, "My heart trembles (hridayam kampate mama), my limbs tremble (gatrani mama kampante), my mouth is dry, Oh Parvati! (mukham shushyate Parvati!) Oh gentle one, my mind is all disturbed (kshobho me jayate bhadre). What more shall I say? Conceal it (Na vaktavyam) conceal it, conceal it." He then says: "In the Kali age Sadhakas are generally greedy of money. Having done greatly sinful acts they destroy living beings. For them there is neither Guru nor Rudra, nor Thee nor Sadhika. My dear life! they are ready to do acts for the destruction of men. Therefore it is wrong to reveal these matters, oh Devi. I have told Thee out of affection for Thee, being greatly pleased by Thy kisses and embrace. But it should be as carefully concealed by Thee, as thine own secret body. Oh Parvati! all this is greatly sinful and a very bad Yoga. (Mahapatakayuktam tat kuyogo'yam udahritah.)"

Kalikale sadhakastu prapasho dhanalolupah

Mahakrityam vidhayaiva praninam badhabhaginah

Na gurur napi Rudro va naiva tvam naiva sadhika

Mahapranivinashaya samarthah pranavallabhe

Etat prakashanam devi dosaya parikalpyate

Snehena tava deveshi chumbanalinganaistatha

Santusyaiva maya devi sarvam etat prakashitam

Tvapa gopyam prayatnena svayoniriva Parvati

Mahapataka-yuktam tat kuyogo'yam udahritah.

"None of these things are ever to be done by Thee, Oh Daughter of the Mountain (Sarvatha naiva kartavyastvaya Parvatanandini). Whoever does so, incurs the sin of destroying Me. I destroy all such, as does fire, dry grass. Of a surety such incur the sin of slaying a Brahmana. All such incur the sin of slaying a Brahmana."

Sarvatha naiva kartavya stvaya Parvatanandini

Badhabhak mama deveshi krityamimam samacaret

Tasya sarvam haramyashu vahnih shuskatrinam yatha

Avyartham brahmahatyanca brahmahatyam savindati.

When therefore we condemn the sin of evil magic it is necessary to remember both such teaching as is contained in this quotation, and the practice of those of good life who follow the Shastra. To do so is to be both fair and accurate. There is nothing, in any event, in the point that the magical contents of the Tantra Shastra make it contrary to Veda. Those who bring such a charge must also prefer it against the Atharvaveda.

As a matter of fact Magic is common to all early religions. It has been practiced, though condemned, in Christian Europe. It is not necessary to go back to the old witchcraft trials. There are some who protest against its recrudescence to-day. It has been well observed that there are two significant facts about occultism, namely its catholicity (it is to be found in all lands and ages) and its amazing power of recuperation after it has been supposed to have been disproved as mere "superstition". Even some quarter of a century ago (I am quoting from the same author) there were probably not a score of people in London (and those kept their preoccupation to themselves) who had any interest at all in the subject except from a purely antiquarian standpoint. Magic was dismissed by practically all educated men as something too evidently foolish and nonsensical to deserve attention or inquiry. In recent years the position has been reversed in the West, and complaint is again made of the revival of witchcraft and occultism to-day. The reason of this is that modern scientific investigation has established the objectivity of some leading phenomena of occultism. For instance a little more than a century or so ago, it was still believed that a person could inflict physical injury on another by means other than physical. And this is what is to be found in that portion of the Tantra Shastras which deal with the Shatkarma. Witches confessed to having committed this crime and were punished therefor. At a later date the witchcraft trials were held to be evidence of the superstition both of the accused and accusers. Yet psychology now allows the principle that Thought is itself a Force, and that by Thought alone, properly directed, without any known physical means the thought of another, and hence his whole condition, can be affected. By physical means I mean direct physical means, for occultism may, and does avail itself of physical means to stimulate and intensify the force and direction of thought. This is the meaning of the magic rituals which have been so much ridiculed. Why is black the color of Marana Karma? Because that color incites and maintains and emphasizes the will to kill. So Hypnotism (Vashikaranam), as an instance of the exercise of the Power of Thought, makes use of gestures, rotatory instruments and so forth.

The Magician having a firm faith in his (or her) power (for faith in occultism as in Religion is essential) surrounds himself with every incentive to concentrated, prolonged and (in malevolent magic), malevolent thought. A figure or other object such as part of the clothing, hair, nails and so forth of the victim represents the person to be attacked by magic. This serves as the 'immediate object' on which the magical thought is expended. The Magician is helped by this and similar aids to a state of fixed and malignant attention which is rendered intense by action taken on the substituted object. It is not of course the injuries done to this object which are the direct cause of injury to the person attacked, but the thought of the magician of which these injuries are a materialization. There is thus present the circumstances which a modern psychologist would demand for success in a telepathic experiment. As the witchcraft trials show, the victim is first affected in thought and then in body by the malignant thought thus focused upon him. Sometimes no apparent means are employed, as in a case reported to me by a friend of mine as occurring in a Bombay Hotel when a man well-known in India for his "Powers" (Siddhi) drove away, by the power of his thought only, a party of persons sitting at a neighboring table whose presence was greatly distasteful to one of his companions. This, if the effect of magical power, was an instance of what the Tantras call Ucchatana. In all cases the general principle is the same, namely the setting in motion and direction of powerful thought by appropriate means.

This is the view of those who give what may be called a psychological explanation of these phenomena. These would hold that the magical symbolisms are without inherent force but work according to race and individual characteristics on the mind

which does the rest. Others believe that there is an inherent power in Symbolism itself, that the "Symbol" is not merely such but an actual expression of, and instrument by which, certain occult laws are brought into play. In other words the power of "Symbolism" derives not merely from the effect which it may have on particular minds likely to be affected by it but from itself as a law external to human thought. Some again (and Indian magicians amongst others) believe in the presence and aid of discarnate personalities (such as the unclean Pishacas) given in the carrying out of occult operations. Similarly it is commonly held by some that where so-called "spiritualistic" phenomena are real and not fraudulent (as they sometimes are) the action is not that of the dead but of Infernal Spirits simulating them and misleading men to their ruin. Occultism in the sense of a belief in, and claim to be able to use, a certain range of forces which may be called preternatural, has the adherence not only of savage and barbarous people (who always believe in it) but also of an increasing number of "civilized" Londoners, Berliners, Americans, Parisians and other Western peoples. They differ in all else but they are united in this. Even what most would regard as downright superstition still abundantly flourishes in the West. Witness the hundreds of thousands of "touch-wood" figures and the like sent to the troops in the recent war, the horror of sitting 13 to a table, and so on. In fact, from the earliest ages, magic has gone hand-in-hand with religion, and if for short periods the former has been thought to be dead it always rises again. Is this, as some say, the mark of the inherent silly credulity of mankind, or does the fact show that there is something in the claims which occultism has made in all ages P India (I do not speak of the English-educated community which shares in the rise and fall of English opinion) has always believed in occultism and some of the Tantra Shastras are repertoires of its ritual. Magic and superstition proper, exist in this country but are also to be found in the West. The same remark applies to every depreciatory criticism passed upon the Indian people. Some have thought that occultism is the sign both of savagery and barbarism on the one hand and of decadent civilization on the other. In India it has always existed and still exists. It has been well said that there is but one mental attitude impossible to the educated man, namely blank incredulity with regard to the whole subject. There has been, and is, a change of attitude due to an increase of psychological knowledge and scientific investigation into objective facts. Certain reconciliations have been suggested, bringing together the ancient beliefs, which sometimes exist in crude and ignorant forms. These reconciliations may be regarded as insufficiently borne out by the evidence. On the other hand a proposed reconciliation may be accepted as one that on the whole seems to meet the claims made by the occultist on one side and the scientific psychologist on the other. But in the present state of knowledge it is no longer possible to reject both claims as evidently absurd. Men of approved scientific position have, notwithstanding the ridicule and scientific bigotry to which they have been exposed, considered the facts to be worthy of their investigation. And on the psychological side successive and continuous discoveries are being made which corroborate ancient beliefs in substance, though they are not always in consonance with the mode in which those beliefs were expressed. We must face the fact that (with Religion) Occultism is in some form or another a widely diffused belief of humanity. All however will be agreed in holding that malevolent Magic is a great Sin. In leaving the subject of Magic I may here add that modern psychology and its data afford remarkable corroboration of some other Indian beliefs such as that Thought is a Force, and that its operation is in a field of Consciousness which is wider than that of which the mind is ordinarily aware. We may note also the aid which is derived from the establishment of dual and multiple personalities in understanding how it may be possible that in one unity there may be yet varying aspects.

The second charge is the alleged Avidik character of the secret Pañcatattva Sadhana, with wine, flesh and women, its alleged immorality of principle, and the evil lives of those who practice it. I am not in the present paper dealing in full with this subject; not that I intend by any means to shirk it; but it is more appropriately the subject of consideration in future Chapters on the subject of Shakta Tantrik Sadhana of which it forms a part. What I wish to say now is only this: We must distinguish in the first place between a principle and its application. A principle may be perfectly right and sound and yet a supposed application may not be an application in fact; or if there be an application, the latter may violate some other moral or physical law, or be dangerous and inexpedient as leading to abuse. I will show later that the principle involved is one which is claimed to be in conformity with Vaidik truth, and to be in fact recognized in varying forms by all classes of Hindus. Some do so dualistically. The Sadhana of the Shakta Tantra is, whether right or wrong, an application of the principles of Advaitavada and in its full form should not, it is said, be entered upon until after Vedantic principles have been mastered. For this reason Kauladharna has been called the fifth Ashrama. Secondly I wish to point out that this ritual with wine and meat is not as some suppose a new thing, something introduced by the Shakta Tantriks. On the contrary it is very old and has sanction in Vaidik practice as will appear from the authorities cited in the Appendix to this Chapter. So much is this so, that a Tantrik Sadhu discussing the matter with a Bengali friend of mine said of himself, as a follower of this ritual, that he was a Hindu and that those who were opposed to it were Jainas. What he meant, and what seems to be the fact, is that the present-day general prohibition against the use of wine, and the generally prevalent avoidance, or limitation of an animal diet, are due to the influence of Jainism and Buddhism which arose after, and in opposition to, Vaidik usage. Their influence is most marked of course in Vaishnavism but has not been without effect elsewhere. When we examine ancient Vaidik usage we find that meat, fish and Mudra (the latter in the form of Purodasha) were consumed, and intoxicating liquor (in the form of Soma) was drunk, in the Vaidik Yajñas. We also discover some Vaidik rites in which there was Maithuna. This I have dealt with in my article on "Shakti and Shakta".

The above-mentioned facts show in my opinion that there is ground for the doctrine of the Tantrikas that it is a mark of ignorance (Avidya) to sever Veda and Tantra. My conclusion is not however a counsel to follow this or any other particular form of ritual. I am only concerned to state the facts. I may, however, here add two observations.

From an outside point of view (for I do not here deal with the subject otherwise) we must consider the age in which a particular Shastra was produced and consequently the conditions of the time, the then state of society, its moral and spiritual development and so forth. To understand some rites in the past history of this and other countries one must seek, in lieu of surface explanations, their occult significance in the history of the human race; and the mind must cast itself back into the ages whence it has emerged, by the aid of those traces it still bears in the depths of its being of that which outwardly expressed itself in ancient custom.

Take for instance the rite of human sacrifice which the Kalikalpalata says that the Raja alone may perform (Raja naravalim dadayenna yo'pi parameshvari) but in which, as the Tantrasara states, no Brahmana may participate (Brahmananam naravalidane nadhikarah). Such an animal sacrifice is not peculiarly "Tantrik" but an instance of the survival of a rite widely spread in the ancient world; older than the day when Jehovah bade Abraham sacrifice his son (Gen. XXII) and that on which Sunasshepa (Aitareya Brahmana VII, 3) like Isaac was released. Reference, it is true, is made to this sacrifice in the Shastras, but save as some rare exception (I myself judged a case in Court some years ago) it does not exist to-day and the vast mass of men do not wish to see it revived. The Cakra ritual similarly is either disappearing or becoming in spirit transformed where there had been abuse.

What is of primary value in the Tantra Shastra are certain principles with which I have dealt elsewhere, and with which I deal again in part in this and the following lectures. The application of these principles in ritual is a question of form. All form is a passing thing. In the shape of ritual its validity is limited to place and time. As so limited, it will continue so long as it serves a useful purpose and meets the needs of the age, and the degree of its spiritual advancement, or that of any particular body of men who practice it; otherwise it will disappear, whilst the foundations of Vedanta on which it rests may remain. In the same way it is said that we ourselves come and go with our merits and demerits, but that the Spirit ever abides beyond both good and evil.

NOTE TO CHAPTER IV

The following note as to Tantra Shastra and Veda was kindly prepared for me at my request by Sj. Braja Lal Mukherji, M.A.:

My purpose in this paper is not to give to the public any pre-conceived opinion, but is simply to put together certain facts which will enable it to form a correct opinion on the subject.

These facts have been collected from sources as to the authenticity of which there is no doubt. There is no dispute that most of these works disclose the state of Vaidik society prior to the 6th century s.c. and that at the time when the said works were composed the Vaidik rituals were being observed and performed. Certain elements which have been assumed to be non-Vaidik, appear in the said works or at least in many of them, and they have been summarily disposed of by some scholars as supplementary (Parishishta), or interpolations (Prakshipta). The theory that these portions are interpolations is based on the assumption that the said elements are non-Vaidik or post-Vaidik and also on the assumption that at the times when the said works were composed, the Anushtupchhandah was not known; and that therefore, those portions of the said works which appear in Anushtub, must be later interpolations. We need not go into the propriety of these assumptions in this paper; but suffice it to say, that the first assumption simply begs the question, and the second one is not of any importance in connection with the subject of this paper; inasmuch as, the statements made in the Anushtub portions are corroborated by earlier authorities as to whose antiquity there is no question, and in any case, the fact that the statements have been made are proof of earlier usage or custom.

Vaidik sacrifices are divided into three classes: (1) Pakayajñas, (2) Haviryajñas and (3) Soma sacrifices; and there are subdivisions under each of the said classes. The Soma sacrifices are classed under three heads according to the number of days required for performance, viz., Ekaha, Ahina and Satra. Ekaha sacrifices are those which are performed in one day by three Savanas, exactly as in the Jagaddhatri Puja; Ahina sacrifices are performed from two to eleven days and Satras are performed during a long period, the minimum number of days required being thirteen and the maximum being a thousand years. The twelve-day sacrifices are arranged as a separate class. The principal Somayajñas are (1) Agnishtoma, (2) Atyagnishtoma, (3) Ukthyah, (4) Shodashi, (5) Vajapeyah, (6) Atiratrah, (7) Aptoryama. The Ishtis or Haviryajñas are also principally seven in number, namely, (1) Agnyadheyam, (2) Agnihotram, (3) Darsha-paurnameasa, (4) Caturmasyam, (5) Agrayaneshti, (6) Nirudhapashubandha, and (7) Sautramani. The Pakayajñas are also seven in number, namely, (1) Astaka, (2) Parvanam, (3) Shraddham, (4) Shrivani, (5) Agrahayani, (6) Caitri, and (7) Ashvayuji. The last seven are to be performed with the help of the Grihya fire and are described in the Grihya works. The others are described in the Shrauta works.

Whatever be the differences among these Yajñas in regard to the number of stomas or stotras and the Samans to be sung and the Kapalas, Grahās, or the number and nature of sacrifices or as to other particulars, there are some ideas which prevail in all of them. All Yajñas are based on the idea that Mithunikaarana leads to spiritual happiness. Sexual intercourse is Agnihotra

(S.B. XI. 6. 2. 10). Maithunakarana is consecration (S.B. III. 2. 1. 2, etc.) They enclose the Sadas secretly, for enclosing is Mithunakarana and therefore it must be done secretly (S.B. IV. 6, 7, 9 and 10). Bricks (Vishvajyotis) are made because the making of the bricks causes generation (S.B. VI. 5. 3. 5.) Two Padas or Caranas of an Anushtub verse are read in a detached manner and the two remaining are read together to imitate the manner of sexual union (A.B. II.5.3.); they do not worship a female Devata, unless she is coupled with a male Deva (A.B. III. 5. 4); they use a couple of Chandas distinguishing the one as male from the other as female and the two are taken together and believed to be the symbol of Maithuna, and by such Maithuna the desired result of ritual is achieved (A.B. V. 3. 1); they believe that the reading of the Ahanasya mantra (S.S.S. XII. 24. 1-10; A.U. XX. 136) will confer bliss (A.B. VI. 5. 10); they say that the highest and best form of Maithuna is that of Shraddha and Satya, Piety and Truth (A.B. VII. 2. 9) and this kind of Maithuna in the abstract is directed for Agnihotris who have purified themselves by actual performances and observances in a religious spirit.

They direct the observance and performance of Maithuna as a religious rite or part of a religious rite (L.S.S. IV. 3. 17; K.S.S. XIII. 42; 7.A. IV. 7. 50; X 62, 7; A.A. I. 2. 4. 10; V. 1. 5. 13; G.G.S. II. 5. 6. 9. 10; S.G.S. I. 19. 2-6; K.G.S. I. 4. 15; H.G.S. I. 24. 3; Ap. G.S. III.8. 10; P.G.S. I. 11. 7; Ap. V. 25. 11; Tan. Br. VIII. 7. 12; Chh. Up. II. 13. 1-2) and they direct that Mantras are to be uttered during the observance of this rite (Br. D. V. 90; VIII. 82; A.V. V. 82. 4; R. V. X 85. 37; R.V. Kh. 30 1; Rik P. II. 15. 1-8; As. S.S. VIII. 3. 28; G.B. VI. 15). One of the articles of faith of the Vaidik people therefore was, that sexual union led the way to bliss hereafter and must be performed in a true religious spirit to ensure spiritual welfare; wanton indulgence being severely deprecated. Ida (a woman) said: "If thou wilt make use of me at the sacrifice, then whatever blessing thou shalt invoke through me, shall be granted to thee." (S.B. I. 8 -- 1. 9, etc.)

The Vaidik people performed their Somayajñas and Haviryajñas which included the Sautramani, with libations and drinks of intoxicating liquor (L.S.S. V. 4, 11; K.S.S. XIX, 1, etc.; S.S.S. XV. 15; XIV. 13. 4.; S.B. V. 1. 2. 12; V. 1. 5. 28; XII. 7. 3. 14, etc.; XII. 8. 1, etc.; XII. 8. 2. 21, 22; V. 5. 4. 19, etc.; XII. 7. 3. 8; Ap. S.S. XVIII. 1. 9.) Sura purifies the sacrificer whilst itself is purified (S.B. XII. 8. 1. 16). Rishi Kakshivan sings the praises of Sura (R.V. I. 116. 7). It is said to be a desirable thing (R.V.. X. 107. 9; VIII. 2. 12). They prefer Soma, the sweet drink. Soma is Paramahutih (S.B. VI. 6. 3. 7); it is the nectar of immortality (S.B. IX. 4. 4. 8.) They deprecate and punish the wanton use of intoxicating liquor (Ap. Dh. S. I. 25. 3.; Ga. Dh. S. XXIII. 10; Va. Dh. S. XX. 19; Ba. Dh. S. II. 1. 18, etc.; S.V.B. I. 5). They direct the use of Sura and Soma for attainment of happiness and prescribe the manner and purpose of drinking the same; they prescribe the measure and number of drinks to be offered or taken at a sacrifice (S.B. V. 1. 2. 9, etc., V. 5. 4), and they add that a breach of these rules destroys the efficacy of the rite. They offer libations of Sura to the Fathers (A.B. III. 1. 5; S.B. V. 5. 4. 27, etc.) They offer Sura to the Ashvins (R. V.B. I. 44). They offer Sura to Vinayak's mother (Yag. I. 2. 88). During the performance of a sacrifice, the priests and the householder sit together; they all touch their cups, and raise them to their mouths, all the while reciting proper Mantras addressed to Devas (A.B. VI. 3. 1) and then they drink (A.B. VII. 5. 7). The Vaidik people used to offer to their Devatas at their sacrifices animal and vegetable food. The vegetable substances are Tandula, Pishtaka, Phalakarana, Purodasha, Odana, Yavaguh, Prithuka, Laja, Dhanah and Saktu, and the animal food was Payah, Dadhi, Ajyam, Amiksha Vajinam, Vapa, Mamsam, Lohitam, Pashurasah; the principal of these being Dhanah, Karambha, Paribaha, Purodasha and Payasya (A.B. II. 3.6). Indeed it would not be incorrect to say that no Vaidik rite can be performed without these offerings; the forms and the mode of preparation and the number of cakes to be offered, differing in each case (A.B. I. 1. 1.; II. 1-9; II. 3. 5; II. 3-6; S.B. I. 2. 2; L.S.S. V. 4. 1, etc.; Ap. S.S. XII. 3. 12; XII. 4, 9. 14; K.S.S. V. 309; Tait. Br. III. 2. 6, etc.) They offer animal sacrifices (Kat. S.S. Chap. VI; S.B. III. 6. 4; III. 8. 1; V. 1. 3. 2. 14; V. 3. 1. 10; VI. 2. 2. 15. Kanda XIII; As. G.S. I. 11; P.G.S. III. 11; G.G.S. III. 10. 18; Kh. G.S. III. 4; H.G.S. II. 15), which include the horse, goats, sheep, oxen (Tait. Br. II. 8. 1, etc.) and human beings (Tait. Br. III. 4. 1). They believe that by performing animal sacrifices, the sacrificer ransoms himself (S.B. XI. 7. 1. 3; A.B. II. 1. 3). or wins all these worlds (Ap. S.S. VII. 1. 1). The animal is the sacrificer himself (A.B. II. 2.1). They direct by special rules, in what manner the animal should be killed, cut and offered (A.B. II. 6; S.B. III. 8. 1. 15). They were aware that wanton killing of animals was wrong (A.B. II. 1. 7) and believed that offering animal sacrifices to the Devatas, was one of the means whereby bliss hereafter could be attained (Ba. Dh. S. II. 4. 23). And it was only for certain Yajñas that animals could be slain (Va. Dh. S. IV. 5-8; S.G.S. II. 16; 1 Ba. S.S. IV). Wanton killing of animals was very severely punished (Ap. Dh. S. I. 25. 13-26; Ga. Dh. S. XXII. 18, etc.; Va. Dh. S. 18. 23, etc.; Ba. Dh. S. I. 19. 6).

The Vaidik people from the time of the earliest Yajñas severely deprecated lust of any kind whatsoever; and they allowed Maithuna, Mamsa, Madya and Mudra for religious purposes only and as offerings to the Devas. The Cakra sittings of the Tantriks (M.N.T. Ch. VI) have unmistakable similarities with the Vajapeya and Sautramani (S.B. V; K.S.S. XIV; A.B. III. 4. 3; S.B. XII. 7.1, etc.; K.S.S. XIX) and even the manner of drinking in company has been preserved as will appear from the references given above.

When performing Yajña in company, the members of the company become Brahmanas and there is no distinction of caste (3.B. VIII. 4. 1).

The worship in both Vaidik and Tantrik rites begins with Acamana, which is a form of ablution, in which certain parts of the

body are touched with water. In this respect, the Vaidik and the Tantrik practices are exactly similar (G.G.S. I. 2. 5; Tait. A. II. 11; M.N.T.; Chap. V). They purify themselves by uttering some mantras as Bijas while contemplating the Deities of certain parts of their bodies and touching such parts with their fingers (A.A. III. 2. 1. 2; III. 2. 5. 2; R.V.B. II. 16). They contemplate each Deva through his or her particular Mantras (R.V. III. 62. 10) which will be found collected in the Parishishta to the Taittiriya Aranyaka. They make use of certain sounds for removing unclean spirits, e.g., "Khat. Phat. Hum." (7.A. IV. 27; S.V. St. I. 2. 1; I. 1. 3; Aranyagana VI. 1-8; IV. 2. 19; S.B. I 5. 2. 18; I. 3. 3. 14; I. 7. 2. 11-14; I. 7. 2. 21; XI. 2. 2. 3 and 5; M.N.T. Chap. III) and for other purposes (A.B. II. 3. 6.). They attribute a Deity to each letter in a Mantra (A.B. II.5.5)

They make gestures with their fingers as part of their religious rites (S.B. III. 1. 3. 25; III. 4. 3. 2) and locate the Devatas of particular sounds in particular parts of their bodies (P.S. 54, 56; K.S.S. VII. 71, 73). They perform their baths as a means of and with the view of pleasing their Devas (G. Sn. S. and M.N.T.) and in performing the Acamana they sacrifice unto themselves conceiving that they are part and parcel of the Great Brahma (T.A. X. i). They worship the Great Brahma thrice daily, such worship being called Sandhyavandan or Ahnika-kriya, twilight prayers or daily rites. How and when the forms of Vaidik Sandhya now practiced by Vaidikas commenced has not yet been ascertained but, there is no doubt that prior to the time when the Taittiriya Aranyaka was composed the practice existed in its present form. It will be remembered that it is only in that work that we find the Sandhya-mantras recorded. The practice of Pranayama and Tarpana to Rishis, Fathers, and Devas also existed before Baudhayana. This practice of Vaidik Sandhya worship should be compared with the Tantrik mode, to gain an insight into the relationship of the Vedas and the Tantras.

In the Yajñas, the Vaidik people principally worshipped (1) Sarasvati (S.B. II. 5. 4. 6; III. 1. 4. 9; III. 9. 1. 7; V. 2. 2. 14; V. 3. 5. 8; V. 4. 5. 7; V. 5. 2. 7) to whom animals are sacrificed (S.B. III. 9. 1. 7; V. 5. 4. 1; XII. 7. 2. 3) and who is the same as Vak or Vagdevi who became a lioness and went over to the Devatas, on their undertaking that to her offerings should be made before they were made to Agni (S.B. III. 5. 1. 21) and who bestows food (S.B. XII. 8. 2. 16); (2) Mahadeva or Mahesa, another form of Agni, in all his eight forms (S.B. VI. 1. 3. 10 et seq.); (3) Rudra, (4) Vishnu, (5) Vinayaka (Ganesha), (6) Skanda (Kartikeya) (S.V.B. I. 4. 31 et seq.); (7) the Lingam or Phallus (7.A. X. 17) on whom they meditated during the daily Sandhya worship and who is the same as Shambhu riding on a bull, (8) Shiva (S.V.B. I. 2. 2). They also worshipped (9) the cow whom they called Bhagavati (A.B. V. 5. 2) and also (10) Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, Rudra, Pushan, the Ashvins, Surya and some other Deities. For purposes of attaining eternal bliss they worshipped Ratri (S.V.B. III. 8) and this Ratri is described as a girl growing into womanhood who bestows happiness. She has long and flowing hair, has in her hand a noose. If she is pleased, then all other Devas are pleased. She being pleased, offers boons, but the worshipper must reject the same and then he will gain freedom from rebirth. This is the worship of Ratri; it requires no fasting and must be performed at night. The Mantras to be recited is the Ratri Sukta which commences with Ratri vakhyad (Rig Veda X. 127. 1) to be followed by aratri parthivam rajas.

The Rig-Vidhana-Brahmana (IV. 19) which follows the Sama-Vidhana-Brahmana declares that the Ratri Sukta must be recited; the worship; the worship must be performed as a Sthalipaka-Yajña. Ratri is substantially the same with, but in form different from, Vagdevi; and they are sometimes worshipped as one and the same (Tait. Br. II. 4. 6. 10 et seq.). The Ratri Sukta describes her as black (R.V. X. 127. 2-3). The portion of the Ratri Sukta which is included in the Khila portion of the Rig-Veda (R.V. Kh. 25) calls Ratri Devi by the name of Durga and this Mantra appears in Taittiriya Aranyaka (X. 1). She is described here, as the bearer of oblations; therefore, she is the same as Agni and as such she has tongues which are named as follows: (1) Kali, (2) Karali, (3) Manojava., (4) Sulohita, (5) Sudhumravarna, (6) Sphulingini, (7) Shucismita and these tongues loll out and by these tongues offerings are received (Grihya-Sangraha I. 13. 14). The Brihaddevata mentions that Aditi, Vak, Sarasvati and Durga are the same (II. 79).

In conformity with the Vaidik system the Tantrik system of worship acknowledges that Om is the supreme Bija (A.B. VII. 3. 6; II. 1. 2; V. 5. 7; A.A. II. 3. 8; Chh. Up. I. 1. 1 et seq.; 7.A. VII. 8; X. 63. 21 et seq.; Shakatayana, p. 106 (Op-pert); Panini VIII. 2. 87; Br. D. II. 127. 133; G.B. IX. 1. 24; I. 1. 17. 19; M.N.T.; II. 32) and they also acknowledge and use the Hinkara of the Vedas pronounced Hum (S.B. I. 4. 1. 2; IX. 1. 2. 3. 4; A.B. III. 2. 12; L.S.S. I. 10. 25; I. 1. 27; II. 1. 4; IV. 3. 22). The rules and practice of Acamana, and the bath are exactly the same as will be found on a comparison of chapter V of the Mahanirvana Tantra with the Snanasutra of Gobhila. The Tantras prefer to use single compounds instead of long sentences to express an idea and form one letter Mantras very much according to the Vaidik method. We also find the practice of Nyasa and Shuddhi foreshadowed in the Vedas as has been already mentioned. (See also S.B. VII. 5. 2. 12). The principal Devi of the Veda is Sarasvati, who is called Nagna in the Nighantu, expressing nakedness, and also referring to that age of a woman when womanhood has not expressed itself. If we again take these ideas with that of the Sama-Vidhana-Brahmana, we have the almost complete form of a Devi who is called at the present day by the name of Kali. Another Devi whose worship is very popular at the present day is Durga, who has a lion for her carrier. It will have been observed that Vach turned herself into a lion, and after earnest solicitations went over to the Devas; and therefore, Vach and the lion are identically the same. We have already given references which show that Vach and Durga were the same; and these facts explain how Durga has a lion to carry her. The worship of Ratri is to be performed at night and therefore the worship of Kali must be a night

performance; and therefore, must partake of all the features of a night performance; and these elements must be sought for in the Vaidik Atiratra. The Atiratra is a performance of three Paryayas or rounds of four Stotras and Shastras in each and at the end of each libations are offered, followed by drinking of Soma. The same rules and practices as in the Atiratra are substantially followed in the worship of the Devi Kali, bhang being very largely used under the name of Vijaya and Amrita. It will be remembered that the Devi of the Atiratra is Sarasvati. The principal male Devata of the Tantras is Mahadeva named also Shiva, Mahesa, Shambhu, Soma and also in a different aspect Rudra. Rudra and Mahadeva are admittedly Vaidik gods. Rudra is described as having bows and arrows and has hundred heads and thousand eyes (S.B. IV. 1. 1. 6.; Yajur Veda III. 27). Mahadeva is Maham devah, the great God (S.B. VI. 1. 3. 16). It appears that the Mantras of the different aspects of Mahadeva, which are even now used by Tantriks, were known and used by the Vaidik people. I cannot, however, trace the name Mahesa in Vaidik literature. Shiva can be identified with Rudra Susheva, who is a kind god (S.B. V. 4. 4. 12). Mahadeva (Soma) is clad in a tiger skin which can be traced in Vaidik literature (S.B. V. 3. 5. 3; V. 4. 1. 11). Rudra is black, in the Tantras as well as in the Vedas. He is the same as Manyu with a Devi on each side of him (S.B. IX. 1. 1. 6; XI. 6. 1. 12 and 13). In this connection, we must not fail to note some of the attributes of Vaidik Nirriti. Nirriti is black and is a terrible Devi and punishes those who do not offer Soma to her. She is the Devi of misfortunes and removes all misfortunes. She is the genitrix and she is fond of the cremation ground (S.B. VII. 2. 1; A.B. IV. 2. 4.)

The Tantras direct the worship also of Ganesha, Kartika and Vishnu, for whose worship the Sama-Vidhana-Brahmana prescribes the singing of certain Samans, known as the Vinayaka Samhita (S. V. 4. 5. 3. 3), Skanda-Samhita (S. V. 3. 2. 1. 4) and the Vishnu-Samhita (S. U. 3. 1. 3. 9) respectively.

The Tantras also direct the use of certain figures which are called Yantras. These may be of various kinds and forms and may be used for various purposes. One of these which is constantly used, is a triangle within a square (M.N.T. Chap. V) and this can traced to the rules for the preparation of the Agnikshetra, or the Fire Altar of the Vaidik people (S.B. VI. 1. 1. 6). Another curious circumstance in connection with the altar, is, that both in the Vaidik and the Tantrik ritual, the heads of five animals are used in its preparation (S.B. VI. 2. 1. 5-8). The worship of the Lingam is foreshadowed by the Vaidik Deity Vishnu Shipivishta (R.V. VII. 1001, etc., Nirukta V. 2. 2) and the serpent which twines round Devas or Devis is foreshadowed by the Sarparajñi, the Serpent Queen (S.B. IV. 6. 9. 17) who is the same as Vach.

The facts collected here will, it is hoped, enable impartial readers to come to a definite conclusion as to the relationship of the Vaidik to the Tantrik ritual.

Next: Chapter Five: The Tantras and the Religion of the Shaktas