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薩卡的密宗：超然實踐的比較與歷史回顧

**Sarkar's Tantra:**

**A Comparative and Historical Review  
of Transcendental Praxis**

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A Comparative and Historical Review  
of Transcendental Praxis**

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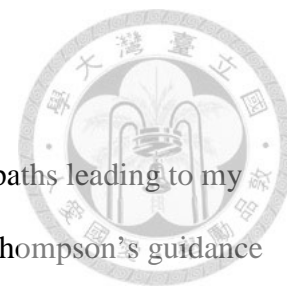
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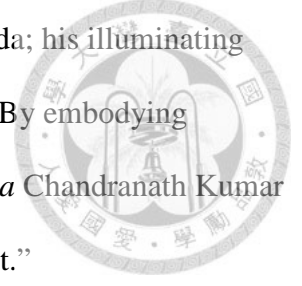


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Digital files have allowed me to carry hundreds of books on a tablet, and in the course of my research, articles and books have appeared and disappeared on its screen. Much as humanity is in debt to the ancients who learned how to harness the fires that would eventually make information (almost) free, I am indebted to the hundreds of authors and practitioners who have shared their time writing about mysteries. I honor their legacy by continuing it.

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## 摘要

本研究分兩個部分。相較於密宗古魯 (Sadguru) 薩卡 (Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, 又名 Shrii Shrii Anandamurti) 的脈絡化通史, 第一部分進行怛特羅哲學 (Tantric philosophy) 的去脈絡化歷史研究。薩卡將濕婆密宗 (Shiva Tantra) 定義為始於西元前五五〇〇年、以解放人性 (anthropic) 意識為目標的超然實踐 (transcendental praxis), 怛特羅意識形態的當代詮釋深受其影響。第一部分將經典密宗常見的定義、歷史與目標, 與薩卡詮釋下的濕婆密宗做比較; 第二部分是東西超然實踐的脈絡化思維比較。薩卡的宇宙觀與心靈因果論與唯物物理有概念上的不同。標準化專有名詞的引介有助於在物質與超然宇宙觀的宏觀環境之中, 針對二元論 (duality)、一元論 (monism)、意識與無限等的研究。最後, 薩卡的密宗靜坐 (sādhana) 與奉獻 (bhakti) 可分別與胡塞爾 (Edmund Husserl) 的超然還原 (transcendental reduction or epoché) 與蘇格拉底 (Socrates) 的愛洛斯 (eros) 作比較。本研究整體上有一個目標: 闡釋靜坐的客觀解放 (moksa) 如何深受靜坐的止性或精神客體影響。

薩卡的密宗論述是公開的; 然而, 密宗靜坐的學習仰賴精神嚮導 (Tāntrikii diikśā)。薩卡於《密宗論述》(Discourses on Tantra) 第二冊為密宗提供定義: 「怛 (tan) 即『擴展』, 特羅 (tra) 即『解放者』; 密宗即為藉由擴展——擴展心靈, 擴展存在——而解放修行者的科學」。(頁二十二) 本研究除闡釋密宗之外, 首要主題是結合薩卡的理論與實踐, 亦即拉森 (Gerald Larson) 所言「南亞研究中兩個極度令人困惑但又重要的詞, .....『瑜珈』(yoga) 與『怛特羅』」, 兩者的共同核心為「自我 (ātman) 或心靈 (citta) 的研究」。(頁四八七)

本研究的引言綜述密宗為何、針對怛特羅瑜珈脈絡化與去脈絡的化印度學研究之急迫需求, 以及修改印度神秘主義史的迫切性。本研究接著強調認知研究 (cognitive studies) 中, 深諳靜坐與分析研究的修行研究者之重要性。第一章說明薩卡將密宗定義為苦行, 以抗衡其為二元悖論享樂主義的常見誤解。第二章質疑吠陀哲學 (Vedānta) 與密宗瑜珈的爭論性歷史, 並提出濕婆密宗始於西元前約五五〇〇年的觀點; 本研究將梨俱吠陀 (R̥g Veda) 的證據和薩卡的分析, 與廣為接受的西元前三〇〇年的起始時間做比較。第三、四章呈現薩卡的濕婆學, 公開薩卡關於密宗與其始祖濕婆的獨特知識。薩卡對密宗節慶與神祇的歷史研究, 提供濕婆密宗經採用、融合與變形而成為秘密大乘佛教 (Vajrayāna or Tantric Buddhism) 的學術基礎。

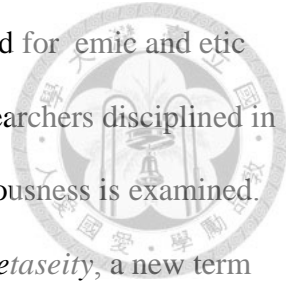
相較於西方的超然論, 本研究第二部分聚焦於薩卡的密宗與靜坐實踐, 並在此引介新的學術用詞——「後設自我性」(metaseity), 以結合真實無限、絕對真空、無條件真空 (nirguṇa) 與道 (śūnyatā) 等跨領域概念。第五章將笛卡兒 (René Descartes) 的二元論與超然一元論作比較, 以呈現物理學家想像的物質無限與超然無限。第六章詳述薩卡的心靈因果論以探究靜坐的客體與目標, 並接著詳述密宗與佛教論述中的有條件出神

(savikalpa)與無條件出神(nirvikalpa samādhi)。第七章將柏拉圖的《饗宴篇》(*Symposium*)和神媒狄奧提瑪(Diotima)的愛洛斯,與古希臘巫覡(iatromantis)巴門尼德(Parmenides)連結起來;後者的一元論與蘇格拉底的愛洛斯亦與密宗的奉獻有關。第八章討論薩卡的心靈抽離(pratyāhāra)對胡塞爾的現象學(phenomenology)與少為人理解的超然還原之重要性,二者之間的關連有助於自我性(ipseity)——即超然自我——的但特羅分析。第九章為本研究的結論,重述薩卡兩位資深修行者關於靜坐的客體與無條件出神經驗的教學。

## Abstract

This study has two main divisions. Part One is an etic historiography of Tantra contrasted with the Tantric *Sadguru* Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar's (Shrii Shrii Anandamurti) emic chronology. Contemporary exegeses of Tantric ideology are contextualized by Sarkar's formal definition of Shiva Tantra as a 5500 BCE transcendental praxis leading to the liberation of anthropical consciousness. The introduction of standardized nomenclature facilitates researching duality, monism, consciousness, and infinity in the macro-environment of material and transcendental cosmology. Part One compares the commonly accepted definition, history, and aims of Classical Tantra with Sarkar's exegesis of Shiva Tantra. Part Two is an emic hodology of transcendental praxes. Sarkar's cosmology and causal theory of mind are ontologically differentiated from materialism. Finally, Sarkar's Tantric *sādhana* (meditation) and *bhakti* (devotion) are, respectively, compared to Husserl's Transcendental Reduction and Socratic *eros*. The primary objective of this study is to elucidate how a meditator's quest for spiritual liberation '*mokṣa*' is profoundly impacted by cessative or numinous objects of meditation.

Sarkar's discourses on Tantric philosophy are public, but instruction in his Tantric meditation requires initiation '*Tāntrikii diikśā*.' Sarkar defines Tantra in *Discourses on Tantra Volume 2*: "*Tan* means 'to expand' and *tra* means 'liberator,' so the science that frees the aspirant from the fetters of bondages by expansion — by expanding the mind, by expanding the existence — is Tantra" (22). This study's major theme, complementing its elucidation of Tantric meditation, is the convergence of Sarkar's theory and praxis in what Gerald Larson states are "two of the most puzzling yet important terms in South Asian studies, . . . 'yoga' and 'tantra'" whose nexus is "the study of the self (*ātman*) and mind (*citta*)" (487).



The introduction overviews Tantra and discusses the critical need for emic and etic Indological studies of Tantra-Yoga. The importance of practitioner-researchers disciplined in both meditation and analytic research for comparative studies of consciousness is examined. Sarkar's causal model of mind informs the terminology of this work. *Metaseity*, a new term introduced here, unites interdisciplinary concepts of true infinity, absolute void, *nirguṇa*, *śūnyatā*, and *Tao*. Chapter 2 investigates Sarkar's explication of tantric asceticism to counter Tantra's misconception as antinomian hedonism. Chapter 3 questions received histories of Vedānta and Tantra-Yoga, arguing Shiva Tantra arose in 5500 BCE. The evidence of the *Rg Veda* and Sarkar's explications are juxtaposed against the widely accepted 300 BCE date. Chapters 4 and 5 present Sarkar's Shivology, detailing Sarkar's unique knowledge of Tantra and its first *Sadguru*. Shiva Tantra's transformation into Vajrayāna Buddhism and other pan-Indian traditions vis-à-vis its adoption, integration, and distortion is contextualized by Sarkar's historiography of Tantric festivals and deities.

Part Two of this study focuses on Sarkar's Tantra and meditative praxes compared to Western transcendentalism. Chapter 6 contrasts Cartesian duality to transcendental monism and compares physicists' notions of material infinity to transcendental infinity. Chapter 7 investigates the object and objective of meditation, followed by Tantric and Buddhist accounts of *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Chapter 8 discusses the significance of Sarkar's *pratyāhāra* to an evolution of Husserl's Phenomenology and poorly understood Transcendental Reduction. This informs a Tantric analysis of ipseity — the transcendental self. Chapter 9 correlates Plato's *Symposium* and the *eros* of the seer Diotima with the *Iatromantis*, Parmenides. The latter's monism and Socratic *eros* is adduced to Tantric *bhakti* (devotion). Chapter 10 summarizes the major findings of a practitioner-research based study of Sarkar's Tantra and transcendental philosophy.





**Key Words:** actional mind, Anandamurti, Aseity, brain, Buddha, Buddhism, consciousness, contemplation, Cosmic Consciousness, Cosmic Mind, enlightenment, *epoché*, *eros*, existential mind, expansion, force, Heidegger, Husserl, infinity, materialism, ipseity, liberation, meditation, Metaseity, mind, *mokṣa*, *moksha*, motion, mysticism, *Nirguṇa*, *nirvikalpa samādhi*, non-duality, objectivated mind, P.R. Sarkar, Parmenides, Phenomenology, *pratyāhāra*, praxis, Indology, *Rg Veda*, *sādhana*, Sarasvati River, Sartre, *savikalpa samādhi*, *shakti*, Shiva, singularity, Śiva, Socrates, spirituality, Tantra, temporal, trance, monism, duality, Transcendental Reduction, transcendental, Yoga

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## Preface

### The Practitioner-Researcher's Story



P.R. Sarkar<sup>1</sup> reinvigorates the spiritual quest for the ultimate transcendental state known as *mokṣa* by transforming the Tantric meditative praxes taught by the Tantric *Sadguru* Shiva in 5500 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Sarkar's Tantric praxes utilize specific objects of meditation while training practitioners to strive ceaselessly for Tantra's soteriological aim: merging the self with unqualified, infinite consciousness. This attempt is nothing less than the absolute unity of anthropical mind with ipseity, Aseity, and then, ultimately, with the ontological singularity I term *Metaseity*. The Indian meditative episteme has long understood that the objects of mind: our thoughts, feelings, impressions, senses, dreams, and desires play an overwhelming role in mental evolution. As Sohail Inayatullah notes, the "underlying principle" of meditation is "as you think you become" (65). The idea that mental objects change the psychic and embodied existence of humanity is the pivotal concept of Sarkar's Tantra. He says the individual "takes the form" of their "psychic object so that their "very existence" is "converted into" that which is meditated on — meditators should choose their "psychic object" with great caution (par. 1). Putting forward an emic understanding of Sarkar's Shiva Tantra in Part One, this work uses a comparative methodology in Part Two to explore how the objects of meditation influence liberation.

Dedicated meditators from most transcendental traditions are keenly aware that spiritual progress is quantified by increased clarity of mind, detachment from suffering,

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<sup>1</sup> P.R. Sarkar's works were published using both his legal name and his Tantric title, Shrii Shrii Anandamurti. Readers should note references to his works occur under both names.

<sup>2</sup> The highest, fully perfected, spiritual master who can infuse meditative praxes with liberatory spiritual force.

increased expressions of empathy, wisdom, intuition, and spiritual bliss. I argue spiritual progress can be directly moderated by practitioners because the objects of meditation, Sarkar explains, accelerate or retard spiritual development. Recognizing the bias inherent in a Tantric practitioner privileging Sarkar's episteme in an academic work, I acknowledge that I am a practitioner-researcher (PR) working from Sarkar's tradition, making this dissertation an emic study tempered by comparative and etic research. It includes Sarkar's Tantric historiography, his causal paradigm of mind and consciousness, and the Tantric meditations which yield transcendent states of joy, love, and enlightenment. I blend Indological narratives and Western transcendental praxis to produce an interdisciplinary account of the relationship of the self to Metaseity mediated by Sarkar's definition and development of Shiva Tantra and meditation. It is necessary to add that dealing with Sarkar's works demands the recognition that his oral discourses were primarily intuitive, and much of his Tantric historiography and spiritual instructions are seemingly pre-epistemic/noetic. Despite the skepticism this revelation might produce, Sarkar is viewed by many scholars as a polymath and social revolutionary, and, as a contemporary Tantric Guru, he offers unique insights into many of the mysteries surrounding the history and practice of Shiva Tantra.

One of the contentions put forward here is that emic studies undertaken by practitioner-researchers are not only valuable to comparative philosophy but absolutely critical to studying transcendental praxes. As such, this work combines my personal engagement with Tantric meditation and research into Eastern and Western transcendental philosophy to explore the big debates on the ontology of mind, the nature of consciousness, and spiritual liberation. The etic research for this dissertation required about 2000 hours (excluding the preceding years of study and outside reading), while the past twenty-three years in Taiwan were dedicated to practicing martial arts, particularly the "internal" art known as Tai Chi Chuan. I have also intensively engaged with the meditative systems of



Buddhism, Taoism, and Tantra. The last two decades have been devoted to Sarkar's Tantra and Tai Chi, entailing two daily meditation sessions of between one to three hours and equal time on Tai Chi. I spent up to eight hours per day in the early years of my Tai Chi practice and standing meditations. All told, I am about 12,800 hours into meditation and 15,000 hours into Tai Chi Chuan. This should satisfy as an authentic emic perspective not overly crippled by its infancy. But progress in Tantric meditation depends on more than a certain number of hours, enthusiasm, and intellect — it requires devotion, sacrifice, assiduous effort to sustain ideal conduct in worldly matters, and no small measure of surrender to the flow of the greater cosmos. In short, there is still so much more to be learned, and my shortcomings in comparison to my excellent teachers remain evident.

Any personal experiences of transcendental states notwithstanding, I wanted to avoid eisegesis regarding the practical processes of meditation and Sarkar's theory by confirming my research with Sarkar's senior disciples, my mentor, *Acarya* Mánavendránanda Avt. I also reviewed two recordings I made during visits to *Acarya* Chandranth Kumar, one of Sarkar's first initiates, who was a Tantric saint in his own right. *Acarya* Mánavendránanda was initiated into advanced Tantric praxes by *Shrii*<sup>3</sup> Sarkar and has practiced long meditation for over forty years. The last fourteen years have coincided with his careful guidance of my personal practice of meditation, and rich discussions, as I analyzed Sarkar's teachings. During this period, *Acarya* Mánavendránanda paid yearly visits to *Acarya* Chandranth Kumar (*Dadaji*) while exhaustively studying Sarkar's advanced system of Tantric meditation known as *Visheśa* yoga. By proxy, my practical understanding of meditation has been enhanced, and

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<sup>3</sup> *Shrii* is a Sanskrit word of respect for great spiritual masters and is implied when talking of Sarkar. Academic convention omits honorific titles.

this knowledge — along with the guidance of the foremost Sarkarian scholar, Sohail Inayatullah — informs the theory and practical explorations of this work.

A flexible orientation grounded in academic rigor should be the *modus operandi* of a practitioner-researcher. Like the push hands practice of Tai Chi Chuan, transcendental research is soft and hard, flowing between experience and rigorous attention to methodology. Practitioner-researchers of transcendental praxis understand that consciousness exists in the pre-epistemic, and that articulating the ineffable is epistemically limited by language, space, and temporality. Because the transcendental is pre-noetic, revealed to the mind only in the language of approximation, Tantra views philosophy and science as useful but incomplete systems for analyzing consciousness. Historically, spiritual sages have paradoxically encouraged practitioners to transcend the mind through the mind. This is an invitation for humanity to step beyond the shadows of duality into the effulgent singularity and make the ultimate leap into the inexpressible absolute that is Metaseity.

With Metaseity at its core, this dissertation delineates Sarkar's map of the meditative processes a practitioner should follow while preparing their mind for the journey from duality to singularity and ultimate transcendence. In so doing, it offers comparative accounts of some major philosophical and historical debates: Where did meditation begin? What is the ontology of mind? What is the role of love in spirituality? What resolves humanity's infinite longings? Is ultimate reality material — and therefore apprehensible — or is it ineffable and transcendental? Each of these questions are monumental and admittedly beyond any single study. Nevertheless, Sarkar's philosophy offers an intuitive ontological framework that causally relates all these issues to the essence of consciousness and just how this essence can be realized through Tantric meditation.

With the issue of practitioner's subjectivity versus academic objectivity in view, I suggest practitioners and researchers can combine a critical emic approach to harmonize

transcendental philosophy with meditative praxis so that the analytic and intuitive are given equal importance. Arguably, this combination, as Inayatullah describes in relation to Sarkar's ethical discourse, takes the "wisdom traditions," such as the "mystic, the gnostic, and the shamanic" and makes intuitive epistemes "relevant" to the big debates (63). Put another way, understanding how and why a Sarkarian meditator approaches their object and objective of meditation addresses the perennial debates from a uniquely emic position.

Sarkarian Tantra employs meditation as the fundamental mystical praxis that awakens intuition to resolve ontological and epistemological concerns in Shiva consciousness. As a practitioner writing on praxis and transcendence, I employ emic experiences and academic pedagogy to fuse the transcendent and immanent, the unqualified and qualified, and the passive and active under Sarkar's cosmological umbra. I explore Sarkar's meditative praxes in the spirit they were given: tools that develop intuition and, with time, resolve mental duality in the a priori infinity of Cosmic Consciousness. An emic approach to Sarkar's Tantra should not be likened to a cup that is half full (or half empty) but one that overflows and is carried away on an infinite current. If the cup is the mind and consciousness water, mind is simultaneously the vessel of limitation and the gateway to limitlessness; the mind's emancipation is infrangible from a state of realization that is eternally unbounded and infinite. When mind is trained to penetrate the interstices of the material, to unflinchingly embrace the transcendent and, ultimately, to sacrifice the small egological self, the final transcendence known to Tantrics as *nirvikalpa samādhi* is realized.

In two visits to India, totaling seven months, I asked *Acarya* Candranath Kumar (Dadaji) important questions about the practice and experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Dadaji, who was eighty-six at the time, and has since passed away, is still highly revered in Sarkar's spiritual and humanitarian organization, Ananda Marga, for his simplicity, devotion, and vast spiritual realization. It is difficult to portray the man without recognizing his

humility and unending willingness to help those in need. Visitors, including myself, have noted that he wore certain simple jackets, shawls and other pieces of clothing for over twenty years. When I met Dadaji everything material around him had faded with age — except his acute intellect, perfect memory, devotion to meditation, and absolute veneration of his *Sadguru, Shrii Sarkar*. His body was suffering the frailties and severe pains of old age, yet he retained his elevated composure and generosity, evidenced by the steady flow of visitors to his modest rented home in Patna, India.

*July 17, 2002, Acarya Chandranath Kumar's Residence*

*It's 5 PM and I, at thirty years of age, am sitting across from Dadaji on his porch surrounded by flowering plants. Resting on the old table in front of us is his frayed copy of Shrii Shrii Anandamurti's text, Idea and Ideology. I am yet unaware of the sometimes painful but challenging, rewarding, and illuminating direction my life will take over the next thirteen years. I have been meditating for seven years, and am completing an undergraduate degree.*

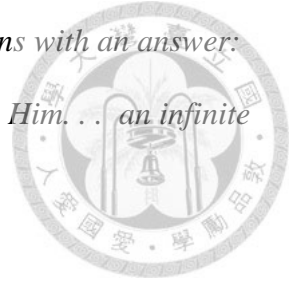
*On the flooded dirt road outside, a rickshaw puller's emaciated calves strain to pull wheels out of the knee-high mud. The heat has broken, and the mosquito perched on Dadaji's thin arm is gently brushed off. I am relating to Dadaji his answer to my earlier questions on a proof of Cosmic Consciousness. Afterwards, he responds "that was very well put, someday you should write about these things for others." I assure him that I will and promptly forget it.*

*Most of this dissertation seems now to be the outcome of Dadaji's casual suggestion that day. The last question I ask Dadaji is what he sees during nirvikalpa samādhi (the ultimate meditative transcendental state).*

*Dadaji sits for some moments and becomes completely still. I watch his eyes roll back as he goes inward. This corner of the world becomes silent; my mind gets swept along an*

*exquisitely subtle wave of timeless silence. After a few moments, he returns with an answer:*

*“I do not know what I see after nirvikalpa samādhi . . . I see He and only Him. . . an infinite ocean of brilliant light . . . and then . . . I am gone.*



## Chapter One

### Introduction



According to *The Encyclopaedia of Science and Religion* “transcendence, from the Latin *transcendere* (to climb up), is to surpass phenomenal duality. Spiritually, transcendence is equated with experiencing that which is ontologically *a priori* to “the physical cosmos and exalted above it.” *Merriam Webster* derives praxis (pl. praxes) from mediaeval Latin, defining it as the “exercise or practice of an art, science, or skill,” or the “practical application of a theory.” This dissertation investigates P.R. Sarkar’s historiography of Shiva Tantra to explore Tantric soteriology through a comparative transcendental exegesis of the object and objective of meditative praxes. Unqualified consciousness, Metaseity, is shown to be the ultimate spiritual objective of Eastern and Western meditative/transcendental systems that seek the emancipation of mind in absolute reality.

Part One presents Sarkar’s historiography of Tantra and examines his contention that the historical Shiva was the first Tantric guru to systematize the already extant, but unrefined, meditative praxes. Shiva’s historical contributions were eventually obscured by Tantra’s transformation over the millennia. Significantly, Sarkar correlates Shiva’s teachings with Tantra-Yogic asceticism but not to the hedonistic practices popularly ascribed to Tantra. Part Two examines Sarkar’s Tantric praxes by comparing meditation to Socratic *eros* and Husserl’s phenomenological *epoché*. Diotima’s instructions on Socratic *eros* in Plato’s *Symposium* echo Tantra’s *bhakti* approach to spiritual love and are suggestive of esoteric meditations that can transform mundane desire into Parmenidean monism. Husserl’s Transcendental Reduction, which has tremendously impacted Western ontology and studies of consciousness, can be advanced by Sarkar’s *pratyāhāra* and meditative techniques.

Mind and consciousness are complex scientific and philosophical concepts, and cross-disciplinary dialogues with standard English terminology will grant faster understanding of difficult Sanskrit words by simplifying scientific and philosophical jargon. To this end, I translate Sarkar's Sanskrit definitions into new standardized English terms for his ontological model of mind and consciousness. I trust future studies will be enhanced by clarifying these concepts as practitioners, philosophers, and scientists continue the great philosophical debates. The next section considers the criteria applicable to practitioner-researchers who analyze Tantra, mind, and consciousness.

### 1.1 Etic and Emic Methodology

Successful interdisciplinary research into consciousness and meditation depends on researchers who are (1) engaged in meditative praxes, (2) capable of comparatively analyzing Western and Eastern philosophy, (3) speak related languages, (4) able to remain objective while analyzing their personal spiritual practice. These are crucial characteristics of an interdisciplinary approach, although their complete realization is unlikely. Difficulties aside, the philosopher and practitioner and the subject and the object of transcendental praxis must integrate for current research into mystical states to progress beyond academic analysis. Acknowledging that meditative experiences are necessarily subjective and open to individual interpretation is only part of the issue: researchers need to be aware that the synergetic melding of mind and consciousness rarely occurs during the early years of a meditator's practice. The elusiveness of genuine spiritual realization hinders most empirical studies, and so science generally relegates mystical experiences to footnotes. Mrinal Miri points out the challenges of comparative transcendental research:

One might then ask uncomfortable questions such as: is the Vedantic, or the *sankhya* or the *nyaya* or the Buddhist way of dealing with the self

philosophically more or less adequate than, say, Descartes', or Kant's or Hegel's way of dealing with it?

These questions are uncomfortable, because we do not, as yet, have the necessary background against which we can even begin to face them. The preparation of such a background will require enormously detailed and imaginative work of building bridges between two vastly different traditions of philosophical thought. (xi-xii)

Miri's observation that we lack the necessary background to build bridges between traditions aptly describes the status quo of Sarkarian research. Because scholars are rarely practitioners and vice versa, etic analyses of Tantric meditation cannot be considered truly objective when directed at a tradition that requires hours of daily practice over decades to attain profound transcendental states. Transcendental traditions have to be examined from within, and so my twenty-three years of meditative practice, observing other meditators, and close relationships with monastics and lay practitioners from various Buddhist, Taoist, and Tantric schools inform the emic approach of this work.

Chapter Two details the contested definitions of Tantra which, despite their complexity, pale in comparison to the vexed narrative of Tantric historiography. On the one hand, etic accounts substantiate their specific historical narratives on the basis of Tantric texts, the Vedas, and archaeological data. On the other hand, scholar-practitioners consider initiation into Tantra critical to understanding Tantric lineage. Some indigenous scholars and initiates view foreign accounts of Tantra with skepticism, believing their cultural affinity with Sanskrit, their engagement in Tantric praxes, and personal contact with a Guru arm them with an authentic perspective that outsiders lack. None of these criteria (excepting familiarity with Sanskrit) would likely convince Western academics whose have long argued that "objective" etic studies are more academically significant than "subjective" emic understandings. The



former's objective veneer is maintained by decrying subjective engagement in the area under study, while the latter supports subjective approaches and contextualized praxes, but is subject to possible bias.

The hoary etic versus emic debate has raged across disciplines but remains especially significant for research conducted into esoteric, mystical, and contemplative traditions — which accounts for a significant portion of Indian religious studies. Tim Murray's *Milestones in Archaeology* claims the “respective pluses and minuses of the internalist and externalist perspectives” and the “perils of presentism” all received a “thorough airing” even at the “early stage” of historical writing (xvi). Murray, referencing Stocking, says understanding these differences has not prevented archaeology from adopting a number of “antinomies” entrenched in Western academia:

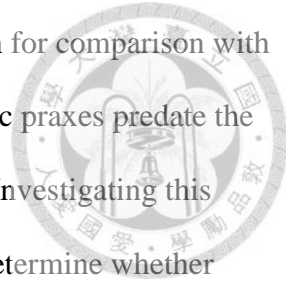
An ontological opposition between materialism and idealism, an epistemological opposition between empiricism and apriorism, a substantive opposition between the biological and the cultural, a methodological opposition between the nomothetic and the idiographic, an attitudinal opposition between the racist and the egalitarian, an evaluational opposition between the progressivist and the primitivist — among others. (xix)

Historians have maintained a symbiotic relationship with archaeology, and anthropology. From history's scientific beginnings “in the 19th century,” after “all three disciplines began to take on their modern forms,” researchers proceeded to translate “archaeological data into anthropological or historical information” from their respective perspectives. This process “did not (and does not) always go smoothly,” a recognition now vexing previous convictions which compels archaeologists to “seriously” reconsider ideas “that such simple translations” are accurate (Murray xix-xx).

Considerations like these make comparative philosophical and historical research increasingly relevant to Indological studies of India's spiritual legacies. Modern scholars are seeking the origins of Sanskrit and a *terminus a quo* for the Vedas and Tantra-Yoga. Different studies have incorporated the Indo-Aryan migration/invasion debate, outlined the cultural life of the migrant and indigenous populations of the Indus Valley civilizations, and explored the importance of the *RV*'s connection to the Sarasvati and Indus River. Linguists have attempted to discover data to (in)validate the proto-Indo-European (PIE) language hypothesis of a primeval language that connects old Vedic to Sanskrit, Avestan, and other European languages. Isolating the origin of PIE might explain why "Sanskrit and Greek" share many cognates and similar philosophical concepts, although many believe there are no remains of the "original Proto-Indo-European language" (Bryant 68).

Understanding the origins of Tantra-Yoga requires synthesizing data from emic perspectives and various disciplines. Fortunately, there is an expanding group of non-Indian Indologists practicing Asian contemplative traditions. Geoffrey Samuel's "involvement in contemporary versions" of practices "related to "Tibetan Buddhism," drew him, "like many" Western scholars, to "Buddhist and Hindu studies (308). Today, important contemporary Indological research is tempered by increasing emic sensitivity or experience. Acknowledging the subjective dimension of practitioner-researcher's (PR) work should, hopefully, not impugn revisions of India's spiritual legacy which has for too long been distorted by colonial scholarship.

I argue, the problem confronting PRs is methodological not hermeneutical if they understand their spiritual system. The dilemma is not what to say but how to say it. How should data derived from esoteric initiation be included in empirical studies? My presentation of Sarkar's Tantra and Tantric history confronts this, and I suggest it is critical that the PR explores both etic and emic perspectives. PRs with historical data not yet recognized by



academia might objectively describe what is permitted by their tradition for comparison with other traditions. For example, it will be shown that Sarkar claims Tantric praxes predate the *RV*'s written form and impacted some of its prehistorical composition. Investigating this demands comparative studies of oral traditions and written records to determine whether Tantra flourished in 5500 B.C.E. — millennia before its usually accepted beginning. Sarkar, amongst other sources discussed throughout Part One, is adamant Shiva Tantra existed well before its attributed common era date and was not a byproduct of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* written in "northern India around the third century B.C." (Hill 5). Sarkar's emic perspective on Tantra's history, combined with modern and revised Indological research, is discussed in detail to demonstrate a radically earlier timeline for Tantra.

I suggest a single study combining etic and emic methodologies without collaboration will be hamstrung. One possible workaround to satisfy academic needs for objectivity is to acknowledge emic subjectivity, while providing full access to etic insights. This ensures practice and research meet in a new mutually inclusive paradigm that does not elevate or denigrate emic accounts without exploring the potential for mutual benefit.

## **1.2 Thesis — Part One: History and Praxis**

Part One provides a detailed emic overview of Tantric history examined under the joint perspectives of the traditional evidence, new research, and Sarkar's teachings in a bid to undo some of the discrepancies between accepted and revisionary Indological timelines. In this regard, Sarkar's Tantric history started to become available in print in 1955, and some of his more provocative claims are slowly being supported by contemporary researchers unaware of his teachings, indicating that the historical Shiva might well have founded Tantra.

Typically, the goal of historical hermeneutics is to understand historical trends in relation to the past in an "ascending dialectic" which, quoting Plato, Paul Ricoeur says is

difficult yet familiar to historians. “The descending” dialectic, leading “back toward historical inquiry,” is far more arduous but is also where “the most significant questions for hermeneutics” are encountered (683). Sarkar’s hermeneutical pathway handily guides practitioners and researchers through the labyrinth of Indian mysticism by signposting Shiva Tantra’s transformations over millennia while Tantra’s highly ramified branches flourished and withered under the wash of socio-religious forces. *Shivology* is Sarkar’s name for the study of Shiva’s contributions to the spiritual and social development of humanity in the prehistorical area of India that Sarkar names Ráfh.

Samuel notes in *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra* that “Yoga, meditation and Tantra are complex and problematic labels” (3). One major difficulty researchers have in grasping the relationship between these terms stems from philosophical misunderstandings and a dearth of emic engagement by researchers in esoteric Tantric praxes. Simply put, India’s oral traditions are ignored while its textual history is reified. Hence, this dissertation explores Sarkar’s teachings that the historical Shiva and the deified Shiva, found in many of India’s religious traditions, are different, but the former certainly influenced the latter. Sarkar’s Shiva codified and developed the rudimentary proto-Tantric praxes practiced by the indigenous inhabitants of India before his birth in 5500 BCE. Tantra influenced the people of Bengal, the tribes inhabiting the banks of the Sarasvati River, and the Indus River civilizations in Ráfh prior to, during, and following the migration of the Aryans who brought the Vedic religion to India.

While a pre-1500 BCE genesis of Tantra-Yoga is not necessarily new, it is not given serious consideration by many Western historians who usually disregard India’s oral traditions in preference for the accepted dogma of Tantra as a Vedic and Buddhist derivative. Sarkar outright rejects this, presenting a broad-ranging, albeit un-systematized, Tantric historiography which he developed through dozens of discourses on Tantric philosophy,

yogic practice, linguistics, history, art, politics, medicine, and the humanities over his life. Splicing together and cross-referencing the historical aspects of these discourses given between 1955 and 1990 requires sifting through four and a half decades of publications to balance verifiable research against the unverified. The intuitive nature of Sarkar's discourses will probably require decades of interdisciplinary research to authenticate.

### 1.3 Thesis — Part Two: Praxis and Philosophy

Part Two utilizes the Shiva episteme and Sarkar's Tantric model of mind introduced in Part One to comparatively explore the object and objective of meditation vis-à-vis scientific and Tantric concepts of infinity, Husserl's phenomenology, and finally love and transcendence. Philosophically, Sarkar views humanity's quest to understand our universe the product of anthropical mind's (un)conscious desire to transcend spatiotemporal limitations by returning to the infinite state known as *mokṣa* — permanent liberation.

Sarkar's Tantra, like Buddhism, states limitations are the causes of suffering in the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of life. Individuals may experience suffering at all levels simultaneously, or hierarchically. Those who escape material deprivation experience psychological and, eventually, psycho-spiritual suffering. Even if these experiences do not always occur in sequence, Maslow's theory of instinctoid needs aptly illustrates the human tendency to seek out solutions to physical difficulties and psychological suffering, followed by desire for love and "growth or self-perfection," and finally the search for transcendence (Jordaan and Jordaan 579). To satisfy this desideratum, Sarkar teaches the Tantric meditations that engender a pinnacle spiritual experience that is intuitive, non-epistemic, and indescribable.

Empiricists or etic researchers will find Sarkar's intuitional teachings disconcerting. Part Two will show that intuition was as relevant to pre-Socratic philosophers as reductive

logic is to modern thinkers, but most academics equate intuition with imagination or charlatanism. The importance of ontological and cosmological explanations from intuition has been replaced with empirical reductionism and the scientific argument that mystical insights are at best delusions or at worst irrational religious impulses entirely devoid the objective value of Parmenidean logic. In spite of these challenges, Part Two shows that Indian mystics influenced the Greek *Iatromantic* meditations practiced by Parmenides and his teachers. Unfortunately, modern research into pre-Socratic philosophy generally reorders the mystical aspects to elevate Greek logic over intuition, because the latter is seen by academics as remnants of a primitive past. Aristotle's taxonomy, regarded as the apotheosis of Greek logic, then went on to shape the development of scientific reason and analytic philosophy for the next 2000 years, but the dominance of empirical logic actually arose from philosophical misinterpretations of Parmenides' contemplative praxes and his monistic cosmology.

Scientists argue our universe can be reduced to matter and energy, yet they lack credible proof to explain how energy arises from “nothing” while rigorously discrediting transcendental explanations. Ironically, scientific objectivity is itself founded on a misinterpretation of Parmenides's intuitional poem that became the basis of Western logical inference. Contrary to the positivist readings of Parmenides given since Plato, Peter Kingsley argues the poem describes a meditative journey into the transcendental — not the analytical. “Logic is not what it seems”; its purpose “had nothing to do with complicated formulas” or “fancy calculations.” In Parmenides' system, the transcendently derived logic of meditation awakened and transformed “every aspect of the human being” (17).

For Tantrics, meditating on singularity first expands mind and then releases anthropical consciousness in infinite Cosmic Consciousness. Sarkar says in *Ananda Sutram*: “*Tasyasthitih amānasikeśu*” the “state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* is beyond the mind,” or logic, and is not “mentally apprehensible” (1-22). Only transcendence can satisfy the mind's

longing for infinity that is generally distorted by the ego into the desire for infinite acquisitions. Although the transcendence of mind makes a description of infinity impossible, Sarkar says evidence of *nirvikalpa samādhī* is found in the “lingering bliss” following this “vacuity,” confirming *nirvikalpa* as an attainable state (1-24). The development of intuition and growing detachment from personal suffering proves sincere Tantric practice can actualize subtle levels of consciousness:

The spiritual entity is not subject to any time, place or person, but the finite unit entities are their cooperative creations. He, being beyond their purview, i.e., outside the scope of mind, is absolutely free from all sorts of mental modifications of pleasure and pain. So one who identifies oneself with Him after attaining Him, becomes free from all sorts of pain. His mind gets stilled.

He merges in the Macrocosmic Consciousness. (Ānandamūrti 119-20)

Part Two of this work details how Tantra achieves the ultimate transcendental state via an object of meditation that accelerates progress towards spiritual liberation. Transcendental systems like Buddhism and Jainism that assimilated Tantric techniques have *mokṣa*, the permanent liberation of consciousness, as their spiritual objective, but knowledge of the appropriate meditative praxes was distorted and covered by extraneous ritual, dogma, and general misunderstanding.

Consciousness, itself, is the ideal object of meditation that frees mind from duality. Recognizing that liberation stems from the desire for transcendence, Sarkar defines “Proto-psycho-spirituality” as the first stage in mind’s movement towards “psycho-spirituality.” The prefix *proto* suggests that at this early stage the mind is a “flickering entity” constantly fluctuating between objects of perception (Sarkar *Liberation of Intellect: Neo Humanism* 90).

In the physical world, physicists have long understood that “motion” and its “lack” is always “relative” to the “frame of reference” used to quantify movement (Zukav 145).

Ideally, there should exist an “inertial frame of reference” whereby all the theories of mechanics are valid for all points of reference, but because the universe is in constant motion, nobody has found a “co-ordinate system in which the laws of mechanics are valid” (148). Einstein did away with the issue of a fixed inferential point while explaining the “constancy of light” phenomenon discovered by Michelson and Morley in 1887. He argued that as said “frame of reference” is not part of our everyday experience it should be ignored because it was “intolerable” to include an attribute in a “theoretical structure” without a “corresponding characteristic in our system of experience” (157). He then developed the theory of relativity and proper versus relative time to demonstrate that the universe is in a constant motion in the space-time continuum. From this, Einstein formulated the “idealization” of “uniform motion.” Tantra does not recognize the uniformity of motion, and, as Einstein put it, “movement is “neither constant nor ideally smooth,” making his idealization of uniform motion a “special” or “restricted theory” (180).

Sarkar explains movement is systaltic: thought (mental movement) is the subtle expression of motion; thus, the “mobility portion within the systalsis of proto-psycho-spirituality is purely psychic” (“An Ideology for a New Generation (Discourse 10)” par. 25). The static stage between changes in motion is “purely spiritual” and blissful because thought is suspended in the infinite consciousness of *Brahma* (91). In *Ananda Sutram*, Sarkar’s first Sanskrit aphorism, “*Shivashaktyātmakam Brahma*” says “Brahman,” or the “Cosmic Entity,” is the composite of Shiva (consciousness) and *shakti* (the Operative Principle).” When ultimate reality is manifest as the composite of consciousness (infinity) and energy (motion), the centrifugal and centripetal flow of creation generates duality. When absolute pause is attained, by transcending all relative motion, the entity merges with infinite consciousness. Sarkar is thus reintroducing an evolution of Shiva’s transcendental praxes that establish mind in the absolute quiescence of ontological consciousness. To close this overview, I contend



that understanding Sarkar's historical and philosophical conception of Shiva Tantra is critical to Part Two's emic considerations of the object and objective of Tantric meditation and transcendental praxes.



#### 1.4 Terminology

Given mind and consciousness form the second part of this dissertation, using diverse terms from ontological philosophies, cognitive science, psychology, and general transcendental philosophy are unavoidable, and, generally speaking, the proliferation of jargon makes interdisciplinary discussions of transcendence and consciousness difficult. For example, Sarkar uses both English and Sanskrit terms to describe ultimate reality: infinite consciousness, cosmic consciousness, superconscious mind, *Brahma*, *Nirguṇa Brahma*, *Parama Puruṣa* etc. Moreover, different aspects of mind, including the unconscious, subconscious, conscious, and superconscious mind have Sanskrit nomenclature. The same words, with slight variations, are seen in many other Indian traditions.<sup>1</sup>

For simplicity, the diverse nomenclature used to describe consciousness and are encompassed in eight terms. I convert similar concepts (unless directly cited) to conform to this usage. Square brackets enclose my terminology to assist the flow of reading without unnecessary cross-referencing. My usage should not suggest unilateral agreement about their definitions and functions in different traditions — particularly at the most interior level of self-consciousness. It would be “an exaggeration” to argue for “widespread consensus” on what being conscious actually entails.

As “radically” diverging connotations exist in “different disciplines,” this dissertation provides English terminology that encapsulates Sarkar's Tantric terms for future interdisciplinary work in other transcendental and cognitive domains (Zahavi and Grunbaum ix). The terms listed below are a critical component of the following discussions on how

consciousness transforms from the ineffable ontological singularity into duality. To support my interdisciplinary ontological meta-narrative, the new term *Metaseity* is introduced, and the English terms Aseity, ipseity, and mind are also consistently employed. Readers should note the eighth term, *reality*, is used to describe phenomenal reality as opposed to ultimate Reality.

1: **Metaseity** — unqualified infinite consciousness: *Nirguṇa Brahma*, Tao, Śūnyatā, Absolute Void

2: **Aseity/Reality** — qualified infinite consciousness: *Saguna Brahma*, *Parama Puruṣa*, *Brahma*, Cosmic Mind, Noumenal Cause, Pure *A Priori*, Transcendental Entity, Singularity, Supreme Subjectivity, God

3: **Iipseity** — zetetic consciousness, the fundamental individual consciousness, undifferentiated by phenomenal duality, subject to extroversion and introversion: *Atman*, Unit Consciousness, *Cogito*, I, Self, Non-Egological Being, Individual Subjectivity

4: **Mind/Ego** — individual psychological life arising from ipseity due to extroversion and introversion; functioning through perception, desire, emotion, action, reflection, imagination, memory, dreams, discrimination, detachment, longing for the infinite, the gestalt of all the portions of mind: *mahatattva/buddhitattva*, *ahamṭattava*, and *citta* (pure I, doer I, objectified mind), phenomenal mind, egological mind, human mind

5: **Existential Mind** — the “knowing” portion of mind, I know I am:  
*mahattattva/buddhitattva*

6 **Actional Mind** — the “doing” portion of the mind, filters phenomena for perception:  
*ahamṭattva*

7 **Objectivated Mind** — the “done” portion of mind, transforms into objects of perception:  
*citta*

8: **reality** (un-capitalized) — quotidian awareness of phenomenal reality: existence, material reality, the cosmos, duality, objective reality



### 1.5 Sarkar's Ontology of Mind

I stated above that Sarkar's causal model of mind informs the terminology used in this dissertation's interdisciplinary discussion of transcendental consciousness and anthropical mind. This section systematizes and elucidates Sarkar's terminology for the comparative philosophical approach of this work. It seeks to resolve Mircea Eliade's contention that "Western investigators and philosophers may find the Indian analyses rather oversimplified and the proposed solutions ineffectual" because the "technical language" of their traditions appears to be "jargon." Although India's mystical traditions are often misconstrued — and the intuitional basis of their terminology ignored by uninitiated researchers — Eliade asserts India's great spiritual discoveries will ultimately "be recognized, under and despite the philosophic jargon."

Sarkar says the human mind has a "clearly-reflected consciousness" expressing the rational behavior which alleviates "misery and suffering." It further expresses an animal element directed at "physical enjoyments" in the quest for happiness, yet physical pleasures never satisfy the desire for happiness: "the acquisition of something limited only creates the want for more," and the quest for happiness finds no end." Inspired by ipseity's innate qualia of expansion and witnessing, the mind's drive to possess objects is "limitless and infinite." Ipseity's constant witnessing of the mind generates the ceaseless searching or zetetic activity. In acquiring mental objects, mind mistakes perception and assimilation for true expansion. The mind's ongoing efforts for survival stimulate its competition with other minds for finite resources, causing mind's fixation on crude duality. But at a subconscious level the mind understands that no single object will satisfy its infinite longings, and it constantly strives to

assimilate physical objects. Conflict arises between the desire for infinite happiness and egological survival. While the impetus for the psychic assimilation of limited objects holds sway satisfaction is impossible. If, during meditation, Aseity's "infinite and eternal" status is attained, mind is completely eliminated once ipseity's causal tether to the mind is broken.

This is why Sarkar states the only lasting path or "dharma of humanity" is to "realize the Infinite or Cosmic Entity" (par. 1-2).

Sarkar's causal model subdivides mind into three primary aspects: existential mind, actional mind, and objectivated mind — explicated in his 1955 discourse "What Is Dharma?" from *Ananda Marga Elementary Philosophy*. In describing the process by which mind comes to perceive a book, a hypothesis supporting ipseity's existence during meditation is presented. The three divisions of mind are also known as: (1) *citta*/done "I" (objectivated mind), (2) *ahamtattva*/doer "I" (actional mind), (3) *mahattattva/buddhitattva*/"I" (existential mind). During perception, recognition, and psychic assimilation of a book these aspects appear to operate synchronously in a spatiotemporal field of perception. Synchronicity is an illusion; in real terms, mind's rapid perception leaves us unaware of a sequential process. Causally, the three divisions of mind reflect the present, the present continuous, and the past perfect tense — I am, I am doing, I have done.

### 1.5.1 Objectivated Mind

Human action appears to be executed by the motor and sensory organs, but this activity underpins the need for a functioning mind directing the sensory organs perceptual "force." Perception requires a functioning mind, amply demonstrated by an open-eyed unconscious individuals who would not have any recollection of a book shown to them upon awakening. Sensory data, such as the light waves transmitted from a book, impact the retinal nerves and are carried to an occipital region of the brain; these vibrations then transform a

portion of the mind, known in Sanskrit as “*citta* or mind-stuff,” into a book (par. 13). This objectivated mind is plastic, ceaselessly morphing into various psychic objects.

True perception arises as objectivated mind is transformed into an abstract representation of the book —evidenced by the mind’s reconstruction of specific books (and other known objects) without requiring their physical presence. Arne Grøn argues “identity implies difference” and to “identify something particular” like the same physical book, is to recognize a “particular object” is not just “different from something else” but that the book can be described “differently from what I now identify it as” (124-25). The physical object and its cognitive counterpart are virtually but not absolutely identical.

Further supporting objectivated mind’s role in perception, Nikos K. Logothetis, David A. Leopold, and David L. Sheinberg claim cognitive research “over many years” highlights that “perception is not simply determined by the patterns of neural activity” in the retina of the eye; it is the “brain” which “allows experience and expectation” to significantly influence the organization of “sensory information.” Cognitive scientists propose that mind does not “see” the information but draws on “data” to “draw inferences as to what lies” before it (105). One way to look at this is to understand that the mind essentially puts together the sensory pieces of the “data puzzle” to mysteriously organize experiences. The intriguing question is how mind creates a viable, emergent reality through its selective data filtering. I argue mind’s ability to create stable objects through the gaps of perception, and without prior experience, points to an infinite epistemic reservoir which consciousness imbibes. This chapter’s discussion of Aseity and Metaseity will show that this is precisely what Sarkar’s Tantric model of mind proposes. Chapter Eight will indicate how this can be experienced by comparatively examining Husserl’s *epoché* and Sarkar’s Tantric reductions of mind.

### 1.5.2 Actional Mind

After the light waves reflected from a book morph objectivated mind, another part of mind does “the work of seeing” the book. The Sanskrit name for this portion is *ahamtattva* ‘doer I’ or actional mind. Mind, despite what common sense suggests, does not receive information in an unbroken flow. Although cognition seems continuous, perception is quite “gappy” and “disjointed”: the “snapshots of different parts of our environment” are interspersed with “brief interludes of no visual input at all.” The brain, or more appropriately the mind, completes the unseen portions to provide a “continuous and stable scan” (Logothetis 107).

Sarkar states perception of a book happens after mind comes in contact with “*rupa tanmátra*,” the external vibrations from the book that are psychically assimilated before recognition can occur. *Tanmátra* are the objects radiated microscopic waves which stimulate the *indriyas* (sensory organs) like the eye. The objectivated mind will only transform itself into a book if a separate portion, actional mind, activates this change. For this reason, people engaged in deep thought will not see what is directly in front of them because actional mind and objectivated mind can only maintain a *single* psychic object during any specific instance of perception. Once what is perceived is attenuated by changes in focus or concentration, new vibrations previously ignored by actional mind become available for transformation and assimilation. Actional mind filters the data that transform objectivated mind into a specific object. In other words, actional mind is the “doing” lens that directs the vibrations impacting the sensory organs and orchestrates their transformation in objectivated mind.

### 1.5.3 Existential Mind

Sequentially stated, objectivated mind takes the shape of a specific object and actional mind perceives the image. Phenomenologists are interested in the activity of actional and

objectivated mind, but Sarkar states that although actional mind is the apperceptive or “doing” portion of mind, there must be an epistemic portion of mind to take ownership of the transformed objectivated and filtering actional aspects of the mind. This “knowing” mind is “*mahattattva/buddhitattva*,” or existential mind. It establishes the sense of “I” in relationship to all phenomena: “No action can be performed” without the “feeling of the existence of ‘I’ or knowledge of the self.” Mind must experience its own existence for volitional perception to occur.

Sarkar’s model requires a mental entity to experience possession of perception. Marc Jeannerod asks, “What makes us self-conscious?” or why is it that “we can consciously refer to ourselves” as a “particular self, the narrative self? He argues that “as narrators we obviously know who we are, where we are, what we are presently doing, and what we were doing before,” and “we have a strong feeling of continuity in our conscious experience” (124). This “knowingness” or awareness of Being is the ground zero of our mind’s subjective ownership of all its experiences. Perception of external or internal objects only occurs because of existential mind, and all sensory data would be unrecognizable — and self-perception impossible — without existential mind which is, itself, ineliminable from its ownership of the objects created in objectivated and actional mind. Quite simply, anthropical mind, otherwise known as phenomenal mind, or “the outward manifestations of mind,” is the composite of objectivated, actional, and existential mind — or the temporal aggregate of the past perfect, the present continuous, and the present (par. 3).

It has been shown mind is an organ of perception dependent on a sense of self-existence to function, and phenomenologists as well as neuroscientists acknowledge the existence of a self but not how it comes into being. Although, as Naoyuki Osaka explains, the neurosciences focus on the “basis of consciousness” in the brain-mind relationship, they leave the “hard problem” of subjective “qualia” to phenomenologists, arguing the latter will

be resolved by “the binding issues of neuroscience.” But, neuroscientists and phenomenologists leave the nature of consciousness “in terms of subjective” qualities that appear unrelated to the object of perception unresolved. Even the use of “modern fMRI” has not explained the “relation[ship] between the brain and mind” (2).

Over millennia meditators have realized that consciousness is the interface between mind and brain. Certainly, Tantrics and “traditional Buddhist[s]” hold “consciousness transcends the brain,” yet Evan Thompson reports the Dalai Lama “wonders whether all conscious states — even the subtler states of ‘luminous consciousness’ or ‘pure awareness’ without any mental images — require some sort of physical basis” (loc. 200). J. Singh states “quantum mechanists” who consider “consciousness “a basic property of matter” are likely correct: “In the inert matter it is dormant,” but “with the first sign of life, the soup begins to thaw and consciousness begins to evolve” (38). Consciousness is “the primordial stuff that this universe has metamorphosed from under the influence of primordial energy” (37). Sarkar’s causal model supports the idea that the brain and mind are mutually interdependent, but mind is merely a functional reflection of ipseity’s consciousness.

#### 1.5.4 Ipseity

Existential mind has the sense of its own existence, the feeling of “I-ness.” The process of cognition can be explained as follows: all objects are created in a part of the mind (objectivated mind) and seen by another portion of mind (actional mind). To see is to know which indicates there is a self-aware agent that experiences its capacity to assimilate and enjoy objects (existential mind). Existential mind takes ownership of all actions and perceptions; it is the egological me, myself, and I. This “I” is the independent subjectivity that objectifies phenomena —the Cartesian self. Most theories of mind are built on the cogito, but Sarkar radically departs from Cartesian phenomenology. As existential mind (“I exist”)



knows its ownership of objectivated and actional mind, there must be a true “possessing ‘I’” cognizant of the mind. There is this unrecognized transcendental “real entity” witnessing existential mind. This pure unchanging witness has no sense of ownership and is known in Tantra-Yoga as the “*ātman*.” The *ātman* of ipseity is famously denied by Buddhist texts.

Knowledge of ipseity can be achieved “through introspection and concentrated thinking” to reveal that ipseity and mind are “two separate [but related] entities” (Ānandamūrti par. 15). It needs to be remembered that mind is the “embodiment” of duality. Mind survives by sustaining duality, the distance between knower and known, and the separation of subject and object. Existential mind continuously transforms aspects of itself into phenomenal objects, yet nothing that is continually transforming is stable enough to be an existential constant. Ipseity, which remains unchanged from the moment it begins consciously witnessing the activity of mind, is the true noumenal entity behind existential mind’s systaltic existence.


The statement “I exist” presupposes the presence of “I” which is the witness of this existence. This witnessing entity is *ātman* [ipseity] or unit consciousness and its presence is established by the feeling of existence that one displays by one’s every action. That this assertion of “I exist” is different from *ātman* [ipseity] or unit consciousness is seen from the fact that this “I” presupposes the presence of my *ātman* [ipseity] or unit consciousness. This feeling proves that unit consciousness is only consciousness and that without consciousness existence is not possible. Without consciousness there can be no feeling of existence. What then is going to witness the existence of “I”? Consciousness is therefore essential to create the feeling of *mahattattva* or *buddhitattva* [existential mind]. To be explicit, *mahattattva* or *buddhitattva* [existential mind] cannot exist without *ātman* [ipseity] or unit consciousness. (par. 14)

Ipseity is the consciousness existing within each individual, and every mind is witnessed by it. The critical question, which science and psychology have not been able to resolve, is what makes ipseity conscious. Tantric ontology posits that all individual ipseities share a single identity — a qualified reflection of Aseity's singularity — much as a drop of water is essentially indivisible from the ocean. The difference is the container and not the contents. Then why does separation occur? Sarkar's answer is found in ipseity's relationship to mind: mind is the valence of cause and effect (*saṃskāra*), and its engagement with action and reaction differentiates ipseity from Aseity. While ipseity witnesses existential mind's activities, the individual has no capacity to realize singularity because duality prevents ipseity from accessing the liberating experiencing of itself as Aseity.

Individual anthropical mind is a kaleidoscope of egological agency and reactive expressions. But, the ipseity of every subject is intrinsically identical, regardless of its mental association. By being a singularity, ipseity links mind and consciousness together and is not impacted by the mundane forces that buffet the mind.

It has been noted that the cessation of existential mind in meditation does not end enstasis, increasing the likelihood ipseity does not originate in mind. Under the impact of quotidian cognitive flows, ipseity's overwhelming fixation on the mind's activities inhibits spiritual enstasis. If ipseity reifies consciousness of the mind, action and reaction limit its awareness to spatiotemporal dimensions. In other words, duality is the sole purvey of mind, and the singular consciousness witnessing this performance provides existential mind with the context for active self-delusion. Tantra overcomes this by developing the detachment enabling ipseity to fully enter singularity. Given ipseity is the inferential ground of all experiences, Sarkar states the "existence" of "consciousness" does not depend "on any forms," making "consciousness" an "absolutely independent" entity ("What Is the Cosmic Entity" par. 4).

### 1.5.6 Aseity



Cosmic mind or Aseity begins to make its presence felt when mind moves from phenomena to concentrate on ipseity. The meditator focuses on infinite consciousness (at this point it is symbolic) in objectivated mind, sustains the ideation with the actional component of mind, and allows existential mind to completely identify with its object of concentration. In time, the unification of mind with its object is realized and ipseity, freed from witnessing duality, becomes present to itself. Once mental fluctuations are eliminated, the mind can perfectly reflect ipseity's consciousness, the two merge, and mind's independent existence temporarily disappears. Without mind the remaining consciousness becomes immeasurable to itself; "mind is incapable of coming in contact with unit consciousness [ipseity]" while qualified by duality. Ipseity's complete absorption in Aseity illuminates the "creation" extending "beyond the limits of mind" into "infinite" consciousness. When ipseity's witnessing function turns towards its source in Aseity, it finds no origin or terminus and the manifest cosmos becomes available within. Reality manifests as what it has always been, pure consciousness. Thus, Sarkar says "*Brahma* [Aseity], the whole" is "infinite" (par. 10).

Sarkar explains the Shiva-*Shakti* principle in terms of consciousness and force —the two intrinsic qualities of Aseity. Just as heat is inseparably a part of fire, *prakrti*, the qualifying attributes of *Shakti* (force), is inseparably a part of consciousness: "Anything which acquires a characteristic quality due to the influence of a principle or force cannot exist if that force is withdrawn from it" ("What Is Dharma" par 17). Likewise, if ipseity's witnessing faculty is associated with an individual mind, ipseity is temporarily qualified, like a drop of ocean water. All minds and their attendant ipseities are limited by *prakrti*'s 'force and energy' which varies throughout Aseity.

The extroversive or introversive expansion and contraction of parts of Aseity vis-à-vis *Shakti*'s operation generates reality as the manifestation of mind and consciousness. *Shakti* is

the unique cosmological force that establishes the universal law of action and reaction applicable to all manifest reality. It can be said that Aseity and its operative force are inseparably a part of the same conscious existence which scientists call *nature* and theologians name *God* — experienced by Tantric meditators as Shiva consciousness or Cosmic Mind.

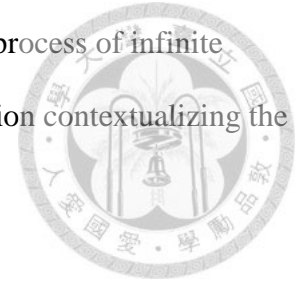
### 1.5.7 Metaseity

Ipseity and mind do not exist unless Aseity's qualifying force (*Shakti/prakriti*) binds them with action and reaction. The relative degrees of quiescence or movement of the force that expands or contracts portions of Aseity determines whether consciousness appears as a fully expressed ipseity, lower forms of mind, or matter. The apotheosis of unexpressed consciousness — or absolute quiescence — whereby *prakriti* has no effect on consciousness is the unconditioned liberation of the Metaseity known to Tantrics and Buddhists as *Nirguṇa/sunyata/* (nothingness). Little can be directly said about Metaseity because describing this unqualified entity would require the presence of a mind capable of quantifying infinity. In Chapter Six I attempt to comparatively explore the concept of experiencing Metaseity while discussing infinity.

### 1.5.8 Concluding Thoughts

I emphasize the qualification of ipseity is the practical condition of human consciousness in an extant mind, but limitation is not ipseity's essence. Meditation inspires the return journey from mind to Aseity, and, if successful, ipseity transcends mind so that the meditator enters *savikalpa samādhi*. While ipseity witnesses duality it remains self-imprisoned via the activity of objectivated, actional, and existential mind. Once mind turns completely towards ipseity, the unchanging consciousness becomes fully reflected. When the

consciousness powering mind is directed towards its own essence, the process of infinite expansion commences. This is the Tantric *sādhana* or spiritual meditation contextualizing the emic approach of the chapters that follow.



## 1.6 Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is divided into two parts. Part One deals with the history of Tantra and compares Sarkar's historiography to commonly accepted Indological perspectives. While the history of Tantra constitutes half of the work, the overall theme projects towards Part Two's comparative exploration of the transcendental praxes informing Western and Eastern ideas of cosmology and ontology. Dividing this work into Tantric history and transcendental praxis is to simplify rather than separate. From Sarkar's perspective (and the Indian episteme), the history of Shiva Tantra is the background to Asia's important transcendental systems.

Part One focuses on Tantra's historiography. Chapter Two introduces Sarkar and details the contested definitions and domains of Tantra including the antinomian and monistic elements characterizing Classical Tantra. Tantra's vexed history and the problematic methodological, textual, archaeological, geological, inter-traditional, and linguistic data supporting its acceptance as a first millennium phenomenon are detailed in Chapter Three. This includes a brief discussion of the interrelationship between Tantra and Buddhism. Chapters Four and Five focus on Sarkar's Shivology and his prehistorical account of Shiva's relationship with the indigenous people of India. How Tantra and Vedic philosophy came to blend between 7,500-3,500 BCE during the Aryan migration into India is outlined. Chapter Four explores the growth of Tantra-Yogic practices, the Vedas, and the role of the Guru in Vedic and Tantric initiation. Chapter Five extends Sarkar's presentation of the Shiva era, detailing Tantric praxis and philosophy, Vedic casteism and Tantric medicine, and the

festivals and deities connected with Shiva. It concludes with an emic analysis of the spiritual meaning of the terms *Shiva* and *Shakti*.

Part Two focuses on transcendental philosophy and praxis contextualized by Sarkar's Tantra. Chapter Six addresses empirical versus transcendental theories of consciousness and contrasts Sarkar's transcendental cosmology with scientific realism. In Chapter Seven, Sarkar's rationale for making Aseity the ideal object and objective of liberatory meditation is related to the meditative trances known as *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* while analyzing competing claims from Buddhists and Tantrics. Chapter Eight comparatively deals with the objective of meditation vis-à-vis the theoretical and practical component of Husserl's phenomenology and emic knowledge of Sarkar's secret first lesson of Tantric meditation. Given Husserl's elevation of Buddhist praxis, the benefits of extending Husserl's transcendental reduction via Sarkar's Tantric *pratyāhāra* are debated. Chapter Eight utilizes a phenomenological approach to analyze the appropriate object of meditation vis-à-vis Husserl's pure *a priori* and ipseity. Chapter Nine compares Socratic *eros* and Tantric *bhakti* to expose previously unexplored similarities between Indo-Greek transcendental praxes — suggesting a common Tantric heritage. By understanding the parallels between Parmenidean monism and Tantric Metaseity, previously ignored connections between Socratic *eros* and the *iatromantis* ascetics of Greece are also revealed. Overall, Chapter Nine explores the objective of meditation by comparing and contrasting Diotima's instructions to Socrates on the nature of love and transcendental praxis. Chapter 10 concludes with a synthesis of the previous chapters and summarizes the object and objective of meditation per Sarkar's evolution of Shiva Tantra.



# **PART I**

## **HISTORY AND PRAXIS**

## Chapter Two

### Sarkar and Tantra



*This chapter introduces Sarkar and Sarkarian scholars working in the Tantric episteme. It discusses Tantra's contested definitions as a system of antinomian and meditative praxes from etic and emic perspectives. Sarkar's definition of Tantra as a liberatory system eschewing materialism is then explored, concluding with his association of human existence with Tantric sādhanā and transcendence.*

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#### 2.1 Sarkar's Background

Shrii Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921 – 1990), or Shrii Shrii Anandamurti to his disciples, was born in Jamalpur, India, and was lauded by the 7th president of India, G. Z. Singh, as “one of the greatest modern philosophers of India (S. Inayatullah *Situating Sarkar: Tantra, Macrohistory and Alternative Futures* iv). In 1955 Sarkar founded the spiritual and humanitarian organization Ánanda Márga to promote and disseminate a new awareness of Shiva Tantra and its yogic praxes. He anticipated the growing demand for verifiable transcendental praxes by providing the science of Tantric spirituality to expand individual consciousness, encourage socioeconomic reform, and reduce the effects of ego-driven reductionist psychology. Ánanda Márga propagates spiritual, political, economic, and humanitarian models under the umbra of Tantric ideology to create a spiritual system cognizant of the individual and society's interdependence. Today, Sarkar is most revered as the Tantric Guru (spiritual guide) of Ánanda Márga Pracáraka Samgha for his teachings of Tantra sādhanā, the systems of meditation leading to *mokśa* or liberation experienced in the meditative state known as *nirvikalpa samādhī*, the unqualified absorption of the self in Metaseity.



Sarkar's ideas are practically unknown to Western audiences despite his remarkable contributions to linguistics, Sanskrit, philology, history, political and social theory, philosophy, and spiritual practice. His extemporaneous discourses and articles given between 1955 and 1990 were recorded by his disciples, resulting in 269 books in Bengali, English and Hindi. Although Sarkar's formal studies at the University of Calcutta were cut short by the death of his father, his corpus is extensive. As of October 2009, in version 7.5 of *The Electronic Edition of the Works of P.R. Sarkar*, there were 1271 articles from 138 books in English and about 700 discourses are yet to be translated from Hindi and Bengali. 2014 has seen a few more books in print — *Yoga Sāadhanā* is particularly relevant to researchers seeking a comprehensive overview of Sarkar's Tantric meditation.

Sarkar's polymathic knowledge appears to be primarily intuitional. Without engaging in extensive reading, he presented comparative and trenchant interpretations of Tantric and Vedic philosophy, composed a comprehensive spiritual pedagogy, and contributed unique insights into history, language, medicine, music, economics, politics, and psychology. Nevertheless, few of these ideas have been communicated outside his circle of Tantric practitioners.<sup>2</sup> His Tantric historiography is bound to be debated in Indological quarters because of the lack of definitive dates for the Vedas and the uncertainty surrounding the origins and impact of Tantra on Vedic and Buddhist thought.<sup>3</sup>

Sarkarian scholars' Sohail Inayatullah and Jennifer Fitzgerald, in *Transcending Boundaries*, recognize that Sarkar worked "within the oral tradition" of India and focused on spiritual "synthesis rather than analysis," making his work "not readily accessible to analytical thinkers" (preface). His "ontological position" was tantric, predicated on India's indigenous culture," which stressed "the practical experience of inner transformation" and not "religious textualism." Inayatullah and Fitzgerald note religious textualism is often "associated with the Vedas, India's other spiritual tradition" whereas Shiva Tantra, Sarkar

tells us, was practical, intuitive, and transmitted orally (5). Sarkar reshapes Shiva Tantra out of the Indian episteme which, Marcus Bussey says facilitates a “critical spirituality” that opens “new categories for making sense of reality” and “an integrated vision of the human being” (“Critical Spirituality: Towards a Revitalized Humanity” 42). Tantra guides the process of “building contemplative processes” and self-reflective methods whereby “theory is validated through practice and practice is validated in turn through reflection” granting the practitioner an “escape from the maze of the mind” (43).

## 2.2 Sarkarian Commentary

Over the last two decades, Sarkar’s ideas have begun to influence thinkers in India and abroad, but Sarkarian commentary has received limited notice. His socio-economic theory PROUT (Progressive Utilization Theory) has some traction with economists and those looking for an alternative to communism and capitalism, yet research into his spiritual praxes remains sparse. To my knowledge, Chris Kang’s 2002 dissertation, *The Spiritual Teachings of Sarkar*, is the last work focused on Sarkar’s spiritual praxis. Kang, himself, noted a “paucity of research” into Ānanda Mārga and “the spiritual philosophy and practice of its founder” (6). Kang gives a broad overview of the spiritual practices included in Ānanda Mārga as a “fixed system” and addresses Sarkar’s historiography within Sarkarian texts without much recourse to comparative histories. He divides the history of Sarkar’s cosmology in two parts: the “*brahmacakra*” teachings between “1955 and 1961” and Sarkar’s later introduction of a “cosmology based on microvita theory” between 1986 and 1989 that brings the “earlier cosmology” into a “new light” (25). Furthermore, Kang offers some comparisons of Sarkar’s philosophy to “traditions deemed most similar to Sarkar’s project” (27).

Preceding Kang's work, Inayatullah's *Understanding Sarkar* gave a significant overview of Sarkar's sociopolitical philosophy by analyzing his universal outlook couched in the language of "the rational." Inayatullah argues for an "all embracing" identity that breaks "out of all boundaries" to "dialectically transcend the limits of what is, and to move to a location" where the individual "exists in the presence of the spirit, not the nation" or any "ism" (3). Inayatullah is clearly cognizant of the spiritual dialectic undergirding Sarkar's social transformation, yet his trajectory anticipates how Sarkar's Tantra can fuel the "individual and social struggle" that is "central to creating a good society" by creating "balanced" individuals (8-10). Kang's concise overview of *Understanding Sarkar* argues the work is significant in seeking "to contextualize Sarkar in traditional and mediaeval India" and "contemporary cross-cultural academic discourse" under the Sarkarian rubric of "social philosophy, theory of history, and social movements" (7).

Inayatullah has also edited and published a diverse array of books and articles focusing on comparative histories, future studies, and social theory drawing on Sarkar's social vision, while Kang explores "Sarkar's texts" in "their discursive multiverse," situated in the "texts of the Indian religious civilization and subsequent Western academic interpretation of these texts" (25).

Marcus Bussey is another researcher influenced by Sarkar's "synthesis of the mystical and critical," and Bussey incorporates Sarkarian ideas into social and educational futures ("Where Next for Pedagogy? Critical Agency in Educational Futures" 20). Bussey is prolific; his 2008 dissertation, *Where Next for Pedagogy? Critical Agency in Educational Futures*, is "ontologically" determined by "the work of Sarkar and his neohumanism (22), with the dissertation focusing on "shamanic futures thinking" that "moves from the empirical, to the interpretive" and "then onto the holistic and spiritual" to inform a pedagogy that includes a "libratory process" (2). Finally, academic, Ivana Milojevic, significantly incorporates

Sarkar's philosophy in her work on gender, race, peace, education, and critical spirituality. Apart from Kang's dissertation, and his 2011 comparative article, "Sarkar on the Buddha's Four Noble Truths" published in *Philosophy East & West*, the status quo regarding the philosophical exploration of Sarkar's meditative praxes in 2014 is mostly unchanged.

Although the foregoing researchers have produced important works on Sarkar's social and spiritual ideology, they do not investigate Tantric historiography nor detail Sarkar's unique account of Shiva Tantra. Filling this piece of history is important to Indologists and Sarkarian scholars because he not only realigns modern Tantra with Shiva Tantra but universalizes the Tantric episteme for future generations. Sarkar, Inayatullah states, considered "Shiva" to be "extra-historical" who "existed empirically" but played "a grand and mythological role in righting the balance of the world" (*Understanding Sarkar: The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge* 13). Inayatullah situates Sarkar genealogically within "Indian thought," as his "universal" teachings are situated in "tracts on Indian historical figures" such as Shiva, Krishna, and other Indian philosophers (36).

Kang points out the postmodern caveat that a "presuppositionless exegesis" of any philosopher's work "is impossible" given the "fusion" of the "horizons of the reader and the texts": all psycho-textual interactions somewhat pre-determine the outcome of any comparative work (277). Likewise, a postmodern account of Sarkar's Tantra urges recognizing that his Indian education in Vidyāsagar steeped him in the "historical and spiritual legacy" of India. Accordingly, his education may have been "an important source of his religious knowledge" and the "subsequent philosophical constructions" of his Tantra (278).

The Indian episteme notwithstanding, Inayatullah and Kang's postmodern comparisons of Sarkar's thought to other Indian spiritual traditions are not the only avenues;

Sarkar's synthesis of Tantra appears to extend beyond the influence of conventional learning and his Indian background. His unique cosmology and spiritual narrative adroitly merge geography, linguistics, comparative religion, and prehistory to present a timeline of Tantra either unknown or forgotten. Possibly the product of intuition or exceptional synthesis, Kang thinks Sarkar's knowledge stems from "epistemological roots" that transcend "history and language" (278). With this in mind, Part One's comparative approach details Sarkar's unique revisions of Tantric historiography.

Sarkar's narrative, counter to contemporary genealogical accounts of Tantric preceptors, proposes the history of India's transcendental practices, particularly Tantra-Yoga. Tantra is anachronistic and skewed by a lack of comparative research and misinformation. I argue the chronological discrepancies and philosophical malapropisms now prevailing in Tantra-Yoga studies require critically investigating contemporary understanding of the field contrasted by data that includes the domains of intra and extra-textual philology, archaeology, and geographical mapping. To maintain objectivity, the foregoing domains should be considered under postmodern historical paradigms that are sensitive to colonial and postcolonial hermeneutic agendas. In this regard, almost every modern Indological text reiterates how India's history has been distorted or lost due to syncretic and analytic forces acting through millennia to (re)establish religious and sociopolitical structures. Therefore, Part One argues Tantra's contentious history and Tantra's relationship to the Yogic, Buddhist, and Vedic traditions needs to be critically reappraised as Sarkar's teachings and comparative research undermine received views. Part One demonstrates that India's contemplative episteme is rooted in Shiva Tantra, which gradually branched out into different traditions to become the now forgotten basis of transcendental praxes throughout Asia. Forms of Tantra-Yoga eventually diffused to the West via Indo-Greek channels to influence the pre-

Socratic's.<sup>4</sup> Although not a comprehensive survey, Part One is a dialogue that incorporates comparative Indological accounts and Sarkar's teachings into an old debate. I now turn to the problems confronting the commonly accepted definition of Tantra followed by Sarkar's exegesis.

### 2.3 Tantra (Un)Defined

Contemporary studies in Tantra formulate it as a syncretic spiritual and cultural phenomenon making it increasingly relevant to postmodern perspectives. Two dominant themes saturate modern cosmology and ontology: (1) existential perspectives based on material reductionism and (2) transcendental perspectives depending on immaterial principles. As such, the cold logic of objective material analysis is juxtaposed with an often unsatisfactory rationale of the spirit. People familiar with both face the dilemma of either denying the world of the spirit or believing in the seemingly irrational. The middle ground is a murky quagmire of competing evidence and deferred faith. These positions will not satisfy every question. After all, faith without experience is as futile as science without reason. Tantra affirms the precedence of consciousness by straddling the transcendent and immanent and situating the latter in the former. This perspective is not widely understood, nor is Sarkar's system of meditation that validates Tantric philosophy openly practiced. In general, Tantric philosophy and psychology are opaque; myriad interpretations are applied to the divergent practices of Tantric schools.

Regarding Shiva Tantra, Alexis Sanderson says "Śaivism [Shaivism/Shaeivism] . . . refers to a number of distinct but historically related systems" made up of "theology, ritual, observance and yoga" handed down "as the teachings of the Hindu deity Śiva" (601). Given

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<sup>4</sup> The diffusion of Indian thought to Greece is discussed in Chapter 9.

the broad spectrum of Tantric systems, what is the precise meaning of Tantra? . . . deified religion? . . . antinomian counterculture? . . . or a social movement attempting to circumvent racial divides and sexual hegemony? Any cursory survey of Tantric literature could convincingly indicate a positive answer to all of the above queries following the great variety of definitions accorded Tantra in the last 150 years. These nuanced definitions have risen or fallen with researches eager to align or separate Tantric praxes from other Indian religions. A general postmodern definition might conceive Tantra to be a boundary crossing discipline invoking progress and a challenge to otherwise entrenched religions.

No single definition of Tantra is likely to be accepted by researchers and practitioners: Tantra's assimilation by social groups and religions far removed from Shiva's teachings make a universally palatable statement improbable. Nevertheless, while Tantra and its praxes are particularly widespread and diffused, reviewing the literature highlights Tantra's role as a "specialized revelation" that destroys "the rebirth-generating power of the individual's past actions" or "karma" (601). Scholars of Shiva Tantra, also known as Shaivism, Shaivism, or Shaveva Dharma, consider it the apotheosis of contemplative techniques that merge ipseity into Metaseity. It is reasonable to argue for academic consensus concerning Tantra's soteriology although its actualization remains mysterious. The common goal of Tantra in its various guises is transcendental: the complete liberation of the self from all forms of bondage or *guñas*. Its ascetic praxes — when correctly performed — propel the practitioner towards an experience of the intractable connection between human consciousness and Reality.

Christopher Wallis's definition drawn from the *Kāmikā-tantra* succinctly illuminates the common element found in most scholarly sources on Tantra's power to remove bondage: "Because it elaborates copious and profound matters, especially relating to the principles of reality (*tattvas*) and mantras, and because it saves us (from the cycle of suffering), it is called a tantra." In other words, "Tantra spreads (*tan*) wisdom that saves (*tra*)." Wallis goes on to

say it “could equally” be said “that a tantra is a device (*tra*) for expanding (*tan*), as a mantra is a device for working with the mind (*man*), and a yantra is a device for controlling (*yan*)” (26). Furthermore, Wallace includes a definition from “within” the tradition given by Rāma Kaṇṭha a “Tantrik scholar and guru” circa “950-1000 CE”: “A Tantra is a divinely revealed body of teachings, explaining what is necessary and what is a hindrance in the practice of the worship of the Divine.” Tantra describes “the specialized initiation and purification ceremonies that are the necessary prerequisites of Tantrik practice” (27). Offering a slightly different perspective, Louise Child argues that despite the individual “features characterizing each Tantric method of transmission,” all Tantric schools “hold in common a sense of discovery” which “although based on transformation,” is primarily conceptualized in “an awareness rooted in the realization of the etheric body, through altered states of consciousness.” Child considers the difference between Tantric and Buddhist practice to be found not so much in the “motivation and dedication of the meditator” at the outset but rather the notion of a catalytic experience through “contact, with sacred objects, persons, and deities” which orchestrate the “experience that awakens this sleeping awareness” (137). Child correctly emphasizes *diikśā* ‘initiation’ in Tantra, but the requirement of contact with a sacred object in order to awaken the initiates latent spiritual yearning is debatable and would likely only appear in etiolated schools of Tantra without a traditional lineage.

Hugh B. Urban in *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics and Power in the Study of Religion* states the etymological origins of the word Tantra are found as a “key term” in the “*Rg* and *Atharva* Vedas.” Urban contends Tantra’s “meaning” is neither “simple” nor “fixed,” but “most scholars seem to agree” Pāṇini’s interpretation of “the term probably derives from the root *tan*,” meaning to “stretch, to spread, or to weave, and, metaphorically, to lay out, to explain, or to espouse.” Accordingly, Urban’s analysis sees the word *Tantra* in its truest sense when the verb *tan* is used in the “classic cosmogonic hymn (RV 10.90)” describing the



ontology of the universe “out of the sacrificial dismemberment of the primordial man, Puruṣa.” The translation follows: “When the gods spread out (*atanvata*) the sacrifice with the Man as the offering, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation. . . (T)he gods, spreading the sacrifice, bound the Man as the sacrificial beast (RV 10.90.6,15)” (25). The appearance of the verb *tan* is frequently cited as the earliest textual reference to Tantra, but in Sarkar’s history this textual reference occurs long after its use during the Shiva era. If Shiva Tantra is restricted to the first appearance of the written Vedas and their later commentary, it makes an argument for Shiva Tantra’s existence 4000-3500 years before the commonly accepted textual dating of the *Rg Veda (RV)* in 1500 BC entirely improbable or fantastical.

The problem, as we will see, with the commonly accepted date of the *RV* is its unflinching acceptance by many Western sources.<sup>5</sup> Western scholarship has tended to adopt the earliest research into the *Vedas* by Sanskritist Max Mueller and Indologists in the final decades of the 1800s. Although groundbreaking at the time, their historical narrative was hampered by unsophisticated and unregulated archaeological techniques and much was assumed by colonial scholarship. Their inherent bias towards Greek preeminence in Western philosophy reduced Indian philosophy to a derivative rather than original phenomenon. A growing body of evidence against the accepted dating of the *RV* is appearing — enough to suggest that previous scholarship is overly conservative when estimating the presence of the Vedas in the oral traditions of India. To reiterate, comparative research into India’s oral traditions is the key to unlocking an earlier timeframe for the *RV*. Revising its terminus a quo allows for precisely the cross-pollination of traditions that Sarkar argues diluted Shiva’s teachings and created the ramified system that Tantra is today. Therefore, Urban rightly argues that the “etymological meaning of ‘stretching’ and ‘weaving,’” makes Tantra “less a

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<sup>5</sup> This is examined in chapter 3.

unified singular entity than a series of complex threads that have been woven, spread out, and extended in manifold ways throughout the rich fabric of Indian history” (25).

The misnomer that Tantra is a singular system is common among lay audiences: correctly speaking there are numerous schools of Tantra based on Tantric texts. This should not dissuade us from talking about Tantra as a generic term but, rather, remind that Tantra has various associations in different areas. Tantra, as a whole, can involve several major lineages aligned with the classical Shiva tradition which branched into numerous modern schools and neo-Tantra. André Padoux argues that Tantrism is a “protean phenomenon . . . so complex and elusive that it is practically impossible to define it” or, at the very least, “to agree on its definition.” He points out H.V. Guenther’s contention that Tantra is “probably one of the haziest notions and misconceptions Western mind has evolved.” If one ignores this as overly dismissive, Padoux correctly claims Tantra is “something vast, diffuse, diverse and very difficult to define satisfactorily (17). Even within the Indian subcontinent Tantra is not understood by most Indians.

June McDaniel’s interview with Tapan, a Tantric devotee of Kali in West Bengal, highlights some of the divisions within the tradition: “there are many forms of Tantric sadhana [meditation]. There are three major styles (*bhavas*): the *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika bhavas*. (McDaniel 78). Tapan’s overview is more an overview of cosmology than a strict description of Tantric practices. In *Discourses on Tantra: Volume One* Sarkar explains that the Sanskrit *bhava* means “to become” and *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika bhavas* represent the creative forces of *shakti* that become sentient, static, and mutative (18). The tripartite of these *guṇas* or binding forces are the cause of mundane becoming and not specific forms of meditation. Broadly speaking, Tantric meditation in its present iterations can be divided into two styles: transcendental (liberatory) and antinomian (power based).

Tapan considers *sattvika sādhanā* or the system of *bhakti* ‘devotion’ as “the best path to follow” (McDaniel 78).



### 2.3.1 Antinomian Tantra

Wallis highlights the separation of Tantra and “esoteric sexual practices” by the divisions of “left-handed” or antinomian Neo-Tantra and the “classical non-dual Shaiva (Shiva-Shakti) Tantra” that includes a “spectrum of right-handed” practices (iv). Neo-Tantra, or the so-called “new age” Tantras, is not solely related to antinomian or sexual practices. Still, it is clear from the extant Tantric literature that this element is frequently emphasized over the traditional right-hand practices. Pleasure (that poor reflection of bliss) is frequently emphasized in Tantric experiences:

Within the Tantric tradition of which I am an initiate, both desire and pleasure are the engines of creation. Nothing is rejected. Nothing is renounced. A self-aware energy, pulsing with spontaneous desire, emanates the manifest universe and then experiences pleasure upon encountering itself in all its multiplicity. (Weinstein 2)

Absolute acceptance of the manifest universe is appropriate and welcomed, but acceptance does not diminish the need for asceticism if the ultimate goal of the practice is to attain the deepest expression of Aseity in *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Nevertheless, in many Tantric traditions physical pleasure and a “lust for life” are promoted. Viewing Tantra along these lines has occupied religious scholars and practitioners for a century and a half. Geoffrey Samuel argues, in *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra*, it is doubtful that a “precise” origin “of the wild, transgressive, antinomian strain in Tantra” will ever be clearly detailed despite access to “a lot of material” on the “transgressive styles” which “developed in both Brahminical (mainly Saiva) and in Buddhist contexts.” Both groups contend that the desire for power from the

transgressive side developed as a result of the other party. Samuel notes “modern Hindu scholars” have a tendency to “blame Tantra on the Buddhists, while Buddhist scholars have either returned the compliment, or argued that Buddhist Tantric practices”—in contrast to Hindu Tantra —“was pure and compassionate, with only the most elevated of aims.” Regardless of these competing claims, both left hand and right hand goals existed “on both sides of the Hindu-Buddhist Tantric divide” because “Saivas and Buddhists borrowed extensively from each other” without always acknowledging the trade (232).

Adding to the difficulties of defining Tantra is the reluctance of local Indians to admit practicing Tantra as its practice can endanger their personal safety and social acceptance. Tapan does not call himself a tantrika “because tantrikas have a bad reputation in West Bengal.” Tantrics are “popularly portrayed as madmen, perverts, cannibals, drug addicts, and alcoholics.” Although Tapan’s practice is heavily “Tantric,” he calls it “Vedic and devotional”:

I [Tapan] have practiced both Vedic and Tantric sadhana. But I do not call myself a tantrika — I don’t take liquor, bhang, *ganjika* [hashish] and that sort of thing. Tantra is a dangerous path—there is much possibility of insanity and brain damage. The Tantric path to liberation is fast and easy (*sahaja*), but it always has risks. The Vedic path is longer, but the risks are fewer. (McDaniel 78)

The portrayal of Tantrikas as degenerates and undesirable to the community at large in West Bengal creates fear of the ritual practices associated with Tantra. There are reprisals by “goondas,” the criminal element, “often hired by political groups,” to create an “atmosphere . . . against tantra *sādhana*.” McDaniels says this is an “organized attempt to rid West Bengal of people viewed as social parasites and troublemakers.” These tactics are employed by the Communist “anti-superstition club” in West Bengal (79). Ironically,

“communist leaders” will still go to “tantrikas and astrologers” to predict the “results of an election” because of their belief in “*sakti*” (79). Tapan’s local viewpoint reveals the widespread (if erroneous) belief of Tantra’s association with a broad spectrum of antisocial practices which are either misunderstood or subverted to fit the agendas of entrenched religious and political systems.

Christian Wedemeyer’s work on Buddhist Tantra, the daughter of Shiva Tantra, justifiably claims Tantra’s methods are usually bracketed by the “circular reasoning” of commentators so that “the transgressive statements of the tantras” are read in an “imagined context.” This context is, itself, the outcome “of a prior interpretation of the statements” (3). Wedemeyer further argues that scholarship on Buddhist Tantra has justified “certain ways of speaking about and otherwise representing” Tantra “similar to the phenomenon of ‘Orientalism’ . . . discussed by Edward Said” (4). Some Tantric practices dealing with corpses and skulls are popular with certain “black magic practitioners” and deviant sexual practices have found scope in certain orgiastic schools. However, the general paradigm historians follow in locating “antinomian practices and discourses (historically) in social contexts” as “expressions of either animal impulses, primitive mentality/superstition, or merely slavish imitation, . . . ascribed to irrational or arational impulses,” closes the door to both their context and practical function.” This makes “further explanation” unnecessary and impossible. Thus practitioners and researchers alike are absolved of any duty to “confront the difficult challenges of cultural interpretation” and “interrogation ceases” (6). From the above, it is safe to suggest that in no other spiritual domain has the reification of distorted praxes become more endemically entrenched than in Tantra and society’s collective fixation on antinomian paradigms. In contrast, Sarkar’s teachings reverse the stereotyping of Tantra by explaining how its antinomian elements are misunderstood and their importance distorted by dilettante practitioners lacking the ascecis required for disciplined practice. In the first few

years of practice the practitioner must struggle mightily to overcome mundane desires in the attempt to merge mind with ipseity.



### 2.3.2 Vidyā and Avidyā Tantra

Shaeva Dharma is the dharma for attaining Parama Puruṣa, and thus there is no external ritual in it. It does not enjoin any ritualistic offering of ghee, or any sacrifice of animal's blood in yajña; it is not a path of self-gratification. The followers of Shaeva Dharma proclaimed in a thundering voice that dharma is the path leading to supreme attainment not the path of animal enjoyment. (S. P. R. Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shántāya* 39)

From genuine confusion regarding Tantric practices, the path of antinomian indulgence is readily trod by the power hungry or self-indulgent who incorporate, yet incorrectly follow, the outer trappings of Tantra in their religious life. Sarkar says people, “misinterpreted the real idea” doing “whatever they liked” to further “their narrow individual interests” and satisfy “worldly desires,” vexing Shiva Tantra with antinomian connotations and deliberate distortions (*Ānandamūrti Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 27). The intentional misinterpretation of spiritual practices to further religious, economic, and political, agendas is nothing new. In the past “a section of the polished intelligentsia, because of their meanness and degraded tastes, misunderstood Tantra and went against its idea.” People seeking to justify indulgence in selfish desires gave “crude worldly interpretation[s] of the “*Paiṇcamakāra*” (the famous 5Ms of Tantra) known as *madya* (wine), *māmsā* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudra* (grain), *maethuna* (intercourse) and ignored the “inner spirit” of the terms so that these individuals Tantric praxes became “nothing but an immoral antisocial activity” (28).

Tantra generates a mental force whose internal application forces “spiritual obstructions . . . out of the human mind.” Its external utilization for worldly affairs heavily impacts the mind so that spiritual “degeneration” is “unavoidable.” The abuse of mental power by “degenerated Tantrics” is known as the “*śāt karma* of Avidyā Tantra.” This includes “psychically killing, psychically dominating or controlling, stupefying, hypnotizing, etc” which has “nothing to do with spirituality” (29). Sarkar explains the six powers arising from the *śāt karma* of Avidyā Tantra, the left-hand path:

- (1) *māraṇa* — killing through mantra or some related technique
- (2) *vashīkaraṇa* — controlling an individual through mantra or natural psychotropic substances accompanied by raising the *kuṇḍalinī* ‘spiritual force’
- (3) *uccāṭana* — using mantra to uproot an individual from their residence
- (4) *sammohana* — hypnotism through light waves or gaze fixation to overpower the personality
- (5) *stambhana* — using a mantra to stop the flow of movement (can cause physiological harm to the practitioner)
- (6) *śāntikarma* — saving an individual through transference of disease or negative reactions to another person thereby causing their death (253-254).

With the above in mind, Sarkar’s explanation of transgressive Tantric practices and their adoption by various sects appears particularly relevant apropos of abuses perpetrated by “gurus.” Sexual misconduct and financial gain are typically justified by aligning the “guru’s” desire for material gain with purported spiritual benefits to the disciples who are coerced into compliance. Reports have attested to cases along these lines, but, Osho, the purported “sex guru,” who was later known as the “Rolls-Royce guru” after acquiring ninety-three of the vehicles in 1981, stands out as a spiritual teacher dogged by crimes of “bio-terrorism” and “violation of immigration laws” (Ramachandran par. 9). Returning to Sarkar’s explanation of

the misapplication of Tantric practices, he claims these gross detours occur when the uninitiated try to learn a subtle practice by imitating Tantric's outer behavior without comprehending the inner spirit of their praxes. This is readily likened to a person attempting to master the nuances of *Tai Chi Chuan's tui shuo* 'push hands' by imitation. The reality is that even with a subtle yet still physical discipline that depends on tactile sensitivity and enhanced kinaesthetic awareness, thirty years of mimicry will not bring expertise in the art. Certainly the seemingly miraculous feats that Tai Chi experts display during *hua diao* 'neutralizing' their opponents force or *fa jing* 'emitting explosive energy' will never materialize.<sup>4</sup> By the same token, copying the path of a surgeon's scalpel without the requisite background in anatomy and medicine will cause more harm than good to the patient.

Mimesis without rigorous guidance and practice in physical activities is dangerous enough, but when it comes to the process of changing the mind through Tantric meditation, mimicry will create undesirable consequences. Apart from the risks inherent in exposing oneself to dangerous environments, the human mind, itself, is highly susceptible to suggestion. Individuals lacking a proper understanding of the purpose behind graveyard and corpse meditation, or some of the other more psychically demanding aspects of Tantric meditation, may hallucinate or experience neurotic episodes rather than deepening peace and detachment. These examples should underscore that the ideational components of Tantric meditation taught by a competent Guru contain secret visualizations and Sanskrit *mantras* 'spiritual incantation' which are inaccessible to non-initiates.

Sarkar explains there are also the six powers or benevolent actions found in the "*śaṭkarma*" of Vidyā Tantra, the right-hand path:

- (1) awakening of benevolent intellect in human beings
- (2) awakening of the nobler *vṛttis* or propensities of the human mind
- (3) awakening the sense of humility



(4) awakening the sense of dharma or spiritual motivation

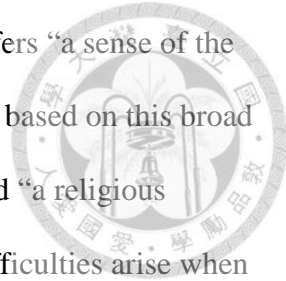
(5) awakening the sense of self-surrender to Aseity

(6) *shāntikarma* — removing predominant defects through propitiatory rights (251-252).

These actions are increasingly manifested by *vidyá* meditation and the psycho-physical struggle against the propensities that sustain awareness of duality. Sarkar believes it is impossible to overcome a “crude idea” and “replace it by a subtle idea without a fight.” Therefore, “Tantra is . . . an all-round fight. It is not only an external or internal fight, it is simultaneously both” (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 27). In this battle, Tantric practitioners confront two tasks: the psychological or internal practices of meditation that expand ipseity and the physical or external practices that substitute previous crude behavioral patterns with refined expressions: “The practice for raising the *kulakuṇḍalinī* [spiritual force] is the internal *sādhana* of Tantra, while shattering the bondages of hatred, suspicion, fear, shyness, etc., by direct action is the external *sādhana*.” Tantric practitioners employ various methods to sustain this fight in both domains, but the outward methodology is invariably misinterpreted so that Tantrics are vilified: people “see the style of this external fight,” and believe “the Tantrics moving in the cremation ground” are “unnatural,” antisocial, or psychologically unstable. This stereotype, particularly in India, belies the Tantric’s external struggle “against the *ripus* and *páshas*” ‘enemies and fetters’ of mind that lead to crudity. Hence, Tantra is analogous to warfare; during war certain behavior appears “unnatural,” yet it cannot be ignored “that in wartime every person becomes, to some extent, unnatural in his or her activities” (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 27)

## 2.4 Sarkar’s Definition

The previous section dealt with contemporary definitions of Tantra carrying etic or emic values proportionate to commentators engagement in practice or research. Wallis



reminds us that the “Western mind,” specifically the analytic mind, prefers “a sense of the whole landscape” of study and formulates “general definitions” that are based on this broad sense. Researchers have striven to “define Tantra as a phenomenon” and “a religious movement” by analyzing common features of its “various streams.” Difficulties arise when researchers fail to consider “a wide enough range of sources.” Wallis reiterates “that most pre-modern Indian people” weren’t concerned with “formulating abstract general definitions,” although “a few” Indian scholars of the Late-Classical Age (500-1500 CE) gave general definitions of Tantra. In stark contrast, Sarkar finds Shiva Tantra within the Neolithic agricultural cultures of 5500 BCE. While comparative explorations supporting this contention will not be tabled until the following chapter, I strongly support Wallis’s position that a thorough investigation of indigenous sources will reveal “a definition of the tradition from *within* that tradition” which should carry more weight than the definitions of “academics from a foreign culture a thousand years later” (27).

Although Sarkar was born seven millennia after the advent of Shiva, the authenticity of this Shiva lineage is critical to Sarkar’s Tantric project. Sarkar’s adoption of Shiva Tantra is not orchestrated to appeal to a nationalist or religious agenda but to explicate and expand upon the most subtle teachings of Shiva Tantra. Sarkar, himself, was a Tantric Guru without a direct predecessor; at eighteen he initiated his first disciple in a graveyard. While Sarkar had no guru, and relied on his own intuitions, he revered Shiva and Krishna. The spiritual importance of the socio-geographic areas impacted by their philosophy is a frequent refrain in his discourses. Sarkar’s definition of Tantra contains some elements of Classical Tantra<sup>6</sup> and reflects the Shiva essence.

In 1959 in Bhagalpur, India, Sarkar broadly defined Tantra linguistically — and, importantly, in practice — vis-à-vis its etymological significance: Tantra encompasses the

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<sup>6</sup> European Late-Classical Age

journey of mind from duality towards singularity. A Tantric is any “person who, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, aspires for spiritual expansion or does something concrete” to transcend the limits of mind. Tantra is a transcendental praxis which is “neither a religion nor an ism.” It is a “fundamental spiritual science”(Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2 22).

The etymological root of *Tantra* is as follows: “the letter *ta* is the seed (sound) of dullness.” When the “verb *trae* suffixed by *da* becomes *tra*,” it means “that which liberates.” In other words Tantra means “liberation” from the bondages of stagnation Mundane duality crudifies consciousness but movement towards singularity expands consciousness. The techniques that redirect the mental flow of a spiritual aspirant and free them from immobility by enlarging the practitioner’s spiritual identity are called “Tantra *sāadhanā*.” This process is practical and experiential. Stuart Sarbacker relates Agehananda Bharati viewpoint that the “character of *sāadhanā* itself is an emphasis on the practical” and distinguishes “the tantric from the non-tantric forms of Hindu and Buddhist” praxes “on this basis” (114). To speak of Tantra is to speak of meditation: without the latter spiritual progress is severely retarded.

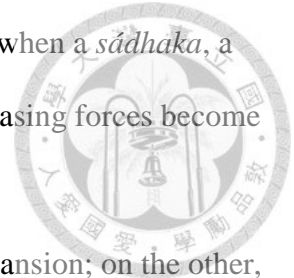
Not the least of meditation’s spiritual benefits is the impetus it provides the aspirant in their fight against debasing tendencies. In *Ānanda Vacanāmrtam Part 34*, Sarkar shows that the Tantric struggle also includes psychological expansion:

I said the root verb *tan* means “to expand”. Now, the practical approach, that is, the actual spiritual endeavour, actual spiritual practice, is called Tantra.

Here, also the root verb is *tan*. *Tan* means “to expand”, and *tra* means “liberator”. The cult that liberates the spiritual aspirant by helping him in expanding his mind and spirit is Tantra, “liberation through expansion”.

Unless and until the mind becomes great, one cannot get liberation, one cannot attain spiritual salvation. That’s why the spiritual cult is called Tantra. Now, this expansion, this expansion of mind, expansion of ideas, expansion of

human spirit, is the . . . only *sādhana* [meditation]. And when a *sādhaka*, a spiritual aspirant, tries to enlarge his mind, naturally debasing forces become very active. (*Ānanda Vacanāmrtam Part 34* 16)



On the one hand, progress towards liberation is a valence of mental expansion; on the other, regression into bondage is determined by the degree of contraction a mind experiences when overly immersed in duality. Attempts at expansion are met with a counter-action that forces practitioners to face the mental constructs holding ipseity in the limited psycho-physical state. This opposing force must be overcome for spiritual progress:

In his mind there will be those two belligerent forces; that is, the spiritual force and the debasing material force will start fighting amongst each other in the mind. In family life also, in social life, in national life, in each and every stratum of life, there will be fight. That is, those two fundamental belligerent forces will become active. One force will try to exalt you towards the Supreme Self, another force will want to degrade you, goad you towards crude materialism.

Consequently, the ego resists attempts at fundamental transformation. The motivation towards innate continuity is apparent in all human beings, and self-introspection generally reveals the continuity of personality traits over a human lifetime. Changes to conatus rarely occur unless a life-threatening or similarly powerful experience forces the psyche to transform.

Ron Smothermon's *Winning Through Enlightenment* explains why conatus is the de facto status quo of the mind: "The purpose of the mind is to survive itself through the passage of time and to this end it will do almost anything." To sustain survival of the organism, the mind automatically seeks out "basic supplies" required to "avoid death" which is facilitated by the mind's capacity to recall events related to survival (2). As the

fundamental requirements for survival are air, nourishment, and love, the mind will sustain unconscious and automatic “patterns of behavior” if not consciously observed by ipseity (5). These traits or conditioned reflexes are deeply entrenched within the subconscious mind and reassert themselves whenever awareness wanders or survival is threatened.

Smothermon’s reasoning substantiates Sarkar’s explanation of the mind’s reaction to any attempt at transcending egological structures. The destabilization of existential mind during meditation stimulates habitual survival mechanisms. For example, Buddhists conceptualize existential mind as the independent aggregation of desires which manifest in our experience of temporal continuance. Ricardo Repetti says that “to decrease mental bondage, characterized by greed, hatred and delusion, and attain full mental freedom or ‘liberation,’ Buddhists cultivate detachment” during “meditation” (169).

The Buddha explains that a “direct experience of *nibbana* [Metaseity]” requires “four ways of establishing mindfulness” — one of which is “overcoming” the “longing for and discontent” of “the world” by “watching mind as mind” (Gethin 143). James Austin argues that “only when our earlier egocentric constructs are deconstructed can the requisite restructuring begin” (*Selfless Insights: Zen and the Meditative Transformations of Consciousness* 10). The process of a liberated constitution is difficult to attain because the mind’s “egocentric circuits” assume “sovereign, possessive authority” over “psychological life,” and the “Self [mind]” becomes the “overriding authority on reality” (53). Liberation or enlightenment is therefore “a gradual ripening, a process of incremental maturation” that deconstructs habitual strategies and changes “moment by moment tactics” (*Zen and the Brain* 641).

Actualizing transcendence is clearly a continued battle against mind’s negative traits. Sarkar tells us the spiritual aspirant is a soldier or *sādhaka*:

Now, a Tantric is called, a *sādhaka* is called, a soldier, (*Sāadhanāsamara*) ('the battle of *sāadhanā*'). *Samara* means "war", "battle", "fight". The *sādhaka* is engaged in fight. It is for the brave, it is for courageous people.

*Sāadhanāsamara*. And this cult is the cult of Tantra. He who wants to keep himself away from fight is unknowingly committing suicide, mental and spiritual suicide. Each and every man should be ready for fight - fight in the mental stratum, fight in the family stratum, fight in each and every stratum of life. This is Tantra. (*Ānanda Vacanāmrtam Part 34* 16-17)

Sarkar's Tantra eschews left-hand Tantric praxes that develop power for material gain and social dominance but retard the practitioner's spiritual growth. Spiritual praxes that promote self-expansion naturally encourage social progress. Because spiritual insight is practical intuition, Tantric meditation is the internal struggle to overcome psychophysiological attachments.

Sarkar understands that social and personal opposition to spiritual progress is inevitable. Although society plays its part, the individual's spiritual progress is independent of social development because spiritual expansion, while benefited by a congenial environment, can be attained in isolation or harsh conditions. Nevertheless, stimulating the latent spiritual inclinations of society towards transcendental expansion will encourage freedom from humanity's negative conditioning. The latter is the cause of fanaticism, greed, and apathy. For Sarkar, "this path of non-compromising aggressive spirituality is the only way to ultimate oneness with Infinite Consciousness" (*Idea and Ideology: a Collection of Speeches Delivered to Higher Ta' Tivika Trainees from 27 May 1959 to June 5, 1959* 62).

## 2.5 Tantric Embodiment and *Sādhana*

Postmodern conceptions of the individual arising from socio-historic forces or cognitive theories of mind modeled solely on phenotypic and genotypic influences do not grant the possibility of complete transcendence via Tantric meditation. The “left-handed Tantra school,” as Inayatullah explains, tries to force “the liberation of the self through emersion” of the body “into pleasure” (*Understanding Sarkar: The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge* 48). As we have seen, the antinomian approaches typified by left-handed Tantra have subverted the ascetic elements of Tantric expansion. Sarkar discredits Tantric systems that sustain crude bodily behavior in entrenched patterns of hedonism while elevating praxes that overcome attachment to mundane pleasures, fears, and mind’s survival.

Although graveyard meditation and a fearless attitude towards death (symbolized by skull meditation and other esoteric techniques) exist in Sarkar’s Tantra, quotidian physical indulgence are detrimental to liberation. Facile arguments that relentless gratification facilitates transcendence are illogical because mind continually expends energy on sensory gratification without attaining any deep insights. Gavin Flood tells us the “Tantric body” is “constructed through dedicated effort over years of practice” (6). For the Tantric, the body is the physical substrate supporting the mind and should be maintained in a balanced manner relative to the practitioner’s spiritual realization’s until liberation is achieved.

Broadly speaking, Sarkar’s definition of Tantra incorporates all meditative praxes with transcendence as their soteriology, but he sharply excludes techniques based on sensual enjoyment and the psychology of indulgence. He argues that many in power have unwittingly utilized Tantric principles. Ritualized Tantra and idolatry have no place in authentic Tantra. “If people study constantly without practicing *sādhana*, psycho-physical parallelism will make them vain and egotistical.” A Sanskrit *shloka* ‘couplet’ expresses the uselessness of

ritual and mundane knowledge in a yogi's life: "*Mathitvācatváro vedān.sarvashāstraṇi caeva hi Sāraṁ tu yogibhih piitam takraṁ pivanti paṇḍ'itāh.* (When the Vedas and all the scriptures are churned, the essence of all knowledge is assimilated by the yogis, and the non-essential portion is eaten by the pandits)" (6). The universal stance of a Tantric denies "the caste system" which was accepted only "by the Vedas only, not by Tantra" (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 33). The *Ajiṇābodhinii Tantra* states:

*Varṇashramābhimanena shrutidāsyē bhavennarah; Varṇashramabihīnashca varttate shrutimūrdhani.* Those who proudly espouse the caste system are slaves of the Vedas, while those who have risen above it or kicked it off, attain a place at the head of the Vedas or above the Vedas. (34)

Sarkar considers "*sāadhanā* and the Tantric cult" to be absolutely "synonymous." "Ceremonial sacrifices, prayers, and other extroversial rituals are neither Tantra nor *sāadhanā*." Finally, all meditation aimed "at the attainment of the Supreme [Metaseity], irrespective of its religious affiliation, is definitely Tantra" because "Tantra is not a religion." It is "simply the science of *sāadhanā* — it is a principle" (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 31).

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the "contested" definition of Tantra, explored some of the general misconceptions generated by "the history of scholarship in the West" and antinomian perspectives (Flood *Tantric Body* 7). Sarkar's definition of Tantra encapsulates praxes that unveil Reality under the Shaiva rubric to include the Yoga tradition. Which tradition was a priori is discussed in the next chapter, but George Feuerstein echoes Sarkar's Tantric definition and defines Yoga as "both 'discipline' and 'union'" — a "unitive discipline." He, like Sarkar, defines the compound "tantra-yoga" as "Tantric discipline." Tantra-Yoga focuses on "the realization of higher or subtle states of existence right up to the ultimate Reality



itself,” predicated on “beliefs and practices promulgated in the Tantras,” coupled with the “exegetical literature that has crystallized around them” (112). Shiva Tantra prepares the mind for absolute dissolution into Metaseity; Sarkar says, “The meaning, or root meaning, of yoga is not only addition; it has a subtler meaning too, in that case the meaning is not ‘addition’ but ‘unification’”(Yoga Sádhaná 2).

At this juncture, Tantra comprises all meditative praxes designed to bring about the transcendence of phenomenal awareness in the noumenal consciousness of Aseity. Praxis and philosophy, Tantra and meditation, are one and the same: “There cannot be any spiritual practice without Tantra. Tantra is *sádhaná*” (Ānandamúrti *Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 22).

## Chapter Three

### Tantra, Yoga, and Contested Histories




*This chapter considers conflicting etic studies on Tantra-Yoga's historiography. It lays out the received textual histories versus oral accounts of Tantra's prehistorical origins. The shortcomings of etic philology in dealing with transcendental texts is contrasted to the benefits of an emic reading. An emic appraisal of the R̥g Veda and Dao De Jing argues Tantra-Yogic praxes existed millennia earlier than Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Following this, an interdisciplinary approach to the present division of Tantra is explored: first, the philosophical division between Vedic and Tantric thought is covered; second, the archaeological division between indigenous Indian and Aryan Vedic influences is detailed; third, the linguistic divide separating Aryan Vedic and Tantric Sanskrit from Sarkar's understanding is overviewed; fourth, variations on the Aryan Invasion Theory are contrasted to Sarkar's perspective. Sarkar's intuitive explanation of the supposedly mythical Sarasvati River's location and demise is supported by latter geological studies proving his ideas and the existence of the R̥g Veda several millennia earlier than accepted by Indologists. The presence of prehistorical proto-Tantric ideas are explored in the R̥g Veda to set the stage for the historical Shiva's codification of Tantra. Tantra-Yoga is shown to have influenced the Vedic religion and vice versa before Buddhism borrowed from Tantra. Finally, Sarkar's position as credible emic source suggests India's transcendental historiography needs to be revised.*

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### 3.1 Introduction

Tantra's history has become an intractable gestalt of fact and fiction as Indologists try to unravel the complex interweaving of the archaeological evidence, religious myth, secret oral traditions, and several hundred years of analysis. This historiography has blended Tantra and the Shaiva cults, Yoga, Buddhism, Jainism, and Puranic thought, situating them in a chronological relationship with the Vedas. As such, the *R̥g Veda's* (RV) textual appearance in



1500 BCE is the commonly accepted date for unlocking the chronology of transcendental Indian thought. With these complexities in view, it is evident portraying Tantric history requires navigating two centuries of research that either elevates or denigrates Tantra and, furthermore, claims Tantra's dependence or independence from other traditions according to the religious or academic interests of the commentator. Hugh B. Urban sums up the issue: "The imagining of Tantra, we will find, has been anything but a simple process or the result of a straightforward, linear narrative. Rather, it is the result of a tangled genealogy, as conflicted and contested as the history of encounters between India and the West over the past several hundred years." In our understanding of Tantra's origins it is not possible to reconstruct "a tidy historical progression leading up to our own era"; we must piece together the "fragmented, contradictory, and often quite erroneous tangle of discourses" shaping Tantra's present "strange hybrid construction." Urban, quoting Foucault, says, "It is a matter of tracing 'the accidents . . . The complete reversals-the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to have value for us'" (14).

Detailing Tantra's roots requires mapping the uncritical acceptance of historical stereotypes against new Indological research in archeology, linguistics, geology, and comparative religious studies. I cannot overemphasize the inherent difficulty in revising Tantra's historiography without pointing out that traditional analysis of Tantra-Yoga relied on suspect philological and archaeological data that segued into supposedly accurate historical accounts by early Western Indologists. These colonial influences, coupled with nationalist political and religious agenda's within India, have tainted most historical studies in the field. Feuerstein, recounting the received view, says "Tantra, or Tantrism, is an exceptionally ramified and complex esoteric tradition" that appeared in the middle of the first millennium" and reached maturity "around 1000 CE in the philosophical School of Abhinava Gupta," but "some of its proponents claim a far longer history" (x) Importantly, for this

study, an earlier claim is evidenced by “Tantra-like ideas and practices” uncovered “in traditions and teachings of a much earlier era” (x). The *a priori* evidence that Tantra preceded the accepted 1500 BCE dating of the *RV* and that Tantra was a pre-Buddhist and pre-Yoga phenomena is a major thread of this chapter. It will review the problems associated with creating a definitive historiography of Tantra without considering India’s oral traditions — and the teachings of Tantric Gurus like Sarkar — who uncap a new epistemological and ontological lens. Etic researchers will not successfully understand Tantra’s veiled past without considering emic accounts and without exploring inter-traditional correlations and antinomies of entrenched ideas.

One need only consider George Samuel’s responses to his well-received contextualization of Yoga and Tantra to the social and cultural milieu of India in *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra* to see the progress made towards challenging many aspects of the received view. Samuel points out some pedagogical limits that jeopardize certain aspects of his intriguing comparative study of Tantra-Yoga’s social development. These limitations do not extend to his expertise in social anthropology and Tibetan studies utilized to expose the political and social forces that shaped the growth of CE Tantra-Yoga. He notes (and this is not a criticism particular to him), “I was aware that I lacked a number of desirable qualifications for the job I had taken on. I am not a Sanskritist, I am not an archaeologist, and I am not really even a historian” (306). Samuel also avoids discussing the emic issue of the researcher’s initiation into the esoteric lineage of the Tantric traditions under scrutiny to access Tantra’s secret teachings.

Stuart Sarbacker, supporting Tantra’s social context, says changes to Tantra and Yoga made them “products of particular historical moments,” both “shaped, and possibly “determined, in important ways by the changing political, economic and other social factors in Indic religious history” (Bronkhorst et al. 303). He considers Samuel’s work

complementary to Mircea Eliade's 1958 study, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* which emphasized the "'inner logic' of yoga philosophy and praxis" and paid "little attention to social context" (303). Both Samuel and Eliade work from the traditionally accepted earliest genesis of Yoga in the "fifth to third century BCE and the growth of tantra in the seventh to twelfth century CE" (305).

This chapter takes a different tack to Samuel who explores textual evidence and socio-cultural trails left by Yoga's presence in India; it investigates locations and ideas showing earlier Tantra-Yogic praxes existed in an area Sarkar calls Ráfh, which includes modern Bihar and the ancient regions of Mithila and "Magadha" — also known as "KlkaTa" in the *RV* (Talageri *The Rig Veda: A Historical Analysis* 86).

A precondition to understanding Tantra's prehistorical record is to recognize the links between Yoga and Tantra as part of a pre-Aryan indigenous tradition going back to the historical Shiva in 5500 BCE, and to monistic ideas that took root in the Vedic religion after the Aryans arrived in India. This is not easy without exploring texts, archaeology, geology, transcendental traditions, and the oral traditions. What follows below attempts to establish a framework for these links.

### 3.2 Textual Tantra

Gerald Larson proposes that "yoga and tantra" remain "most puzzling" to South Asian studies," and there continues to be a "great deal of popular as well as scholarly confusion regarding these terms" despite their crucial role in the history of India's religions (487). These problems were detailed in the preceding chapter on the definition of Tantra; this section addresses some of the anachronisms confronting comparative researchers of India's transcendental praxes.

Tantra-Yogic praxes devoted to exploring consciousness are almost universally attributed to “Pātañjala Yoga” which appeared in text “in the first centuries of the common era.” Patanjali’s ideas, “in nearly every manuscripts, printed or hand written,” [are] presented as a *bhāṣya* . . . as a *sāmana-tantra*” or a *sāṃkhya-pravacana*” which is “an explanation of Sāṃkhya” or the “classical system of Indian philosophy (487). According to Larson, the word *Tantra* first appears in the in the “*Rg Veda* in the sense of a ‘loom’ and the fabric on a loom”; the commonly accepted beginning of Tantra suggests it did not exist as a philosophy before 1500 BCE. (490). *Yoga* “first appears . . . in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (11.4.1) and then in the *Kaṭha* and *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads* (11.3.11 and 11.11 respectively).” These texts are all “post-the *Rg Veda*,” and the term *Yoga* “appears widely in the epic and puranic literature” (490). Although Tantra and Yoga as transcendental schools generally appear later in “classical Sanskrit literature,” *Tantra* is “used earlier” in “the *Rg Veda*.” Larson’s research shows neither of the terms “in the early” or “principal Upanisadic literature” (489). His analysis underscores that researchers’ over-rely on textual references derived from the “creative and systematic era” that led to “classical Sanskrit literature” and significant works on transcendental praxis like Patanjali’s *YS* (490).

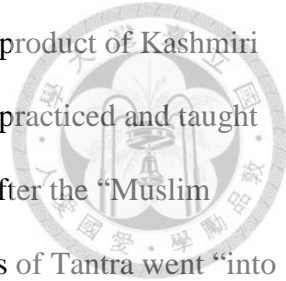
Wallis’s 2012 *Tantra Illuminated* gives an excellent overview of textual Tantra, and its Kashmiri sources. He notes that while Tantra may “sometimes” refer to “any sort of book,” it is generally directed at “divinely revealed” scriptures. The majority of these works appeared in “India around the 6th century of the common era” and were “composed in large numbers (hundreds of major texts and thousands of minor ones) for the next thousand years” (25). Many Tantric techniques were associated with ““a system of spiritual practice articulated within a specific sacred text.”” But, textual evidence is not the only source of Tantric practices; the indigenous Austrico-Negroid-Mongoloid inhabitants of Mithila and the

seven rivers that made up the Sarasvati and Indus civilizations had contemplative practices well before script was invented.

Accordingly, Sarkar states that Proto-Tantra first took root in the ancient area of Rárh and was later systematized by Shiva. Proto-Tantra was the precursor to Shiva's Tantra codified in 5500 BCE. The lack of script at the time made textual dissemination of these esoteric praxes impossible; however, the absence of easily recognized textual references to Tantra-Yoga should not be considered evidence of its nonexistence because Shiva Tantra was not openly disseminated, although evidence for Tantric monism appears in the Vedas. Sarkar claims the Vedas were initially "passed down from guru to disciple through memorization" and were called "*Shruti*" or 'ear.' For millennia after their oral composition, and centuries after script was invented, "it became a dogma not to write down the Vedas," resulting in "a great portion of the Vedas" being "lost" from common memory ("A Scriptological and Linguistic Survey of the World" par. 27).

### 3.2.1 (Un)Written Tantra and Kashmir

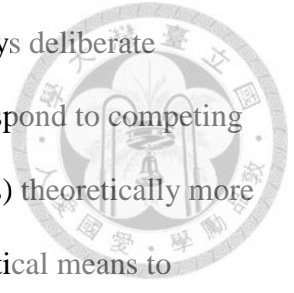
Sarkar says the first Vedic scribes were the "scholars of Kashmir" who wrote them "in Sáradá script," and Kashmiri scholars first authored the "Artharva Veda" that Indologists, like L.P. Singh, argue contains references to Tantra-Yoga and inspired later esoteric practices ("A Scriptological and Linguistic Survey of the World" par. 24). Sanderson points out it is impossible "to say at present where the majority of the Tantras originated," but the "scriptural tradition and the later commentators" unanimously attribute "the Krama revelations" to the "Swat valley" now situated in Pakistan, "300 kilometres north-west of the valley of Kashmir" (684). The *krama* revelations are a progressive system of spiritual progress and are considered to be a monistic-dualistic discipline in the early stages of Tantric development.



Wallis believes the history of non-dual Saiva Tantra is mostly a product of Kashmiri commentary: “In Kashmir 1000 years ago the teachings of Tantra were practiced and taught in small circles of highly advanced and intellectually brilliant yogis.” After the “Muslim invasion of the Indian subcontinent” in “the 13th century,” the teachings of Tantra went “into hiding” amongst “the most edgy segments of society” (iv). Kashmir’s extensive Tantric works have created the received historiography that Tantra arose during the first millennium and informed academic understanding of non-dual Saivism (Shiva Tantra). Kashmir was home to the “Kashmirian polymath Abhinavagupta” who wrote *The Paramarthasara*, or ‘*Essence of Ultimate Reality*’ in which Abhinavagupta offered a “brief treatise” outlining “the doctrines of which he [was] a notable exponent, namely non-dualistic Saivism.” This school of Kashmirian Tantra is designated by the “Trika, or ‘Triad’ of three principles: Siva, sakti and the embodied soul (nara).” The text deals with concepts of *jivanmukti* or “liberation in this life” and “hint[s] at” certain “esoteric techniques and practices that are at the heart of the philosophical discourse” (Bansat-Boudon et al. i)

The considerable amount of commentary on Classical Tantra notwithstanding, “the scriptural corpus of Tantrik texts” remains “almost entirely unpublished . . . in India or the West.” Most of the surviving texts “exist only in manuscript form” and are “physically and linguistically inaccessible to most” (Wallis 30). English speakers do not have the “Tantrik scriptures” for direct review but only “the commentaries on those scriptures, and other works inspired by them, written by great Tantrik masters.” This highlights a recurring theme throughout Tantra’s recorded history that the oral tradition has been diluted, appropriated, and adumbrated by “commentaries” increasingly “treated” as “scriptures themselves.” These latter additions are convincingly if often fraudulently presented as authentic “by some modern gurus” (Wallis 30).





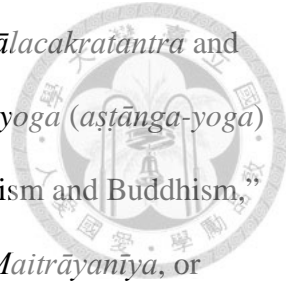
Changes in philosophical and historical orientation are not always deliberate obscuration but may also result from the evolution of theories which respond to competing philosophies., Commentary on Tantra appears (and in many instances is) theoretically more advanced than its *a priori* source. Sarkar holds Shiva Tantra was a practical means to liberation, but academic engagement with esoteric praxes naturally stimulates theorizing not actual practice. Also, theory stemming from the early stages of practice will include embellishing “detritus” and emotional responses to meditation that “color” spiritual insights. This critique does not imply all commentary is without value, yet “the high degree of sophistication and spiritual wisdom exhibited by these commentarial texts” should not be equated with guaranteed superiority over orally transmitted praxes. In this regard, Wallis states that “Kashmir Shaivism” is solely based on the “commentaries and associated writings,” of a “series of masters from Kashmir, and it is “these materials” that are entertained in “most discussions of Tantrik philosophy, *since the scriptural texts are themselves almost wholly concerned with practice*” (emphasis added 30). Although Wallis recognizes the classical Tantric chronology, he also argues there are “few facts about the social setting of the Tantrik traditions,” and, therefore, the “history of Tantra” is “predominantly a history of ideas and practices” (24).

### 3.2.2 Antecedents to the *Yoga Sutras*

Most “historians and leaders in the yoga community” argue Patanjali first codified yoga, in a text written “in northern India around the third century B.C.” (Hill 5). Ramesh Bjonnes suggests a slightly earlier date for the *YS* and Patanjali’s systematization of the “oral teachings of the Tantric yogis for the first time” in the system known as “*Asthanga*, or Raja Yoga” in “200 BCE” (126) Because Tantra and “the word Yoga” cover “an immense ground, and both the Samkhya and the Vedantist schools point to Yoga in some form or other,” it is

unrealistic to claim Patanjali invented Yoga when evidence points to a considerably earlier tradition (Vivekananda vii). Larson says that although the *YS* “appears in the first centuries of the common era,” the text’s “principal *bhāṣya* in nearly all manuscripts, printed or hand written” appears as a “*samāna-tantra* (‘common tradition’)” work (487). Patanjali’s *YS* is fundamentally linked to “the study of the self” or “*ātman*” and “mind (*citta*)” as well as the “two other principal ‘sciences’ (tantras or *Śāstras*)” concerned with “the science of medicine (*Āyurveda*) and the science of grammar” (488).

By the third to the fifth centuries of the Common Era, *Tantra* was used to refer to a number of sciences but after the division of Tantra into various schools, “the sectarian turn” took place in “certain Buddhist and Śaiva . . . environments” so that “*yoga* and *tantra* come to have dramatically different meanings.” These sectarian traditions “were prevalent in various incipient forms,” but there is not much “textual evidence in Sanskrit prior to the middle of the first millennium C.E.” detailing their practices (491). Because prehistorical Tantra-Yoga was undocumented, it is not considered in serious academic studies, and evidence of earlier practices is often dismissed as being too speculative for an academic reckoning. This does not detract from the reality that contemplative praxes were sufficiently developed by Buddha’s time that he employed ascetic meditations which were purely yogic. While ascetic meditations experienced a renaissance in the fifth to eleventh centuries of the Common Era — after the outpouring of written works stimulated sectarian interest in Tantra — the tradition existed before the Classical tantric era. A solid argument can be made for Proto-Tantra and proto-Yoga being essentially the same; their sectarian separation is likely a post-Shiva development more semantic than factual. Thus, the compound *Tantra-Yoga* is frequently employed throughout this work. Yoga’s pre-*YS* forms suggests that comparing the “correlation[s] and historical connection[s] to early forms” of yoga, combined with critical analyses of previous dates will likely derail widely accepted but inaccurate chronologies.



Vesna Wallace's study of the eleventh century text *The Inner Kālacakratāntra* and North Indian Tantric Buddhism stresses that prior to "the eight-phased *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) of the classical Yoga system" an earlier form was "found in both Hinduism and Buddhism," known as a "six phased *yoga*." Its "earliest reference" is found in the "*Maitrāyanīya*, or *Maitrī Upaniṣad*" belonging "to the branch of the black *Yajur* Veda," now considered the "last of the classical Upaniṣads." Six Phase Yoga is listed in the "*ṣaḍ-āṅga-yoga* of the *Maitrāyanīya, Upaniṣad* Ch. 6, v, 18." It includes: "breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*), retraction (*pratyāhāra*), meditative stabilization (*dhyāna*), concentration (*dhāranā*), contemplative inquiry (*tarka*), and *samādhi*." This praxis helped attain "union with the supreme Self (*paramātman*)" (25). Wallace's study proves "the *Maitrāyanīya Upaniṣad* predates Patanjali," so that the "six-phased *yoga*" of the *The Inner Kālacakratāntra* must "predate the eight-phased *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) of the classical Yoga system" (25). The Tantric *Kālacakratāntra*'s relatively late appearance as an "early 11th century esoteric treatise" incorporated in "the class of unexcelled *yoga-tantras*" would erroneously situate Tantra after Patanjali's *YS*, this timeline is a gross chronological from an overly isolated interpretation of a specific text (Wallace 3).

Reifying texts without considering comparative exegeses skews Tantra's historiography. Researchers should not ignore the emic approach that can fill the geographical, cultural, and linguistic lacuna in our knowledge of Tantra's hidden past. Philology without an emic context is insufficient, and Tantra's history will remain clouded despite its profound influence on Indian and Asian transcendental traditions. Revealing these influences demands sustained collaborative studies, and relinking broken connections needs researchers who understand the esoteric components of traditions influenced by Shiva Tantra.

### 3.2.3 Esotericism Translated: *Tao De Jing* and the *Rg Veda*

We have seen that most of the extant Tantras remain unexplored. Because few Sanskrit scholars are also practicing Tantrics, English translations coupled with emic interpretation will appear slowly. The hermetic and opaque tone of most transcendental works generally limits the efforts of the non-initiated to theoretical discussions, even for texts like the Vedas which have several translations. Philologists must juggle explicit translation and implicit meaning so that all hermeneutic efforts confront the issue of linguistic accuracy and authorial intention. This complexity is not endemic to India's transcendental traditions alone and is equally relevant to Chinese Daoist texts such as the sixth century BCE 道德經 '*Tao De Jing*' whose esoteric ideas must be translated in the context of Daoist meditative practices for the *Tao De Jing*'s spiritual praxes to make sense.

Autodidactic techniques (like Ursula K Le Guin's version of the *Dao De Jing*) offers direct Mandarin translations, but without the emic insight of a Daoist practitioner, the inner meaning of the text is hidden behind Classical Chinese symbolism. Understanding the implied spiritual praxes is possible only if the translator has knowledge of the meditative techniques that unlock the transcendental message. Even with this knowledge, the caveat that epistemic and ontological eisegesis may influence a PR's translation must be acknowledged. Strong familiarity with the tradition and comparative experience, coupled with a sophisticated awareness of the internal structure of the language are critical aspects to a successful interpretation. My comparison of esoteric texts is not arbitrary. Sarkar's 1979 Taipei discourse on acoustic roots shows an etymological connection between *Tantra* and *Tao*:

The science that expands your mind and spirit and thus liberates is Tantra. The metamorphosed form of tantra about seven thousand years ago became *taota*. The Sanskrit *dhyāna* became *chan* (in Chinese), *chan* became *chen* (in Korean), *chen* became *zen* [in Japanese] . . . Now, tantra became *taota*; *taota*

after further distortion, further metamorphosis, became *taoa*” and from this Chinese arrived at ‘*tao*.’

Sarkar makes the unique contention that *Tao* is etymologically derived from “tantra” (“Acoustic Roots” par. 11). To illustrate the requirements for a hermeneutical translation, I use the first poem of the *Tao De Jing* which highlights the difference between a strictly objective translation versus an internal interpretation consistent with Daoist practices. The Mandarin reads: “道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。無名天地之始；有名萬物之母。故常無欲，以觀其妙；常有欲，以觀其徼。此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。玄之又玄，衆妙之門” (Feng 1). My direct translation reads as follows:

Dao can Dao, not correct Dao. Name can name, not correct name. Unnamed sky earth origin, have name 10,000 mother/origin. If always no desire, according examination mystery; according examination manifestation. These two, same out but different name, same named mystery. Mystery with mystery, all mystery gate.’

This veridical translation is practically unintelligible although it preserves the meaning of every word. When adjusted for English grammar it becomes clearer; Gia Fu Feng and Jane English provide the poetical translation of the first poem:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.  
The name that can be named is not the eternal name.  
The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.  
The named is the mother of 10,000 things.  
Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.  
Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.  
These two spring from the same source but different name;  
This appears as darkness.

Darkness within darkness.

The gate all mystery. (sic 1)

James Legge's 1891 translation offers an alternative to the preceding modern translation:

The Dao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name. (Conceived of as) having no name, it is the Originator of heaven and earth; (conceived of as) having a name, it is the Mother of all things.

Always without desire we must be found,

If it's deep mystery we would sound;

But if desire always with us be,

Its outer fringe is all that we shall see.

Under these two aspects, it is really the same; but as development takes place, it receives the different names.

Together we call them the Mystery. Where the mystery is the deepest is the gate of all that is subtle and wonderful. (Legge)

My earlier direct translation did little to hint at the underlying meditative state in the poem's closing lines as symbolized by the "gateway" hidden in deep "darkness" and "mystery." The translation by English and Fung, followed by Legge's, captures the rhythm of the passage and presents the Mandarin with elegance, but from a philosophical perspective, meaning (that contested idea) is more important than the beauty of the verse — even when the two are not mutually exclusive. On the other hand, a strictly philological translation might eschew poetic embellishments. I suggest the middle ground provides a veridical translation, a poetic rendering, and internal commentary, but regardless of which methodology is employed, consensus on Tantric and Taoist translations will continue to be stymied by the sheer



diversity of meanings adumbrated to Tantra and Daoism. My translation, couched in the language of a PR reads:

The path of appearances is not the path to Reality. What can be named is phenomenal and not ontological. The causal unnamed produces duality; it manifests creation. Detachment from desire reveals the cause while attachment obscures it. Detachment and desire spring from the same source and lead to the mystery of existence. Transcendence is within immanence; the contemplation of mystery is the gateway to Reality.

Even though this rendering is closer to the essence of the opening passage, it does not explicitly refer to praxis, yet implied in “contemplation” is the practice that unlocks the mystery. The final line points the seeker in the direction of the mystery that can be experienced yet never fully linguistically articulated. Most Taoist meditators would accept the final line indicates that deep contemplation and detachment from duality awakens an experience of truth. In short, the condensed language of the *Dao De Jing* can only be unpacked by contextualizing the subtle links between transcendental praxes and the linguistic devices that hint at the Taoist techniques that direct the meditator towards the ineffable Dao.


Complementing the Daoist perspective, M. Pandit provides Sri Aurobindo’s philosophically oriented translation of the *RV*’s poem of creation by “different Rishis” ‘sages’ that, like the Taoist text above, is “as usual” presented in “cryptic language.” Dao is the cosmological principle of Taoism and its Tantric equivalent is “*Paramatman*, the Supreme Soul” described in the seminal Hymn of Creation in the Tenth Mandala of the *RV* (131). This hymn’s interpretation is equally fraught with difficulties for the uninitiated. The version that follows Aurobindo’s is Ralph T.H. Griffith’s translation. For comparison, I have numbered the verses in Aurobindo’s translation to match Griffith’s. The structure and typography also match the original texts.



1) Then existence was not nor non-existence,  
the mid-world was not nor the Ether nor what  
is beyond. What covered all? where was it?  
in whose refuge? what was that ocean dense  
and deep? 2) Death was not nor immortality nor  
the knowledge of day and night. That One  
lived without breath by his self-law, there was  
nothing else nor aught beyond it. 3) In the  
beginning. Darkness was hidden by darkness.  
all this was an ocean of inconscience. When  
universal being was concealed by fragmentation,  
then by the greatness of its energy  
That One was born. 4) That moved at first as  
desire within, which was the primal seed of  
mind. The seers of Truth discovered by the  
building of being in non-being by will in  
the heart and by the thought: 5) their ray was  
extended horizontally; but what was there  
below, what was there above? 6) There were  
Casters, of the seed. there were Greatnesses;  
there was self-law below, there was Will  
above (132).

Ralph T.H. Griffiths translation, numbered as Hymn CXXIX, of the 10th mandala follows:



- 
- 1) THEN was not non-existent nor existent: there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it. What covered in, and where? and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?
  - 2) Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal: no sign was there, the day's and night's divider. That One Thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever.
  - 3) Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness this All was indiscriminated chaos. All that existed then was void and form less: by the great power of Warmth was born that Unit.
  - 4) Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning, Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit. Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.
  - 5) Transversely was their severing line extended: what was above it then, and what below it? There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder.
  - 6) Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation? The Gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?
  - 7) He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it, Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not. (Griffith sic 593)

Both versions have similarities but also diverge in the first line: Aurobindo's translation asks what essence was contained in the primordial "ocean" before creation? On the other hand, Griffith's translation, asks if "water" was there? There is a subtle difference in meaning for a reader unaware that "waters in the Veda" stood for the "movement of consciousness" (133).

Aurobindo's choice of "ocean" for consciousness is readily recognized as an epithet for *Nirguṇa* Brahma (Metaseity). The phrase "That One Thing" in the second stanza is an apt prognosticator of Taoism's concept of singularity which once named gives rise to "10,000 things" generated in dialectical discourse and noetic mind.

It can be seen that The *Tao De Jing*'s opening poem and the *RV*'s "Hymn of Creation" focus on "darkness" evident in line three of the hymn and the closing lines of the poem. Darkness suggests the failure of the senses to understand the mystery of the noumenal state lying far beyond the objectifying function of the mind. Line four of the *RV* hymn suggests desire is the cause of mundane existence. To transcend existence and find kinship with Metaseity the seeker will have to search "with their heart's thought" in order to find the "non-existent." The use of "heart's thought" is particularly significant in Tantra because the *anāhata cakra* located at the midpoint of the chest is one of the focal points for Tantric meditation. In Chinese *intention* is called 意 (*yì*). The Chinese character is used in a variety of contexts to relay *wish* and *meaning*. Transcendentally, *yì* refers to deep concentration. Typically, In Tai Chi Chuan (the Chinese martial art using Taoist principles to clear the mind of duality and resistance), the student is instructed to 用意, 不用力 'use intention, not force.' The idea being that brute force arises from mind-body duality while conscious intention unites mind and body allowing redirection of the opponent's energy by synthesizing action and reaction. Griffith's seventh line suggests that Metaseity, like Dao, is inexpressible so that even the creator (Aseity) may not know how it came to be. Once the mind begins the process of reversing the course of duality, quotidian existence ceases to influence consciousness and Metaseity's ineffability reasserts.

The extracts discussed above demonstrate that strict philological work without emic commentary sequesters transcendental philosophy and practices under symbolic and poetic devices. The problem self-evident to emic researchers is the prevalence of literal translations

uninformed by knowledge of the esoteric practices that could unlock the meaning of transcendental texts such as the *Dao De Jing* and *RV*. On the question of theoretical versus practical understanding, the lack of initiation into actual praxes can lead to a complete distortion of Tantric teachings. Singh quotes Angārika Govind from *2500 Years of Buddhism*: “in order to preserve its secret nature, they also had to use the language of symbolism which only the ‘initiates’ could understand.” Unfortunately, this symbolism also led to “the common people, ascribing a totally “different meaning” to the words which “gave a shock to the common people” whereas to those initiated the words “carried an altogether different meaning” (116). We need to seriously reconsider the validity of analysis and hermeneutical paradigms that ignore internal perspectives to maintain the illusion of objectivity while ignoring the essential characteristics of the traditions under scrutiny.

Christian Wedemeyer discusses the origins of the Tantric teachings of Nāgarājuna and the “so-called Arya tradition of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*,” which produced a “corpus of extremely influential works concerning the proper textual interpretation and yogic practice of the Esoteric Communion” (103). These teachings, “following in the tradition of secrecy,” were symbolized and made “unavailable to the uninitiated.” The teachings of “sādhana” were “chopped . . . up” and “scattered . . . in different chapters of the text.” According to Wedemeyer, Nāgarājuna reconstituted the different parts and indicated “where the parts had been hidden.” This is a common technique employed by Tantric schools to preserve “a previously oral tradition in writing” (196). At least some sources entertain the idea of a secret “twilight language” which served as a coda to unlock the real meaning of the spiritual texts. L.P. Singh claims “The Canonical literature of Tantra is written in Twilight language (Sandhyā Bhāṣā).” It encodes the practices so that the text’s “apparent meaning is quite different” from the intended practices and “real meaning” (ix). Thus, initiation by a Guru was critical to understanding the esoteric aspects and will be discussed in Chapter Four.

The preceding arguments show interpreting Tantra and its history via secondary sources without initiation and concerted practice will likely introduce inaccuracies and eisegesis. M.L. West observes that the survival of “an ancient book” depended on arousing “interest within 50 years or so of its composition” (7). Despite West’s claim, the lack of Tantra’s widespread reference in ancient texts is mitigated by the oral traditions that influenced the Vedas and Patanjali’s *YS* which, itself, borrowed Tantric philosophy. The Classical Tantric texts by Kashmiri scholars like Abhinavagupta actually emerged out of prehistorical concepts of monism and experiences of infinity which were written in the earlier Vedas and coded to transcendental states integrally linked with Tantric praxes. Initiation into these schools invariably included a lineage of secret transmission now expunged from common memory due to the great passage of time. The survival of these teachings was dependent on students capable of memorizing and understanding the techniques without writing and on teachers accurately disseminating their knowledge.

The corpus of Tantric writing inscribed on fragile palm leaf manuscripts rarely survived more than a few centuries. What did survive was subjected to interpretation, commentary, and distortion. Nor should it be assumed authorship of a manuscript guaranteed mastery of the practices or their history. Mastering Tantric meditation required initiation by a guru followed by decades of practice and a close attention to subtle states of consciousness. Furthermore, it is likely the conversion from oral to textual records of over the millennia obscured much of Tantra’s lineage because the authority of the teacher’s word outweighed historical fidelity. Understandably, practices attributed to, by then, mythologized individuals such as Shiva or Krishna would be less relevant than the practitioner’s experiences attained through practice. Wallis states, “Since one received the scriptural teachings from a trusted authority (the guru), one simply got on with the practice, and faith naturally increased as that practice started to show results (30).

Although, at this point of our exploration, we lack clear-cut evidence for Tantra-Yoga's Neolithic existence, the possibility for, rather than against, an origin in 5500 BCE or earlier is growing. Fortunately, textual evidence is not the only proof available; comparative linguistic studies show language correlations in different geographical areas and shared terms suggestive of a common philosophy.

### 3.3 Tantra Divided

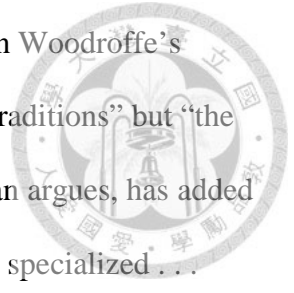
#### 3.3.1 The Philosophical Divide

The inter-tradition division of Tantra should not naïvely be viewed as a division between Buddhist and “Hindu” Tantra. There is no single root to orthodox Hindu Tantra. To consider Hindu beliefs as derived either wholly or in part from the synthesis of the Aryan Vedic and indigenous Tantra-Yoga traditions calls into question the autonomy and interdependence of both schools. Sarkar's Aryan and Indigenous perspectives will be fleshed out in greater detail in Chapter Four but for the present discussion the *a priori* independence of Tantric philosophy from Vedic thought is a pivotal aspect of Sarkar's Tantric history. In other words, Flood's assertion that “The tantric traditions are informed by Brahmanical discourse, not least in their rejection of it” must be read in the context of the later developments of “transgressive practices” stemming from Tantric attempts to “reinterpret or even reject the vedic configuring” of the “goal and ultimate good.” According to Sarkar's timeline, Flood's argument that Tantra reconfigured Vedic ideas is debatable. The “ultimate good,” according to Flood, existed “within the boundaries of vedic social values” and, therefore, the Tantras wanted to break “an identity determined by brahmanical discourse and power” (37). Along these lines, the earlier described Tantric-Yoga tradition as a reaction to later Vedic practices would be untenable to Sarkar. However, Flood correctly notes that Tantra and Vedic philosophy do not share the same ethical and philosophical base: “Any

oversimplification of contrasting a world-affirming arena of Vedic values with a world-negating arena of non-Vedic values” belies the “complex picture of historical development in which the tradition draws life from the tension” between a claim that “what is most important in the world is power or pleasure” and the argument that “liberation transcends all worldly values” (45-46).

Certainly, the conflict between maintaining orthodox Vedic soteriology and the “authenticity of Tantric revelation” is apparent: the ninth century Kashmiri work, *The Bouquet of Logic*, by Jayantha Bhaṭṭa argues that Tantric teachings “should . . . be adopted” if they do not “go against dharma and the “boundaries of vedic reason.” (48-49).<sup>5</sup> Once again, Tantra’s textual existence from the fifth century to thirteenth century onwards can be used to justify claims made by Flood and others that the “Tantric traditions are scriptural,” taking their “doctrine and ritual from Scripture” to formulate “goals wholly in conformity with the text” (49). Strict conformance to the scriptures generated claims that specific texts were “revelation[s] from a transcendent source,” with each later text “positioned in relation to others . . . in a hierarchy.” This position is frequently cited whereby all “account[s] of Scripture in Tantrism” become grounded in “Vedic understanding” of the Scriptures and revelations that were popular “at the time of the rise of the tantras” (50). Researchers encouraged circular reasoning favoring Vedic origins, and the widespread acceptance of this doctrine made Tantra’s pre-Vedic oral heritage a fairytale.

Urban’s work, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, and Politics in the Study of Religion*, argues the type of genealogical tracing employed by Indologists like Flood contributes to our understanding of the social development of religions and Tantra but does not guarantee exposing the hidden dimensions of practices only available to initiates. Researchers have readily “constructed and manipulated” their “own object of enquiry” by “rounding” their “imaginings of tantra firmly in their unique social, historical, and political contexts” (14).



Urban counters the genesis of Tantra in Vedic reactionism, quoting John Woodroffe's position that Tantra is "not only in continuity with Brahmanical Vedic traditions" but "the very essence and inner core of Vedic teachings." This perspective, Urban argues, has added to "recent scholarship on Tantra" that emphasizes "the outgrowth of the specialized . . . intellectual elite" who were "religious functionaries from the upper classes" and mostly "Brahmans" (24). Although Urban's perspective refines Tantra's position, it remains within the Vedic framework, and he does not see it as the outgrowth of indigenous mysticism. Moreover, Woodroffe's mediated perspective is not universally accepted by all Tantric schools — nor do most Vedic adherents accept the disturbing idea that Tantric elements are present in the Vedas. This notwithstanding, Feuerstein argues Tantra "profoundly influenced the outlook and practices of many non-Tantric traditions, such as Vedanta," while "practitioners of those traditions have been unaware of that influence" and are "offended" at suggestions they are engaged in "typically Tantric practices." Chapter Two detailed why the "radical antinomian practices of some Tantric adherents" caused its gradual "disrepute" in orthodox "Hinduism" (10).

Tantra and the Vedas are not considered the same by Tantric practitioners. Feuerstein says that "despite the similarities between the Vedic and the Tantric heritages," the latter was "a distinct tradition," and their "interplay" was "extremely complex" and continues "to this day." Tantra's autonomous origin and gradual influence on Vedic philosophy is disavowed by early Vedic philosophy and only begrudgingly admitted by the later "adherents of the Vedic" systems (17). Vedic followers have "by and large" held "Tantra as a false gospel" and "branded Tantric teachings antithetical to "the truth of the Vedas." Still, Tantra and the Vedic tradition are intertwined and so some of the "later tantras" strove to "construct a bridge to the Vedic heritage of the brahmins" (18). The outcome of research into the philosophical interaction between the traditions highlights a "striking feature" in the last few decades of

“Indological research” whereby “scholars” have slowly realized previous knowledge has proven “far less secure than had been assumed.” Nowhere is this more evident than “in the area of chronology, where a series of conjectural datings adopted as working hypotheses by the great nineteenth-century Indologists and Buddhologists had become a kind of received doctrine” (23).

### 3.3.2 The Archeological Divide

The archaeological evidence for Tantra’s existence and association with the historical, as opposed to mythological Shiva is equally subject to conflicting interpretations and speculation. One way to question the received view is to look at the neolithic evidence from the Indus Valley Civilizations contradicting the accepted chronology of the *RV*. There are indications that a continuous religious and spiritual thread can be traced through the culture of the original inhabitants of these areas as far back as the tenth millennium BCE. M.C Joshi says that “according to traditional beliefs, the Tantras . . . evolved in remote antiquity” and were “interwoven with an intricate mythology.” Tantra is rooted in “prehistoric concepts of a fertile mother goddess and ancient systems for her worship.” Upper Paleolithic representations of this goddess made of “bone” have been discovered in “Belan Valley near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.” Carbon-14 dating puts the artifact “between 23,840 (plus or minus 830 years) B.C. E. and 17,765.” Other artifacts indicative of prehistorical spiritual beliefs include upper Paleolithic “colorful stones marked with natural triangles” which are believed to be “related to a primitive mother goddess” and may “demonstrate connections to the later Tantric use of *yantras*” to represent “fertility” (Joshi 39). Moreover, discoveries of mother goddess figurines in sites far afield but particularly in “Harappa and Mohenjo Daro” reveal a variety of styles pointing to “different craft or religious traditions in Harappan culture.” At least two sites in “Lothal in Gujarat and Banawali in Haryana” have “Goddess



images” that potentially indicate “religious diversity in the Harappan population” (40). Joshi thinks it likely that the noticeable differences in these figurines suggest worship pertaining to “at least two levels of the society” within “the same settlement,” indicating “an authoritarian class and a common class” with “two distinct modes of worship.” Nevertheless, there is uncertainty how the mother goddess was worshiped in “the proto-historic societies of India” (40). This notwithstanding, the *RV* contains “elements of Śākta Tantrism.” Significant Vedic divinities connected with the “historical development of Śāktism are “Aditi (Universal Mother), Uṣa (Dawn), Rātrī (Night), Sarasvatī (Supreme Mother and the River), Vāc (Speech), and Prthivī (Earth) who along with Dyaus (Sky)” represented the “elements of universal parenthood” later taken over by Śākti and Śiva” (40-41).

The archeological evidence for Tantra and Vedic ideas is intriguing but only hints at the culture of the autochthonous people and the differences in their spiritual outlook contrasted to the Aryan migrants/invaders. A serious problem confronting researchers is that artifacts collected from Indian sites towards the end of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th were not stratigraphically systematized, and the eras the artefacts represent went unrecorded. *In the Strides of Vishnu*, A. Glucklich details the haphazard excavation by the influential colonial archaeologist, John Marshall, of Taxila renowned as the 600 BCE center of “Indian Hellenistic” culture and a seat of “Buddhist . . . learning,” the home of Panini and Patanjali centuries later (14-15). The man renowned for introducing scientific methodology to Indian archeology, Mortimer Wheeler, found Marshall’s archeological discoveries “unscientific, impressionistic,” and glamor “seeking.” Even more devastating to Marshall’s research, he failed to “follow a basic stratification procedure” and did not record the “precise” horizontal and vertical location of “identified objects.” Marshall’s Museum, ostensibly casting a “bright light on an ancient urban civilization” in full swing “between the sixth century BCE and the fifth,” did little but garner “treasure seeker’s’ attentions and

tantalize serious Indologists with artifacts made chronologically useless after their removal from their original “context.” These items can now only reveal “a partial” or “altogether false picture” of their “function in the cultural world” from which they descended (16).

Subsequently, Wheeler began a revamped excavation of the city and instead of supporting Marshall’s opinion that Taxila derived its culture from Greek sources he discovered, through vertical stratigraphy, that by the time of its “flowering in the fourth century BCE (when Alexander of Macedonia arrived) Taxila was already the oldest city in South Asia.” Deeper excavations under the city revealed “layers going back to Neolithic times” as far as “the fourth millennium BCE” (17-18). According to Glucklich, the message to take home from the Marshall-Wheeler saga is that two modes of understanding Indian history have prevailed: “the romantic and colonial yearning” for “treasures of the past” and “the hard-nosed pursuit of clarity and systematic knowledge” (18). Glucklich, aptly calls them the “romantic versus scientific” method (21). By the time researchers became cognizant of these paradigms the two had already intertwined to impact the comparative Indological religious research, leaving the distorted legacy existing today.

One of the most undesirable outcomes of the romantic method was the jumbling of artifacts, that included seals, figurines, and motifs related to Shiva Tantra with Buddhist iconography and other objects. Seminal historical narratives since penned on the admixture of these artifacts lead to seemingly accurate but in fact pseudo-continuous historiographies that inform present research. At the very least, it is suggested most assumptions regarding these artifacts should be strongly reconsidered given their anachronistic position in India’s spiritual history. Even if the problems of location are ignored, interpreting these relics’ functions is problematic. Nowhere is this more evident than the arguments stemming from the discovery of the “proto-Shiva seals” held by some as proof that Tantric philosophy ran parallel or prior to the Aryan Vedic tradition. Claims the seals represent Shiva are hotly contested. Resolving

this debate would do much to push Tantra's terminus *a quo*, and Shiva's existence in ancient Indian thought, earlier by at least two millennia than the *RV*'s currently accepted 1500 BCE composition. This would make the Indus and Sarasvati civilizations products of indigenous not Aryan labor, thereby situating Tantra-Yoga's presence in the philosophical worldview of the indigenous population and validating many of Sarkar's historical claims in a single sweep.

Arguments favoring the historical Shiva's early presence in India are particularly vexed by interpretation. Edwin Bryant's *Quests for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indian Aryan Debate* questions the evidence that the "so-called Pasupati proto-Siva seal" found in the Indus Valley depicting an "ithyphallic figure on some kind of a seat in yogic posture with arms resting on knees and crowned with a horned headdress" is, in fact, a representation of Shiva. The seated figure is "surrounded by a number of animals" with an "inscription above it" (162). Bryant outlines the popular interpretation given by Sir John Marshall in 1930 that the figure was "recognizable at once as a prototype of the historic Shiva" because the figure has "three faces . . . sometimes ascribed [to] certain forms of Siva." Despite Marshall's unscientific archaeological techniques, he was a capable interpreter of iconography. He determined the posture was "yogic" and that the deity possessed an "ascetic nature." This convinced him that the "Indus civilization" existed "prior to the entry of the Indo-Aryans" and that the Shiva later incorporated indirectly into the "Vedic Pantheon" was, in fact, a "pre-Aryan, Dravidian God." Consequently, Marshall's analysis influenced "all subsequent interpretations" of the Shiva Seal, and despite Marshall's poor archaeological methodology, extant evidence suggests the Indus civilization predates Aryan migration. (162).

Samuel, avoiding an outright refutation of Marshall's interpretations, acknowledges the "large body of imagery found on the seals" at Indus Valley sites are "particularly significant" to the exploration of the early religions of the "Indus Valley peoples."

Nevertheless, he doubts Marshall's contention that the seal represented "an early version of the god Siva," arguing the seal is "far from unambiguous" (3). Samuel counters Marshall's analysis by claiming "Siva is not shown in this posture in later iconography. Nor is he ever shown with a horned headdress in later times. Nor is it clear that the image has three heads. Nor is it self-evident that the animals are to be read in terms of the main figure being a 'Lord of the Beasts'" (3). These ambiguities force Samuel to come to the "only reasonable conclusion" that we do not have the means to "interpret the figure" nor do we know "what he or she represents" (4). In this vein Samuel acknowledges the "cultural continuities in the archaeological record between the Indus Valley cultural tradition and succeeding populations in the region" do offer evidence for "some continuity in the area of religion." However, he contends the "early evidence is far from unambiguous" and is "almost always interpreted by reading later religious forms into it."

Samuel is not blind to the difficulties of a strictly empirical position yet maintains the course, noting: "We know quite a lot about the daily life of the people of the Indus Valley urban civilization, but little or nothing for certain about their religious practices" because "evidence for the yogic or 'Tantric' practices" "relies on 'reading later practices into the material,' making it useless 'for constructing any kind of history of practices.'" He is "unpersuaded," as many others are, by attempts to see "yogic or 'Tantric' practices in their developed forms in the R̥gveda or Atharvaveda." and cautions there is no "conclusive evidence for yogic or 'Tantric' practices in the Indus Valley cultural tradition" (8). While he takes a strictly academic approach, he acknowledges understanding Tantra "depends on" the "much-contested term" and a "wide variety of meanings" attributed to it "within the Indic traditions themselves." Samuel's strictly empirical approach is relevant to archaeological methodology, yet the rigid exclusion of comparative hermeneutics is, in my opinion, problematic. The capacity to read between the interstices of texts and practices, combined

with scientific dating techniques, will open horizons of Indological research and ultimately reveal connections between archeological discoveries and Tantra. Being open to speculative comparative studies of ambiguous data will present intriguing routes to furthering present understandings of Tantra's contested domain.

In sum, Samuel and other Western trained researchers do not seriously consider Tantra's oral traditions nor engage with the contradictory internal Vedic evidence that dilates the flaws of the received view. Rather, they choose to research Tantra as "the development" of a "relatively coherent set of techniques and practices" appearing "in a more or less complete form in Buddhist and Saiva texts in the ninth and tenth centuries CE" by excluding data that does not fit this picture (9). Not much work has been done to confront the inconsistencies of this classical approach to Tantric history. Still, none of the criticism presented here should overlook the invaluable contributions Samuel and other scholars have made to the understanding of classical Tantra. Nevertheless, if we entertain the earlier existence of Shiva Tantra using Marshall's hypothesis (amongst others), there is more emic scholarship from traditional sources showing Tantra-Yoga may predate the contested Shiva seals found in the "extensive remains of the early urban societies at Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and elsewhere." Even more intriguingly, what follows potentially makes the "2600 to 1900 BCE," chronology of the "Integration Era" of the Indus Valley cultural tradition still too late a terminus a quo for Shiva Tantra's presence in the Aryan Vedic religion (3).

### **3.3.3 Linguistic Divides: Aryan Vedic and Indigenous Sanskrit**

On the issue of the Aryan invasion, Sarkar asserts that prior to 10,000 BCE "India was inhabited by the Austrico-Negroid-Mongoloid races" who mainly lived in northwest India. "Caucasian [Aryan] people" entered India "from the central portions of South Russia" and their "blood" became part of genetic makeup of India. The merging of these four races

was most prevalent in the “north and west,” with relatively “less Aryan blending in the south and east of India.” The language the Aryans brought was “a distorted Vedic language” that influenced the dialects of the Austrico-Negroid-Mongoloid races (“A Scriptological and Linguistic Survey of the World” par. 6). The Vedic language transmitted by the Aryans arriving from the northwest (well prior to the Aryan Invasion Theory or AIT) strongly influenced the non-Aryan population, exerting a “widespread influence” on the Sanskrit “dialects” of these groups, including the “Kash, the Scythians, the Euchi, the South Kuśán, etc.” (*Namah Shiváya Shántáya* 3). However, the indigenous Sanskrit dialect and the Vedic dialect were mutually influential in their separate development.

The integration of language and ideas Sarkar promotes while analyzing the Aryan and indigenous populations, is illustrated by Nicholas J Allen’s critique of Thomas McEvilly’s influential study on Indo-Greek connections, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*. McEvilly argues the existence of “massive similarities . . . between ancient Greek and ancient Indian philosophy” came from “Mesopotamian ideas” spreading “both East and West” while “Indian ideas” moved westward “via Greek-Indian encounters within the Achaemenid Empire.” Allen posits an “alternative explanation” of the common features of these two geographically distinct areas vis-à-vis an “Indo-European common origin,” claiming linguistic resemblances between Indo-European languages “cannot be due to chance,” if “one language has borrowed” a word “from the other” or if both languages incorporated a word “from a third language, related or not” (59). Similar words must have descended “independently from the ancestral language” (60). This dovetails with Sarkar’s position that the Vedic Aryans borrowed words and concepts found in the Indic worldview long before the Aryans arrived in India. Sarkar contends Vedic was the “tie amongst the recognized tongues of the ancient world” which gradually evolved and became known as “Saṁskṛta” or Sanskrit:

Saṁskṛta was suited to the purpose of communication with the masses. The word “*Saṁskṛta*” means reformed or repaired language. When Vedic came in contact with the general mass, the downtrodden mass, it became Saṁskṛta.

There are three types of Vedic pronunciation: Rg Vedic, Yajur Vedic and Artharva Vedic pronunciation. For example, Saṁskṛta in Rg Vedic is “Saṁskṛta”, in Yajur Vedic “Samskrata” and in Atharva Vedic “Samskruta”.

Saṁskṛta means later Vedic period.

Languages which come from Saṁskṛta, moving towards the east, include Persian, Pasto, Western Punjabi, Eastern Punjabi, Dogrii, Kashmirii, Sindhii, Gujaratii, Rajasthanii, Nagpuria, Chatisgharii, Oriya, Magahii, Bhojpurii, Hariyánavii, Bengali, Assamese, Burmese, Thai and Indonesian. ("The Significance of Language" Par. 24-25)

Allen believes a “common ancestor” to Greek and Sanskrit could have given rise to “similar ideas” echoing “an old idea” of the ancestral language. Similarly, Sarkar argues indigenous Tantric praxes tangentially influenced the Aryan’s Vedic religion appearing in the *Artharva* portions of the Vedas: “When the Aryans came to India, roughly during the period of the Atharvaveda, they learned Tantra *sadhana* to some extent after coming in contact with the Indian *Tantrics*. This resulted in the Atharvaveda being pervasively influenced by Tantra” (251). Whether the Vedas textual composition and the oral transmission preceding their writing is a strictly Vedic-Indic phenomena whereby the migrating Aryans and the indigenous inhabitants of the Valley civilizations were mutually influential, or, whether, as some argue, there was an earlier “Proto-Indo-European” (PIE) “common ancestor of Greek . . . Sanskrit” and “Hittite” which, “according to one estimate,” was in use before 3500 BCE is still in question (Allen 72). The PIE hypothesis puts us 5500 years back into Indian

history and raises more questions about the source of the Vedas and Tantric philosophy than it has yet been able to answer.

On the question of PIE, in “An Introduction to Shiva,” Sarkar argues Sanskrit was not “imported to India from central Asia,” instead “one almost identical language” remained current through “central Asia and Eastern Europe to Southeast Asia.” People living in the “northwestern parts” spoke a branch of this common language called “Vedic,” and the language used by inhabitants of the “southeastern part” was “Sanskrit” (*Namah Shiváya Shántáya* 2).

From Sarkar’s perspective, ancient Vedic and regional variations fits the PIE hypothesis and the latter development of classical Sanskrit. In his analysis, the “Austrico-Negroid-Mongoloid languages” contain a “large percentage of Vedic vocabulary,” and even those languages not linguistically derived from the latter have “a large percentage” of Sanskrit “vocabulary.” One example of a distinct language that inherited Vedic words is “Austrico-Negroid Malayam” which includes “75% Saṁskṛta and Vedic vocabulary.” Another is Bengali which is of Austrico-Negroid-Mongoloid origin and contains “92% Saṁskṛta vocabulary.” Punjabi exemplifies a language directly descended from Vedic, containing “80% *Tadbhava* Vedic or distorted Vedic.” Sarkar contends the closeness of Punjab to Persia and Turkey caused “Persian and Turkish vocabulary” to be “included in Punjabi,” creating a “blending in the cultural history of these countries,” with a “similar blending” of their “linguistic structure” (“A Scriptological and Linguistic Survey of the World” par. 6).

Sarkar further claims Sanskrit possessed “four zonal intonations” depending on the region it was spoken in. They were “a) Gaṓṛiīya; b) Káshiká; c) Maharastra; and d) Dakśini (par.7).” During the Sanskrit age, “languages were not given their proper status” so that the Sanskrit spoken by the upper classes was called “Bháśa” and the common dialect of the



people was “Bhákha” with the latter given “lower status.” “Saṁskṛta was compared with well water,” and the “people’s language” with “flowing water (Bahatá Niira)” to differentiate the superior from inferior Sanskrit dialect (8). Sarkar does not give a strict chronological account of Sanskrit’s transformation; he does give a structural analysis of Vedic and Sanskrit detailed by examples from both languages. From an analysis of PIE, the Aryans who entered India belonged to the Vedic branch of this common language and not the Sanskrit dialect. Obviously, at present it is impossible to date the “exact antiquity of the Vedic language” because the only book available in that language, the *RV*, was “written” several millennia after it was composed (2).

On the subject of writing, the question of the Indus Valley script remains a thorn in the side of researchers because the seeming evidence of 35th century BCE writing remains undeciphered. The vacillation over whether or not to see the Indus script as an actual system of writing or not further complicates proposals that the script represents India’s earliest writing. Sarkar states the earliest scripts derived from Vedic and Sanskrit began appearing between 5000-3000 BCE represented by the “Bráhmii” and “Kharośthi” scripts. The “Sáradá, the Náradá, and the Kuṭilá scripts” were “variants” of the “old Bráhmii script.” Furthermore the “Shriihaarśa script” is based on “the Kuṭilá script.” Modern Bengali is related to “the Shriihaarśa script” (*Namah Shiváya Shántáya* 3). The surviving Southern Asian scripts shows “Shriihaarśa” to be “second in antiquity to the Sáradá” or “Káshmiirii script” (*Namah Shiváya Shántáya* 2).<sup>6</sup>

### 3.4 Divided Origins and the *Rg Veda*

While no serious work on Tantra’s historical roots can avoid the available evidence and the tremendous amount of work done to support the origin and maturation of Tantra-Yoga in the commonly accepted 300 BCE to 1300 CE range, critical and speculative

appraisals which yield an origin prior to the accepted 1500-1200 BCE dating of the *RV* and potentially reveal a much older picture. Nicholas Kazanas's review of the critical role of the *RV* to Indologists highlights that the "*R̥gveda*" is the most important document not only for Indology but most Indo-European studies in "philology, religion or mythology" and "history" ("A New Date for the *Rgveda*" 1). The received view from the "mid-19<sup>th</sup> century" is to date the *RV*'s composition between "1200-1000" BCE, a date that has been "closely linked" with a "hypothetical Aryan invasion" into Northwest India in "1500" BCE.

The first instigator of this timeframe is Max Müller's 1859 authoritative text *History of Sanskrit Literature* and the "somewhat modified" 1862 edition of the *RV* (2). Müller's date was predicated on Buddhism's arrival in the sixth century BCE presupposing an earlier timeframe for "the Vedic Corpus." From Buddhism's terminus a quo, he hypothesized a "200" year earlier composition of the "Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads" between "800-600" BCE, "another 200 years for the Śāma-, Yajur- and Atharva-Veda" between "1000-800" BCE, and, finally, another "200 years" for the *RV* and thereby determined a *terminus a quo* of "1200-1000" BCE for the *RV*'s composition. This has become "*doctrine supported by arguments alone and no actual evidence*" (2). After strong "criticism," Müller admitted his timeline "was hypothetical serving only as a *terminus ad quem*" to facilitate further "discussion." Unfortunately, his admission is rarely mentioned in modern texts, even though before dying Müller reiterated his date was "constructive" and should not become "positive by mere repetition" (2).

Kazanas's overview shows that even before (and after Müller's passing) scholars between 1893, 1894, and 1927 had argued for a "much earlier" date based on the "astronomical data in the Vedic Corpus." H. Jacobi and B.G. Tilak arrived at "4500" and "6000" BCE, respectively. Winternitz, from the available evidence in 1927, arrived at a "2500-2000" BCE date. However, the influential philologist T. Burrow "restated the

doctrine” relying on philological studies of the AIT that have since been “interpreted differently by different scholars” to reach “different conclusions” (3). Burrow also “admitted early on” that the *RV*’s chronology was “rough guesswork” (3). Kazanas, himself, believes the *RV* date should be “pushed back to 3100” BCE and the Aryan invasion theory “expunged from textbooks altogether” because “the archaeological” evidence gives no proof of “any invasion or entry of” Indo-Europeans into “the region *before the 1st millennium*” (emphasis added 1).

### 3.4.1 Aryan Invasion Theory

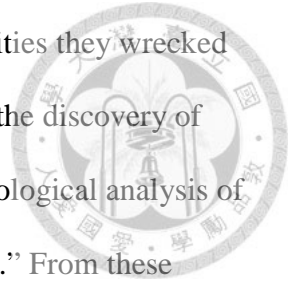
It was shown earlier that the origin of India’s prehistorical philosophy is vexed by competing claims. A brief outline suffices to expose the bones of the debate: at present Indologists tout three main prehistorical models. Once India gained independence from Britain, colonial historiography was criticized by Indian nationalists who felt the Indological studies conducted by outsiders elevated Aryan input while trivializing and/or misconstruing the importance of the indigenous populations on the development of Indian philosophy. National pride and the question of Aryan dominance engender highly charged and emotional arguments from both AIT theorists and indigenous supporters. Regardless, “most Western and Indian academics” used to, and many still, subscribe to the first historical view (and by far the most prevalent) that India “was invaded by Vedic Aryan settlers around 1900 BCE” (Bjornes 125).

The invading Aryans worshipped “the sun god Suria” and brought their “Rigvedic religion based on sacrifices and rituals.” This theory contends the Aryans went on to conquer Northern India and “destroyed the great Indus Valley civilization, where yoga was already practiced by Tantric (Shaeva) ascetics.” The conflict between Aryan and the Dravidian races supposedly gave rise to the “famous epics” the *Mahabhart*a and *Ramayana* (125). Bryant

highlights the common misconception that the indigenous population was a socially and philosophically undeveloped group of “black skinned, flat nosed barbarians.” Paradoxically, these “barbarians,” who seemingly inherited sophisticated culture from the Aryans, were advanced enough that “five thousand years . . . before the Aryans were heard of, Panjab and Sind” enjoyed “an advanced and singularly uniform civilization of their own” more evolved than “contemporary Mesopotamia and Egypt.” No civilization of the time “in prehistoric Egypt or Mesopotamia or . . . in western Asia” could compete with “the well-built baths and commodious houses of the citizens of Mohenjodara.” In fact, nothing in the rest of the world “at this period bears any resemblance, in point of style, to the miniature faience models” that are “distinguished by a breadth of treatment and a feeling for line and plastic form that has rarely been surpassed in glyptic art” (159). Bryant, quoting Edmund Leach, asserts the AIT theory does not successfully explain the Indus Valley development and abandonment:

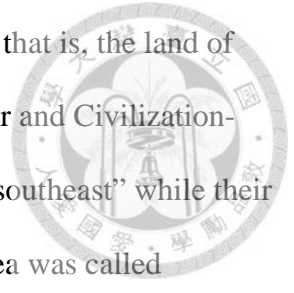
Common sense might suggest that here was a striking example of a refutable hypothesis that had in fact been refuted. Indo-European scholars should have scrapped all their historical reconstructions and started again from scratch. But that is not what happened. Vested interests and academic posts were involved. Almost without exception the scholars in question managed to persuade themselves that despite appearances, the theories of the philologists and the hard evidence of archaeology could be made to fit together. The trick was to think of the horse-riding Aryans as conquerors of the cities of the Indus civilization in the same way that the Spanish conquistadores were conquerors of the cities of Mexico and Peru. (159)

Where did the idea come from that in a brief period the Aryans summarily subjugated the locals and destroyed the Indus Valley civilization? “Stuart Piggott and Sir Mortimer Wheeler” were the forerunners of the flawed idea that the “Tangible archaeological evidence



of the Aryan conquest of India consists of nothing but the ruins of the cities they wrecked (Piggott 1952, 285)” (qtd. in Bryant 159). This argument was based on the discovery of “thirty-seven skeletons in various locations of Mohenjo-Daro” and osteological analysis of two of the skulls which appeared to have been struck by a “sharp object.” From these skeletons, “Wheeler (1968) confidently stated that ‘the end of Mohenjo-daro . . . was marked by a massacre.’” The skeletons were further connected to “so-called citadels found in several sites such as Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa, and Kalibangan,” that were believed to be “fortified mounds — the *pur* of the Rgveda” (78). Indra, sometimes called the “*purandara* ‘fort-destroyer’” in the *RV*, was Wheeler’s Aryan scapegoat for the supposed invasion (159). Serious flaws in this account began to surface when other researchers questioned the lack of any substantial evidence for military operation at the sites: there were no “arrowheads, weapons, pieces of armor” or “the smashed bodies of . . . invaders and defenders.” Dealing another blow to the invasion theory, carbon dating demonstrated the skeletons belonged to later visitors to the city long after its complete “abandonment.” Adding final insult to this version of the injured AIT, further analysis of the skulls made it clear the damage formerly attributed to violence was actually caused by the natural “cracks and warps caused by erosion” and not weapons (160).

What were the “invading” Aryans doing if they were not destroying the cities of the Indus Valley? Sarkar claims they migrated over millennia starting before 7000 BCE. The first stage of their migration started in “the Northwest” of India”; they brought the “ancient language” known as “Vedic” and their Vedic religion of sacrifice and ritual. However, as mentioned earlier, Sarkar claims proto-Sanskrit developed within the Indian subcontinent: “Rárh is the land where Sanskrit originated.” The Aryans “first migrated to the Sindhu-Saoviira, and the land of Sapta-Sindhu,” or the land of “the Seven Rivers” which included the “Sutlej or Shatadru, Bias or Vipásha, Ravi or Irávatii, Chenub or Candrabhágá, Jhelum or



Vitastá, Kabul and Sind.” Later on, the area became known as “Punjab, that is, the land of five rivers” due to the dropping of the names of two of the rivers (“River and Civilization-Section B” par. 20). The second stage of Aryan migration was “further southeast” while their “influence pervaded in the northern part of the Yamuna valley.” The area was called “Haritadhánya or the ‘Land of Green Vegetation’ (Haritadhánya → Hariahánna → Harihána → Hariyána)” (par. 21). The third stage was reached when the Aryans entered “Prayága [modern Allahabad] around the Ganga-Yamuna valley,” extending to “the Gaṇḍákii River on the north and the Shon River on the south” This area contained “the ancient Káshirájya or Kingdom of Káshii” (par. 21).<sup>7</sup> Vedic linguistic influences are seen in the “two daughter” languages they left behind: “Páshcátya and Paeshácii Prákṛta.” The first descendants of these languages such as “Pashto” and “Punjabi” contain a high concentration of Vedic derivations. The second descendants such “the Hariyánavii language” contain a slightly lower percentage of “Vedic-derived words.” The third descendants such as “Máfoyárii, Hafaotii, Bundelii, Bághelii, Avadhii, and Vrajabháśa” contain even less, while fourth descendants like “Bhojpurii” contain far less (par. 22). Yet, despite the indirect influence of Vedic on these languages it continued to influence their evolution.

In refutation of genetic studies and arguments for the Aryans as a distinct race within India, Sarkar says apart from “Kashmir and the northwest areas the people in the other parts of India are not of Aryan stock.” Moreover, the migrating Aryans belonged to the “Mediterranean branch, not the Alpine or Nordic.” Furthermore, Aryans were not the indigenous “inhabitants of Kashmir,” rather, the original people were the “Kash or Khas clans” who were of “short stature” and possessed a “light earthen complexion” (“Psycho-Acoustic and Inferential Acoustic Notes (Discourse Nine)” par. 7).

Sarkar states a lack of sufficient “fertile land” and “water” in the Aryans homelands of central Asia drove them into India where they found a “a fertile land” with abundant

“resources for “food and clothing.” The Aryans initially named India “Jambudvīpa” but later renamed it “Bhāratvarṣa.” *Bhārat*’s prefix *bhr* means “to feed or to maintain,” added to *ta* ‘expansion’ and suffixed with *varṣa* ‘land,’ Bhāratvarṣa means “the land where there is an abundance of resources for existence and expansion” (“The History of Mithila” par. 3).

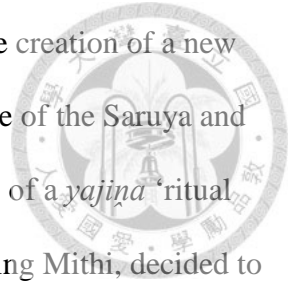
Initially, there were “minor clashes” between first wave of Aryans and the indigenous people as they moved “eastward from Varanasi.” The Aryans possessed a “sense of superiority and vanity of culture,” but this was “increasingly deflated as they moved eastward from Allahabad” (par. 3). They found the people of Varanasi (Kashi) who followed Tantric culture to be “virtuous,” and the “entire land was a Tantrik area.” Subsequently, the Aryans determined that movement further east would be detrimental to their survival and declared that Aryans migrating eastward would become “degenerated.” Essentially, the Aryan leaders utilized caste psychology against the indigenous people living in East India, arguing the inhabitants of those lands were “inferior.” Moreover, the Aryans tried to preserve their self-perceived cultural superiority and integrity by stigmatizing social relations between the different races. It was an orchestrated socio-psychological ploy to avoid “defeat” at the hands of the “people of eastern India.” Consequently, the lands of “Mithila, Magadha, Bengal and Assam were declared . . . non-Aryan land, and all Aryans were prohibited from going there” (par. 4).

Most non-Aryan land was in the ancient region Sarkar calls Rāḥ, which he declared the primordial geographical center of Tantra-Yoga praxes and transcendental philosophy. To the “north of Mithila stood the Himalayas; to the west the Nārayaṇī-Gaṇḍaka river; in the south the Ganges, and to the east, the old Kaoshī river.” Mithila and its environs are part of West Bengal to the southeast of Nepal and northeast of Bihar, to the south lies Jharkhand. These are the areas where Shiva propounded Tantra. Hence, Rāḥ was the heartland of the proto-Tantra that became Shiva Tantra. The most fertile regions were where Tantra proliferated

before migrants took its philosophy southward down to the Sarasvati and Indus delta civilizations. The ancient name given to Mithila was “Videha,” or modern Patna, in the state of Bihar. Some scholars argue ascetic practices existed before Vedic influences in these areas. Samuel believes Mithila might have been home to practices and the philosophy of “liberation from rebirth” that was not necessarily intrinsic to “Vedic material” but might well have had “an earlier presence outside the Vedic region” found in “the tradition of wisdom Kings of Mithila and other renunciate rulers” (175). Sanderson also recognizes that the “earliest datable example of a Tantric ritual handbook” that discussed worship and mantras was authored by “Vimalprabodha,” first mentioned in the “*Kalikulakramarcana* Nepalese manuscript dated 1002 CE.” It was derived from a much earlier “version of the cult of Guhyakali” which appears to have “flourished in Mithila (in northern Bihar)” (Sanderson 684-85).

Returning to Aryan migration, despite the Aryan leadership’s concerns, many Aryans desired access to the “extremely fertile” non-Aryan lands. However, if they crossed the “Sarayu river” they would be declared “of inferior caste” or “*Sarayúpárii Bráhmaṇ*” by their leaders. Nevertheless, some crossed the Sarayu River that originates in the Himalayas, runs along the Indian-Nepalese border, and ends as a tributary of the Ganges 350 kilometers later. The Sarayu River is mentioned repeatedly in the *RV* as being on “par with the Saraswati and the Indus”: “We invoke the great waters, the three time seven rivers, the forests, the mountains and the fire for grace. Saraswati, Sarayu and Sindhu with their waves: May the great rivers with the great favors come, the Divine Mother Waters (X64.9-9)” (Frawley 89). The Aryans that braved the crossing “became quite prosperous,” but those who obeyed the injunction against migration declared these renegades an “inferior caste” mostly because the transgressors’ control over the fertile regions of Mithila was resented by the Aryans left behind. (S. P. R. Sarkar "The History of Mithila" 5).





Aryan migration inevitably established interracial unions and the creation of a new “Aryan-Austrico-Mongoloid” race. These people living on the other side of the Saraya and “Naráyánii-Gańdaka” rivers in Mithila determined that the performance of a *yajña* ‘ritual sacrifice’ could restore their people to holiness. The King of Mithila, King Mithi, decided to “perform a sacrifice” following the “injunctions of the Vedas” so that the land would no longer be declared “unholy, non-Aryan land.” Under Vedic law “five scholars” had to be present at the sacrifice. Each scholar was named for his expertise in the Vedas: *Atharva* scholars were “Bráhmaṇa,” *Yajur* scholars were “Adharvu” *Sáma* scholars were “Udgáta,” and the *R̥g* scholar was “Rtvika.” Their overseer was called a “*Hotá*.” King Mithi requested three “prominent *Hotás*” to perform the ceremony in a place called “Trihotriiyabhúmi,” eventually becoming “Tirhotiiyabhumi in the Mágadhii Prákṛta language, and “Tirhut” in “old Maethilii.” *Mithila* is thus derived from the sacrificial activity known in Sanskrit as “*la*” ‘to hold.’ The suffix *la* appended to the king’s name, *Mithi*, became Mithila. Hence, Mithila was called “the land which holds, or which is held by, King Mithi” (par. 6).

In closing, Sarkar’s linguistic analysis of geographical names and his version of the AIT offer intriguing leads to support the growing number of Indologists who “believe that the Indus Valley could have been an Indo-Aryan civilization or, at least, that the two cultures could have coexisted” (Bryant 160). Evidence in favor of this is extensively analyzed by Bryant.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, according to Sarkar, India became a blending of the Aryan Vedic and Dravidian Shaeva.

### 3.4.2 One River and Two River Theories

We turn now to the second and third historical view known as the “One River Theory” held by “Georg Feuerstein and David Frawley” and other “Indian writers.” This theory, as Bjornes states, proposes there was “never an Aryan invasion around 1900 BCE”

and claims Yoga originates “solely from the Vedic tradition,” further contending Aryans were “indigenous to India” and represented everything “noble about Indian culture” (126). However, the One River Theory allows the Aryans might have “arrived in India at a much earlier date.”

The third view is the Two River Theory in which “Yoga” is seen as a blending of the “Tantric and Vedic traditions of India,” tying in with Sarkar’s argument of mutual assimilation. In regard to Sarkar’s position that Tantra was *a priori* to Vedic influences in the Indian subcontinent, Bjonnes notes that “according to Puranic history as well as recent genetic science discoveries, the Vedic Aryans arrived in India at an early age, most likely as early as 7-5000 BCE” and encountered Tantric praxes for the first time in the Mithila region. Kazanas also says that “apart from its silence on a former homeland the *RV* contains some positive indications about the Aryans’ very long presence in the Saptasindhu” or land of the seven rivers” (“A New Date for the *Rgveda*” 10). The accumulated evidence makes it likely the “blending of the Vedic and Tantric (Shaeva) cultures of India” occurred “by the time the Indus Valley civilization was destroyed and depopulated around 2000 BCE.”<sup>9</sup>

Roughly 500 years after the Indus Valley civilization was destroyed, circa 1500 BCE, “India produced the world’s first coherent philosophy and cosmology” in “Kapila’s Tantric-inspired Samkhya philosophy,” now known as “the philosophy of Ayurveda, India’s ancient medical science” (Bjonnes 126). Access to scripts and writing materials created an age of unprecedented philosophical inquiry so that the period after Kapila, starting at approximately 800 BCE, used the prehistorical legacy of oral sources to inspire “some of the greatest spiritual literature the world has ever witnessed.” Works derived from “oral histories and stories” presented for the first time in writing diverse philosophical works such as the “the epic *Mahabharata*, the Vedantic Upanishads, the spiritual teachings of the *Gita*, and the historical mythology of the *Ramayana*.” This flourish continued until 300 BCE when

Patanjali's seminal *Yoga Sutras* "codified the oral teachings of the Tantric yogis for the first time in the form of *Asthanga*, or *Raja Yoga*." (126). Moreover, Vivekananda states the *Yoga Sutras* "aphorisms" became "the highest authority and text book on Raja Yoga" or Yoga of the Kings (6). Unfortunately for the Tantric record, Patanjali's Yoga was conflated as the forerunner of Tantra whereas, previously, Tantra and Yoga were part of Shiva Tantra.

### 3.4.3 The Sarasvati River and the AIT

The widespread AIT posits a group of lighter skinned Aryans invaded India on "horses and chariots," dominated the region of the "Seven Rivers" situated in modern North Pakistan and Northwest India and "slaughtered, enslaved or drove into the South" the darker skinned indigenous people to become "masters of the country." Much of the theory received a boost from excavations in the Indus Valley basin and the discovery of the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro civilizations, themselves, as Wheeler put it, supposedly "destroyed by Aryan invaders." The fantastical Aryan destruction of these civilizations was later transformed into Aryan migration when, in 1966, archaeologist G. Dale discovered that the cities were not under attack but were "abandoned by their inhabitants" circa "1800-1600" BCE because of the "ecological, climatic and geophysical changes that compelled them to move eastward to the Gangetic area." Kazanas summarizes the problem inherent in the AIT chronology in Shaffer's critique:

The Indo-Aryan invasion(s) as an academic concept in the 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe reflect the cultural milieu of that period. Linguistic data were used to validate the concept that in turn was used to interpret archaeological and anthropological data. What was theory became unquestioned fact that was used to interpret and organize all subsequent data. It is time to end the

‘linguistic tyranny’ that has prescribed interpretive frameworks of pre-and protohistorical cultural development in South Asia (3).

Kazanas supports Shaffer’s perspective with critical geological and archaeological evidence used by a growing body of scholars to prove that the Sarasvati River is the most “startling piece of evidence” pointing to a much earlier *terminus a quo* of the *RV*’s composition millennia before script was invented.

Although earlier dating for the Vedas has been argued since the 19th century, little critical analysis of the internal geographical evidence presented in the *RV* was carried out until relatively recently. The quest to authoritatively date the text has taken a number of divergences of its own — not the least attempts to uncover PIE — and, as Witzel argues, the search for an “Indo-European homeland” that “has taken us some 200 years.” Behind these efforts, the Sarasvati River has stood as a mute testament to the *RV*’s chronology for at least six millennia (1). S.R.N. Murthy analyzes the occurrence of the Sarasvati’s name in the *RV* in 1980. Amongst others hymns, the name appears in “*Maṇḍala* I, Hymn 13, *Ṛg.* 9; *Maṇḍala* V, Hymn 5, *Ṛg.* 8; *Maṇḍala* I, Hymn 142, *Ṛg.* 9; *Maṇḍala* I, Hymn 188, *Ṛg.* 8; *Maṇḍala* II, Hymn 1, *Ṛg.* 11; *Maṇḍala* 1, Hymn 3, *Ṛg.* 8; *Maṇḍala* III, Hymn 4, *Ṛg.* 8; *Maṇḍala* VII, Hymn 2, *Ṛg.* 9; *Maṇḍala* III, Hymn 23, *Ṛg.* 4” (190). The Sarasvati was “praised by the Vedic authors and elevated” to the “level of a goddess” and considered “much responsible for the food and prosperity” of the civilization” living along its banks.

Murthy observes Krishnan’s contention that the river was in full flow “probably 5000 B.C. or earlier.” The *RV* describes the Sarasvati “as a great River — greater even than the Indus and the Ganges; however, by the time of “Manu and the Mahābhārata” in 1500 BCE the river’s “upper course had dried up.” Although the Sarasvati is frequently mentioned “in many hymns” of the *RV*, it was confused with the large Indus River because no large Sarasvati River remained in Indian memory; thus, it was assumed to be “an imaginary River”

(191). This was damaging to the extreme, discrediting “the authenticity of the Veda’s” geological accounts amongst other things (190-191). Fortunately, research in the 1970s and 80s re-established the relevance of these seemingly mythical geographical accounts after geologists “discovered the old route of the Sarasvati” leading from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. In the 90s researchers discovered the river’s course had diverted and, ultimately, dried up due to “tectonic and climatic changes.” Even more telling for the *RV*’s historical significance, the old course of the river is the site of “hundreds of small and large settlements” including “sizable towns” that constitute two thirds of 2500 “total Harappan settlements” (4).

Bimal Ghose, Amal Kar, and Zahid Husain interpreted LANDSAT imagery in 1979 showed the Sarasvati River originated in the “Siwalik Hills of the Himalayan mountain range” traversed the “Punjab and Harayana States.” It continued to the “northern part of Rajasthan (Ganganagar district),” finally drying out into the wide valley “extending from Hanumangarh through Pilibangan and Anupgarh towards Fort Abbas in Pakistan” (446). According to the authors of the study, the “earliest available report” of the Sarasvati’s demise occurs in the “*Mahabharata*”: “the river went underground at Binasana, near the present town of Sirsa” and reappeared at three commonly mentioned but now unknown places called “Chamasodbheda, Sirobheda, and Nagodbheda.” They are unknown because ancient Sanskrit literature did not “systematically” describe the river from “its source to its terminus” (446).

Ghose *et al* believe the Sarasvati shifted course many times and the archaeological remains associated with “old river courses” suggests “a major river, stemming mainly from the same sources as the present Sutlej, flowed through northern Rajasthan, Bahawalpur and Sind” in the “3rd to 2nd millennium BC” (447). All of this strongly suggests the Sarasvati River of the *RV* was much older than the 1500 BCE date given to the *RV*’s composition. The inclusion of the Sarasvati in a 1500 BCE *RV* is all but impossible. Accurately determining the

cause of the Sarasvati's deviations, and its factual existence in the *RV*, was given a major boost when French satellite imagery taken in 1992 determined that the Sarasvati is "pre-Harappa altogether" because it started drying up "in the middle of the 4th millennium." Therefore, the composers of the *RV* who describe the Sarasvati "flowing down to the ocean" are referring to a river "long before 1750" BCE (Kazanas "A New Date for the Rgveda" 4). Considering the importance of the Sarasvati research, it is hard to entertain a 1500 BCE origin of the *RV*. Consequently, much of the research on Tantra-Yoga and the origin of transcendental philosophy depending on the *RV* as a baseline must be reconsidered.

Not unsurprisingly, none of the research done on the Sarasvati reveals any knowledge of Sarkar's contributions to understanding this period of India's history given the negligible amount of comparative research exploring his presentation of Tantric history. In May of 1982 Sarkar gave a discourse "All Bask in the Glory of Shiva" and tangentially discussed the lost Sarasvati River which was not, as he tells it, the name of "a goddess" erroneously connected with Shiva but a "river." (*Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 103). Kazanas points out the *RV* extols the Sarasvati as "*naditamā*" in all but the fourth book (4). The word *Sarasvati* is derived from the prefix "*saras*" meaning "a big lake of water, or white effulgence," and the "entity" that contains "this white effulgence" is known as "*sarasvatii* (*saras* + *matup* + *ii*, a feminine suffix)."

In the Vedas we come across the mention of *Sarasvatii* – *Ambitame* 'O Mother' *nadiitame* 'O greatest river' *deviitame* 'O greatest goddess' *Sarasvatii*. This *Sarasvatii* is the name of a river, and the river is so useful, so beneficial for the people that it is revered as the greatest goddess. The goddess *Sarasvatii* has no relation with this river. (*Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 103-105)

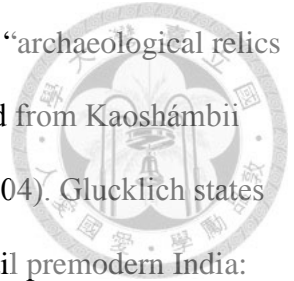
In this discourse, Sarkar describes the origins of the Sarasvati in the confluence of the "Carmañvatii and Drśadvatii [rivers] in central India" which merged to become the Sarasvati

River of the RV. The Carmañvatii River was named for the “ritual killing” of “hundreds of thousands” of animals by the Aryans inhabiting Rajasthan. The blood flowing from “the heaps of those animals” resembled a river in flow which “flowed into the Ganges River” along a tributary that was named “Carmañvatii in Sanskrit” (103). This ancient river is the modern “Chambal” River flowing from the south slope of the Vindhya Range in Madhya Pradesh through Rajasthan to finally merge as a tributary of the Yamuna River in Uttar Pradesh state. The second River, the “Drśadvatii” originated in the “Vindhya Mountain in the Bákhelkhańda area,” flowing “northwards towards the Ganges”:

Drśad in Sanskrit means “pebbles.” As the river was full of pebbles, the people called it “Drśadvatii”. This river used to flow northwards, and the Carmañvatii used to flow towards the east. Further on, they used to meet at a point south of Prayaga, and then they used to flow together past Kaoshámbii, into the Ganges near Prayaga. The combined flow of the two rivers, Carmañvatii and Drśadvatii, became known as Sarasvatii. (104)

The modern name of the Drśadvatii is “is Ghághar or Ghághrá” named after the “rough sound” the river makes as it passes over “large rocks and pebbles” (104). Interestingly, Kazanas believes during “historic times” the Sarasvati’s minor stream was known as “Ghaggar” which ended in “the desert at Bhatnair” (4) According to B.K. Bhadra, A.K. Gupta, and J.R. Sharma most geologists consider the “Ghaggar River” the “Paleodrainage course of the Vedic Saraswati” (Sharma 876). Sarkar says the combined flow of the Drśadvatii and Carmañvatii making up the Sarasvati “watered arid Madhya Pradesh” and the region became extremely “fertile”; out of “reverence” for this bounty people were inspired to call the Sarasvati a goddess (*Namah Shiváya Shántáya* 104).

The meeting point of the Drśadvatii and Carmañvatii at Prayaga flowed past Kaoshámbii, now called Kaushambi district in modern India. Kaoshámbii is situated in North



India and is archaeologically significant as the site of “many ruins” and “archaeological relics of the days of King Harśavardhana of Sthāniishvar.” Artifacts recovered from Kaushambii include “the first seal in Bengali script” used by King Harśavardhana (104). Glucklich states that Kaushambi existed “in one form or another” from “Vedic times until premodern India: about two millennia” (45). Although, I argue the two millennia date must be revised earlier by several millennia to reflect the Sarasvati evidence, Glucklich, acknowledges that in the “archaeological sense” the deepest layers of Kaushambi are “prehistoric” and lack “clear data that can be collated with specific textual information” (48). Moreover, Kaushambi is just one of “500 cities and dozens of states and kingdoms during the fifth century BCE” known to have existed in the “huge watershed region” of the Ganges, Sarasvati and Indus River that are yet to be explored (48).

The next phase of Sarkar’s description of the Sarasvati’s origin and demise is remarkable for accurately describing geological and tectonic events that occurred in 4000 BCE without access to the geological research conducted later. While the ambiguous existence of the *RV*’s Sarasvati has plagued scholars since the late 19th century, a survey of the research suggests Sarkar is the first to accurately describe tectonic activity impacting the Sarasvati’s flow and the desertification of the areas it used to support. His still unknown theory is now widely touted in one form or another by modern geological surveys as the likeliest explanation supported by clear geological records.

According to Sarkar “the river Yamuna flowed from the west, the river Ganges, or Gaungá, from the northwest, and the river Sarasvatii from the south.” These rivers “met at Prayaga,” modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. Sarkar says “*there was a tremendous earthquake in central India,*” which prevented the “Carmañvatii River” from flowing “eastward,” diverging it into the “Yamuna River (emphasis added 104). Its modern equivalent, “the Chambal River . . . flows directly into the Yamuna.” Because the Drśadvatii



River could not merge with “the Chambal River in the north” it took a new course towards the “northeast” and emptied into “the river Shon.” The combination of the “Carmanvatii and Drśadvatii” tributaries which formed the river Sarasvatii subsequently dried up (104). After this the Sarasvati could no longer reach Prayaga so that only the Ganges and Yamuna merged there. Although Sarkar does not provide exact dates for the tectonic activity that altered the Sarasvati’s course, recent geological surveys points to its occurrence around 5000-4000 BCE.

Sarkar’s anecdotal story would not be noteworthy, except the use of “satellite photographs” and geographical studies in India conducted by foreign as well as local researchers have proven the existence of a dried up river in the location Sarkar states (G. Feuerstein, Subhash Kak, David Frawley 88). According to Sarkar’s 1983 discourse “Varña Vijnána,” the “Saraswati River passed by Mogra to the west of the Bhagiirathii and the Yamuna passed by Kalyani.” The land these rivers traversed was an open “triveñii” or “confluence of three streams” as the “three rivers flow off in three different directions”:

The open stream of the Yamuna merges into the Ichámatii. At that time the Vidyádharii River used to emerge from the southern outlet of the Yamuna in midcourse; today it flows into the Bay of Bengal after passing the eastern outskirts of Calcutta, south past Canning, then joining with the Bhagiirathii’s tributary, the Piyálii, where they assume the name Mátlá and thereafter pass through the Sundarbans. ("Varña Vijnána" par.16-17)

Geologists believe the Sarasvati River flowed strongly from about 10,000 BCE, and “prior to its final demise” had “shifted course at least four times” with the result that the “a region around it” turned into “inhospitable desert” (G. Feuerstein, Subhash Kak, David Frawley 88). Corresponding with the area known as the “Thar Desert” or “Great Indian Desert,” the Sarasvati was not directly connected with the “Indus River” that supported “Mohenjo-Daro” and “Harappa” along with other sites that were “hastily” called the “Indus civilization” (88).

B.K. Bhadra et al did a geological study in 2009, determining the Sarasvati flowed through “Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Northern Gujarat states” in full “might” about “6000 B.C. and disappeared around 3000 B.C” (Bhadra, Gupta and Sharma 273). They concluded their study with these observations: (1) “satellite data” has confirmed the Saraswati Nadi of Haryana as a tributary to the Vedic Saraswati River.” (2) “occurrences of the sites of late Harappan, Mature/Sothi Harappan to Early Historic” periods as well as the “relics” of “old temples, sacred ponds and ashramas” along the course of the “obliterated” Saraswati Nadi ‘channel’ are “historically important” (287).

The above research demonstrates why remnants of the so-called Indus Valley civilizations found along the extinct course of the Sarasvati and its tributaries are so significant to Tantric scholars: the Sarasvati reorients the composition of the *RV* and the development of social and spiritual praxes in these areas. Bjornes rightfully claims the discovery of Shiva seals by “Marshall between 1922 and 1931” show “Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro” to have thrived between “4000-2000 BCE.” They were places “where Tantra was widely practiced.” The Indus Valley was “at the time” a “rice-growing” area boasting “approximately one-quarter of the world’s population” (129). The region’s revised historical association with the *RV* makes a 1500 BCE dating for the Aryan invasion and composition of the *RV* patently impossible. It also makes the AIT’s strong association with the Indus River suspect, considering most of the sites associated with “Harappan cities” are in fact “on the banks of the Sarasvatī rather than of the Indus (Talageri *Rig Veda and the Avesta: The Final Evidence* 104).

Shrikant Talageri’s polemical work the *Rig Veda and the Avestha* attacks the AIT and late composition of the *RV* in “1500 BCE” because the *RV* shows the Aryans living on “both banks (Rigveda VII.96.2) of a mighty Sarasvatī in full powerful flow.” They “must have been inhabitants of the region long before 1500 BCE and in fact may be identical with the

indigenous Harappans” (*Rig Veda and the Avesta: The Final Evidence* 104). Moreover, “satellite imagery” has conclusively proven that the Sarasvati “had almost dried up by the mid-second millennium BCE” (104). Talageri also supports Sarkar’s explanation that Sarasvati was a confluence of rivers near unanimously known by “Vedic scholars and archaeologists” to be “identical with the Ghaggar-Hakra” River (104).

The *RV*’s oldest Mandalas, carbon dating, and the discovery of these archaeological sites shows Indian civilization extends millennia earlier than 1500 BCE; the importance of the Sarasvati River in the *RV* suggest the text was composed orally between 10,000 and 4000 BCE, pushing back the standard *RV* chronology by 2500 to 6000 years. To my knowledge, Sarkar is the first to accurately present the demise of the Sarasvati River. While the Sarasvati’s course was subject to early speculation, Sarkar provided accurate details before geological studies proved the Sarasvati’s existence. This suggests Sarkar’s teachings, coupled with comparative research, may eventually prove that his 12,000 BCE timeframe for the *RV*’s first composition is closer to the true record than the long accepted 1500 BCE *terminus a quo*. I argue commencing the *RV*’s chronology in 12,000 BCE is likely a more accurate meta-view than a 1500 BCE timeframe. In this regard, Kazanas conducted linguistic studies that propose the *RV* must predate the Sarasvati-Sindhu culture.<sup>10</sup> He is convinced the *RV* is pre-Harappan and therefore pre-3000 BCE. In short, the linguistic and geological data brings researchers closer to realizing the appearance of the Tantra-Yoga praxes Sarkar connects with Shiva in 5500 BCE.

### 3.5 Convergence: Traditions and Practice

We have seen that the contested Shiva seals, which are 2000 years older than Buddhism, indicate prehistorical awareness of yogic postures related to meditation, even if their Shiva connections are polemical. Moreover, it is agreed by many scholars that prior to

the YS un-systematized ascetic techniques existed in various regions of India, particularly the area associated with Shiva Tantra. Still, the golden age of Tantric writing is typically accepted as 500-1500 CE, long after the introduction of the ascetic practices Buddha employed. Taken in sum, the proposition is so untenable (yet entrenched) that any attempt to shake off the myopia of dependence on “official” Tantric texts for evidence of the advent of Tantric praxes is met with academic silence or ridicule because the strong weight of Classical Kashmiri Tantra has silenced much of the oral record and elided attention from the discrepancies readily apparent in the archaeological and oral record of the Vedas. This paradigm makes Tantra’s historical record solely dependent on written texts, yet the illogic of such a premise can be seen in signs of Tantra-Yoga and non-dual philosophy in the *Artharvaveda* and traditional systems of initiation associated with Shiva Tantra. Bjornes states Sarkar’s claim that “All the yogic references to breathing exercises and yoga in general in the Atharva Veda” should be “traced back to the Tantra of Shiva thousands of years earlier” (127). Kang recognizes that many scholars consider the *Atharvaveda* contains “ostensibly Tantric material” derived from its “many magical spells and charms” (279). Singh contends the *Atharvaveda* is not a “picture of Aryan civilization” but rather its subtle philosophy in the “*Shruti*” of Nishingha Tapaniia” that shows “non-Aryan Tantra is more prominent than the Vedic ideal of the Aryan civilization.” Singh believes “the philosophical wealth of the Vedas” was a “product of the cultural blending of Indo-Aryan civilization.” As such, the latter Vedas used Tantra’s intuitional praxes to become “the vehicles of . . . spiritual illumination” (19). Further cementing the link between Shiva, Tantra, and the great Delta Civilizations, Singh points out the connection between Shiva and Harappa: Harappa’s etymology is derived from “*hara* and *appa*” meaning “Siva” and “father” respectively.” Thus, the “Harappan civilization is the gift of Saivism or Tantrism.” And returning to the Shiva seal, Singh argues that “the only male God of the Harappan culture” was “Lord

Siva . . . characterized by a horned headdress,” the “symbol of great occult power.” The three faces commonly used to represent Shiva indicate “he is the knower of past, present and future” (2).

Sarkar contends the historical “Shiva was well acquainted with the Vedic language and the Vedic religion”; references to Shiva in the latter portions of the “Vedas and in the Tantric treatises” occur but are not found in the “very ancient texts” because the lack of a written script during India’s prehistory caused the “loss” of “much material (*Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 3). Acknowledging this loss means accepting a Tantric historiography determined solely on the basis of recognized texts, reducing the critical role of the oral tradition in Vedic and Tantric dissemination to a footnote. It must be reiterated that prior to the development of script the ancients relied on sound, rhythm, poetic cum-grammatical structures, and memory to maintain their traditions. When Sarkar refers to Tantric texts that instruct the spiritual aspirant to “hear and learn these lessons” from their “Masters,” the command follows an oral propaedeutic. The guru or teacher prepares the student for deeper practice by first providing preliminary instructions. These commands were inscribed into the texts because oral instruction was foremost in the pedagogy of the ancients — for this reason the “Vedas are called *shruti* in Sanskrit, meaning ‘ear’” (4).

A combination of the prehistorical Tantric traditions of India combined with the Vedic religion of the Aryans established a hybrid system mixing ritual with transcendental philosophy. While access to script eventually accommodated the penning of Vedic thought, the oral tradition and belief in the sanctity of the tradition prevented textual transmission. When the dogma against writing down the Vedas finally fell away, a new “liberalism” encouraged adumbrations and embellishments according to writer’s affinity with religious and social groups. Postmodernism has drawn attention to the tendency to support certain perspectives that support power structures, something that likely happened in India’s earliest

rendition of its religious past. These transformed ideas now inform our present efforts to understand Indo-Aryan connections contextualized by geographical, linguistic, and cultural antinomies or associations within the Vedas.

What should be of concern for a veridical lineage of the transcendental philosophy and religious thought in India is not when the *RV* was finally put into writing, but when and by whom it was composed. This epistemological base will then serve to inform further analysis of the succeeding Vedas. In this regard, Bjonnes relates Feuerstein's contention of an earlier and continual migration of the "Indo European Aryans . . . as early as 6500 BCE" over several millennia, who encountered Tantric practices and script for the first time. Sarkar states in *Discourses on Tantra Volume One*:

The Aryans did not have their own script and thus were first introduced to the [written] alphabet after coming in contact with the Dravidians. The Dravidians of the Harappa and Mahenjodaro civilizations of India were already using a script, the Saendhavii script; after the Aryan migration into India, that script became transformed into the Bráhmii and Kharośthi scripts (147)

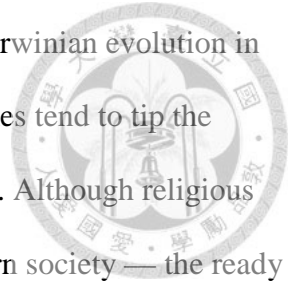
Bjonnes, quoting Feuerstein, supports the idea the Aryans arrived in a populated land of "Dravidians, Mongolians and Austrians," sharing "a sophisticated, urban culture, and the art and science of Tantric Yoga" already long in practice. Thus, what is now termed the Indian civilization is, at its core, composed of "different civilizations, cultures and outlooks," which could be termed "Vedic/priestly" on the one hand and "Tantric/yogic" on the other. (126).

McEvelly also argues proto-Tantric systems existed prior to "Aryan dominance" shaped by the "primeval . . . magic and shamanic belief" of the "Dravidian substrate" going back "to the Indus Valley culture and beyond." These primitive practices were utilized by diverse groups of "Ajivikas" and "Saiva" practitioners who "reportedly" practiced "secret bloody rights" and "sexual magic" as well as "cannibalism and the eating of refuse" found in

the left-hand Tantra followed by the “Aghoris, Kapalikas, Paśupatas, Ajīvikas and Jains” (McEvelley 229). We have seen that not all these antinomian practices should be considered the outcome of a desire for power. Urban argues the processes followed by “radical sadhus like the Aghoris, Naths, and tantrikas” represent “the highest ideals of freedom” and “self-discovery” clothed in a path of “no restraint” (267-68). Child highlights the conflict between the perceived “orderly society maintained through adherence to the Veda” and the practice of “ritual sacrifice” ordained by Aryan priests against the indigenous Shiva beliefs that expressed a “violent rejection” by “members of extreme Siva cults” including the “the Kapalikas, Aghoris and Naths.” Eventually a “tamed version of Siva” was reintroduced into the “sacrificial fold” after a “gradual decline” of obvious “tantric elements in Hinduism” (56).

### 3.6 Divergence Traditions and Practice

On the one hand, many Indian spiritual traditions have typically validated their authenticity through Shiva lineage. On the other, new schools explicitly seeking autonomy deliberately cut the links tying them to older Shiva traditions by transforming the received techniques into new ontological and epistemological paradigms. Still other traditions faced the gradual elision of their lineage over millennia. Explicitly severed or implicitly forgotten, new schools evolving from earlier practices provided their more famous founders with an independent status often divorced from connections to older systems. This should not be taken as a claim that all traditions were ignorant of their continuity within an earlier stream, but for their adherents the spiritual relationship with their Guru and the results of the practice were more important than lineage. This is readily apparent in faith based religions whose soteriologies of redemption or a heavenly afterlife overshadow their histories. The typical believer takes the tradition as it is presented without excessive concern over religious historiography or physical evidence for that matter. The willingness to suspend disbelief is



exemplified by Christian Creationism which denies widely accepted Darwinian evolution in favor of a 6000 year cosmology. Furthermore, belief in positive outcomes tend to tip the scales of attention towards a pleasant future rather than a contested past. Although religious orientation is typically inspired by direct transmission — even in modern society — the ready availability of books now facilitates new inlets into faith based religions, yet meditative traditions still attract practitioners through personal contact with a teacher, whether or not this contact was instigated by reading a specific text. Thus, the guru-disciple paradigm is alive and well. The ensuing trusting relationship often creates a wholesale acceptance of lineage on the part of the practitioner without much further analysis. Moreover, while orthodox Vedic and Tantric Gurus maintained their links with the past, these affiliations and previous connections could also be uprooted by radical religious, philosophical, and social revolutions.

### 3.6.1 Tantra and Buddhism

Buddhist Tantra or Vajrayāna Buddhism exemplifies a school that absorbed Shiva Tantra into its pedagogy with varying degrees of acknowledgment within the tradition. The ultimate development of Buddhist philosophy, inspired by the Buddha's enlightenment, was wholly or in part derived from Tantra-Yogic praxes learned from ascetics in the same areas where Buddha later preached his doctrine of The Four Noble Truths and emptiness: “the area of the middle Ganges, *especially in Magadha*” (emphasis added Lamotte xxii). This area, as has been pointed out earlier, was home to indigenous Shiva Tantra. S. Laumakis notes that before Buddha attained his enlightenment he “sought the help and advice of two yoga masters, Alara Kalama and then Uddaka Ramaputra” who both “taught and practiced different systems of meditation and mental concentration.” The Buddha eventually “rejected their leadership” because the practices “while helpful with calming and stilling his mind” did not, “produce the goal he was eagerly seeking, i.e., enlightenment and the realization of the



end of suffering” (8). Buddha, in contrast to Tantric and certain Vedic systems, focused on realizing the essential emptiness of existence in Metaseity rather than considering Aseity as the ultimate unqualified conscious component of emptiness.

Buddha’s era was a turbulent point in India’s religious and spiritual outlook as it shifted from what Laumakis calls the “Vedic vision to the post-Vedic vision” (8). This perspective was as much a reaction to dissatisfaction with Vedic ritual as it was with the etiolated entrenched practices. The reality is little is really known about how Buddha attained his enlightenment: “Neither the Buddha’s immediate followers nor the Buddhist tradition ever saw fit to preserve and present the facts of his life as [a] . . . continuous, self-contained . . . biography” or showed much concern with how the actual enlightenment “came to be realized or (re)discovered.” Moreover, as has been reiterated throughout India’s spiritual history, even the “followers of the historical Buddha preserved his teachings” only “years later” when they were “written and compiled as texts” (15).

Etienne Lamotte’s seminal *History of Indian Buddhism* argues that within a very short period of time after the Buddha’s death, Buddhism went from a “philosophico-mystical message that it had been at the outset” into a “true religion, with a deified Buddha, a mythology, an hagiography, and occult beliefs deeply interwoven with the messianic expectation” (xxiv). By about “250 B.C.” in the “17th or 18th year of Ásoka’s reign” the Council of Patliputra” was convened to discuss the correctness of Buddhist law because “the Royal favors” given to Buddhists by King Ásoka “attracted” numerous “unworthy recruits . . . whose mentality and conduct had to be corrected.” This caused a split in the “Community into two rival clans” as many orthodox Buddhists considered the “new tendencies” which were “formulated as theoretical proposals” to border on “heresy” (271).

The division of traditions is not unique to Buddhism and increases in direct proportion to the popularity, geopolitical influence, and gap between origin and maturity of a school.

Undoubtedly, the erosion of meditative praxes can be correlated with the deification of teachers and new theories of practice and ethics. This is seen in modern Buddhism's growing trend towards extraneous prayer and ritual witnessed in temples across Taiwan, Thailand, and other Asian countries. I consider this a byproduct of emphasizing ritual at the expense of praxis and general ignorance of the meditations that led to Buddha's realization. Moreover, inclusion of elements not originally found in the practice, along with the discontinuity of the tradition's foundational praxes, is not endemic to Buddhism, occurring in most interfaith offshoots, Shaivism included. However, nowhere is the dispute over the fundamental practices of a school more illustrative than the example of the Buddhist-Tantra debate.


Proponents of Vajrayana (Tantric) Buddhism see the Tantric elements as the "true" teachings of the Buddha and deny any dependence on Shaiva practices for their appearance in Vajrayāna. The reverse perspective is reflected by Buddhists and philosophers who argue Shaivism and Vedic practices degraded Buddhism's elevated teachings. The existence of Tantric praxes in Buddhism brings two possibilities to the fore: either Buddhist meditation was rooted in the indigenous Tantra-Yoga tradition of Magadha in 500 BCE or Shiva Tantra is an offshoot of Buddhism. The latter perspective should find very little support in the academic community, yet most researchers claim Tantra's official emergence is long after Buddhism. If the attributed date of Buddha's birth is approximately 500 BCE, then the appearance of the "first" Tantric texts in about 500 CE leave an impression that Tantric practices were impacted by Buddhism but not vice versa. The existence of Tantric texts after Buddhism indicates the legacy of Tantra's long held secrecy. Arguably, the viewpoint that downplays Buddha's engagement with Tantra-Yoga is attributable to secrecy, misunderstanding, or deliberate obscuration to "cleanse" Buddhism of Tantric, Vedic, and other antinomian precursors.

Wedemeyer does much to illustrate the anachronistic dogma that Tantra was a degenerated posterior development of Buddhism by disabusing the “nonindigenous” academic assumption of “two Nāgārjunas, a ‘philosophical’ and a ‘religious’ Nāgārjuna.” He analyzes Thurman’s claim that the internal evidence of the texts attributed to the two Nāgarājūnas supported “the traditional claim that one person wrote both the philosophical and Tantric books,” but because this would entail a radical resistance to our “prior system of dating the emergence of Tantrism” it would require a total revision of the “patchwork of inferences” that have led to the ontology of Tantra as posterior to Buddhism (3).

### **3.7 Conclusion: Antithesis and Synthesis**

As the foregoing debates have revealed Tantric studies are nothing if not contentious, open to continual revision and skepticism. Serious scholars of Tantric history frequently limit themselves to philological efforts and historical artefacts. Their narratives are penned in line with direct evidence and, as such, receive the most attention for their perceived etic objectivity. Nevertheless almost every text written on the history of Tantra and India contains eisegeses restricting our knowledge of Tantra and its prehistorical praxes. Some of the most influential texts on Tantra-Yoga in recent years have developed positions utilizing archaeological and linguistic analysis or textual and/or comparative paradigms. However, the reality is that for each account an immediate rebuttal arises out of other research primarily because scholars directed at this work are realistically capable of working within a limited number of fields. This is where the question of etic versus emic studies and the issues of experience, agenda, bias, insight and context must also be acknowledged before potential resolutions can be seriously addressed.

The textually oriented studies undertaken by Samuel, Wallis and others cited in this chapter represent the latest research that traces Tantra’s development from recognized



scriptural sources, yet most of these works avoid considering the oral teachings earlier to these scriptures. The classicists' avoidance of the oral tradition artificially restricts our understanding by not entertaining research that does not fit within the accepted paradigm of a post-Vedic, post-Buddhist appearance of Tantra. Yet, Indologists point out the available material on Tantra is limited to a few Tantras translated into English while a large quantity of them slowly decays in palm leaf manuscripts. On the other hand, comparative work that goes beyond the established boundaries of the field offers new epistemic horizons when emic data is included in Tantric research. Given this situation, I argue that ignoring the oral traditions and the comprehensive knowledge of philosophers like Sarkar is unreasonably restrictive inasmuch as etic epistemology denies emic understanding when oral teachings provide alternatives to the received view. More often than not, the only available avenue left open to an emic researcher requires laterally sniping at the contradictions of contemporary data and presenting contrasting views "substantiated" only by their capacity to undermine received historiographies. The processes is entirely dissatisfactory: invalidating a position by critiquing current archaeological, linguistic, and philosophical perspectives is a double edged sword, readily turned back on its wielder's lack of concrete evidence and little academic support for including oral or intuitive narratives in "objective" research.

Sarkar deservedly falls into the emic category and can be subjected to all of the preceding criticisms. He presents his knowledge as clearly stated facts which are validated by remarkably broad discourses and examples from Indian history. Nevertheless, for the most part, he offers no explanation for the source of his knowledge. The researcher on the periphery of Sarkar's teachings sees an unfathomably polymathic corpus originating in an individual whose analysis of transcendence and immanence projects towards a synthesis of both ontology and epistemology which appears omniscient. On the other hand, initiates simply get on with utilizing this knowledge without overly analyzing it. As I have argued,

Gurus provide guidance and pass on their teachings to adherents who typically accept these verbatim. Disciples are concerned with the means to spiritual progress rather than a lineage of the means. Frequently, Sarkar's published linguistic and historical teachings are a matter of interest rather than a vital academic concern in the spiritual life of his Tantric practitioners.

Because the teachings explaining Tantra's esoteric practices are kept secret, his published works on ethics, philosophy, politics, linguistics, medicine, biology, and history take on a veneer of unquestioned fact. Hence, while practitioners may ask their teachers to explicate the praxes enhancing their individual spiritual progress, academics are rarely concerned with the validity of specific meditative praxes. Researchers privilege the type of quantifiable research that is overwhelmingly significant to careers built on finessing and tweezing particular theories to garner collegial support. Treading the path of unconfirmed narratives and emic data is, therefore, a quagmire of conflicting views and dead ends, yet researchers willing to traverse unexplored avenues are more likely to come up with new perspectives that will shatter fossilized positions. In this spirit, carefully analyzing Sarkar's Indological studies offers remarkable evidence scattered throughout his discourses which will after careful collation and follow-up studies likely support a new history and origin of Tantra-Yoga.

If modern scholars entertain and oral nexus for Shiva and Tantric praxes millennia before they were written, the historiography of India's spiritual legacy will have to undergo serious revision. The early presence of Shiva Tantra might explain how Aryan Vedic thought and indigenous Tantra merged into India's cultural and spiritual life. Of even greater significance to the transcendental tradition in general — and Tantra specifically — is the realization that meditative praxes were not a first millennium BCE phenomena but *a priori* to Vedic thought. With this in mind, I now shift to Shivology and Sarkar's history of Tantra's evolution from pre-Shiva to post-Shiva forms.

## Chapter Four

### Shivology Part I: The Tantric and Vedic Episteme



*This chapter presents Sarkar's Shivology, or Shiva studies, and revises Tantra's prehistorical origins vis-à-vis the 7500 BCE historical Shiva. It draws on Sarkar's oral discourses to explicate Shiva's spiritual and social mission through the discipline of Tantra-Yoga. Sarkar's timeline for the Rg Veda's composition and the development of the latter Vedas then demonstrates the linguistic and spiritual relationship between Tantric praxis and Vedic philosophy. Sarkar's requirements of a Sadguru that can influence the spiritual, psychic, and material realm are detailed. Finally, Sarkar's conception of initiation into Tantric meditation versus Vedic religiosity demonstrates the critical difference between spiritual praxis and orthodox Vedic thought.*

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#### 4.1 Introduction to the Emic Episteme

General academic consensus regards the Vedas and their chronology as *prima facie* evidence of the origin of India's religious and transcendental movements. Chapter Three explored the polemics surrounding the *RV*, namely the hiatus between its oral composition and writing. If agreement were reached, the spectrum of theories arguing for a *terminus a quo* between 3500 to 12500 years would reorient Tantra-Yoga's place in spiritual history. Sarkar falls far to the right of this spectrum, claiming the *RV*'s oral composition commenced "about fifteen thousand years ago" (*Rārḥ: The Cradle of Civilization* par. 2).

Before discussing Sarkar's Shivology, I would like to point out the following two chapters are not an exhaustive treatment of the field. To avoid repeating comparative work already done by Kang, the various Shaiva schools are not discussed. As I have argued, Sarkarian studies, if not entirely lacking, are limited to a few researchers. These two chapters answer Kang's contention that understanding Sarkar's "possible borrowings" and "departures

from traditional thinking” necessitates a deeper examination “from the perspectives of history and linguistics” (277). Furthermore, this chapter does not encompass the sheer volume of Sarkar’s discourses that touch on Shiva, and my limited Sanskrit vocabulary restricts any in-depth comparative philology. While twenty-three years studying and living in Taiwan facilitates direct translation and interpretation of Chinese transcendental texts, and a similar period with transliterated Sanskrit vocabulary aids in understanding Tantric concepts, my Sanskrit studies are in their infancy. Nevertheless, I am convinced contextualized interpretations of Tantric and Vedic manuscripts will provide more evidence for Sarkar’s perspectives than discussed here. Fortunately, the number of English translations derived from his Bengali and Hindi discourses is growing, and many discourses were actually given in English. Apart from Sarkar’s work, the gradually expanding English corpus of Sanskrit texts devoted to Tantra greatly assists scholars not fluent in the Indic languages used to compose the Tantra’s. Therefore, these two chapters primarily attempt to fill in some of the lacunae regarding Tantra’s origin and transformation detailed in Sarkar’s *Namah Shivavya Shantaya*.

Chapter Four and Chapter Five approach Sarkar’s history of Shiva Tantra through two paradigms: A diachronic examination of Tantra-Yoga’s prehistory and a hodological overview of the interconnections between Shiva Tantra and the traditions that followed. Chapter Three argued the prehistorical accounts of Tantra-Yoga cannot solely rely on textual evidence. This makes efforts to reveal Shiva’s relationship to Tantra infrangibly a part of Sarkar’s situation within, as Inayatullah tells us, the intuitive “oral tradition” of Tantra, and “there is always something more in the exchange than simply words” when Sarkar speaks. Placing Sarkar in “a purely academic frame” carries “the danger that his words will become sanitized” and the essence lost (9-10). Therefore, these two chapters are primarily emic, attempting to maintain the integrity of Sarkar’s intuitive discourses on Shiva. The need for

this was established in Chapter Two and Chapter Three whose interdisciplinary etic analysis clarified the danger of assuming Tantra-Yoga was solely a Common Era tradition arising out of Patanjali's *YS* and Buddhism. Moreover, if Tantric research is delimited by strictly textual sources, the earliest historical mention of Tantra in the *RV* still artificially fixes the word's origin circa the fifteenth century BCE which ignores all evidence to the contrary.

The absence of scholastic consensus, the eisegesis of contemporary evidence, and the geological evidence supporting a considerably earlier date suggests Sarkar's contention deserves more consideration than academics would accord it at first blush. Given Chapter Three's overview, Sarkar's timeline appears closer to the *RVs* earliest *terminus a quo* than previously considered. These early explorations are speculative, although increasingly well supported, and this chapter lays no claim that Sarkar's *RV* date is the final word — Sarkar, himself, rarely deals in definitive dates, yet he details Tantric history within the pan-Indian episteme. His intention is not to nationalize Tantra but to show how the now long forgotten Shiva Tantra of 7500 years ago alleviated the material, psychological, and spiritual suffering experienced during that age. Inayatullah states that Sarkar changes “contemporary knowledge maps” and “transcends the current knowledge of humanity” to establish a “new ordering of knowledge” that is not readily “captured by the understandings of the present.” Interpreting Sarkar using “conventional categories would be a violation of authenticity” (2).

Bussey argues that to “challenge the hegemonic is one thing” but to “build an alternative future is another” (39). By re-envisioning Shiva's role in Tantric history, Sarkar challenges the hegemony of Indological historiography, bringing about a renaissance of the spiritual system Shiva introduced. Understanding the role of Shiva and Sarkar's Shivology grants the reader, as Inayatullah puts it, an insight into Sarkar's “social level of time” whereby “exploitation” is “reduced through social transformation” to create a “time of dynamic balance — a balance between the physical, social and spiritual” (*Situating Sarkar:*



*Tantra, Macrohistory and Alternative Futures* 7). Analyzing Sarkar's Shivology for precise prehistorical dates will prove unfruitful — a rough timeframe more than serves to balance the present misconceptions — but contemplating Sarkar's 5500 BCE Shiva origin of Tantra clarifies the debates on Vedic and indigenous spirituality. Sarkar's discourses on Shivology are not merely historical or academically informative (although comparative researchers can find rich veins here); rather, they situate the beginning of rational spirituality in a mode of consciousness which, while identified with Shiva Tantra, is, according to Inayatullah, "all embracing" — unlike the type of "identity in one religion" that "means non-identity in another" (*Understanding Sarkar: The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge* 2). This inclusiveness, Sarkar explains, is found in Shivology which begins with antithesis — the division of India into Aryan Vedic and indigenous proto-Tantric society — and reaches varying degrees of synthesis when Shiva, in his role as a perfect spiritual preceptor, created the system of Tantric initiation and spirituality.

#### 4.2 Shiva Tantric and Vedic Perspectives

Sarkar's revision of Tantra is significant in its own right and, like many authors, I dispense with arguing over the Vedas precise chronology. Nevertheless, the Vedas form part of the cultural backdrop to the Shiva era, constituting, Sarkar tells us, important accounts of Indo-Aryan prehistory. In this regard, only the "oldest portions" of the "*R̥g Veda* can be regarded as ancient relic[s] of the non-Indian Aryan civilization" because they were "composed outside India" (P. R. Sarkar 141-45). Thus, Shiva's origins are rooted in India's oldest indigenous traditions with tenebrous links to Shiva found in texts and traditions that are not overtly Tantric. It should also be remembered that not every tradition recognizing Shiva admits to containing Tantric elements. To separate the historical Shiva from the mythical, Sarkar sifts through the interstices of the connections, assimilations, and derivations

to disclose Shiva's relationship to Post-Shiva Tantra, Buddhism, Jainism, and the Puranic religion.

Sarkar unapologetically dates the earliest composition of the *RV* at 13000 BCE and states the *Atharvaveda* was composed slightly after the Shiva era circa 5000 BCE. Although formulated without reference to satellite imagery, contemporary geological research, and recent archaeological discoveries, his intuitive proposition is increasingly plausible. Although his chronology goes radically against previous time frames, considerably earlier claims for the *RV* are being critically re-examined as new archaeological, philological, and geological data indicate Sarkar's historiography (for those familiar with it) is closer to the internal evidence revealed in the Vedas than previously imagined; thus, Sarkar's timeframe may yet inform India's evolving spiritual history.

The details included in Sarkar's discourses eschew mythologizing Shiva and, buttressed by comparative references, give an account of the Shiva era exposing the divisions and connections found in Vedic and Tantric thought within the Indo-Aryan debate.

Indologists have faced over two centuries of research and vitriolic debate on these issues — internet forums and academic venues amply highlight how opposing sides accuse their detractors of poor scholarship, eisegesis, Indian nationalism, colonial agenda, and even Nazism.<sup>11</sup> Vocal supporters of early Indo versus late Aryan etiology of the Vedas are represented by respected academics on both sides. Michael Witzel, Wales Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard, supports the commonly accepted 1500 BCE timeframe against the so-called “fringe” element, of David Frawley, Georg Feuerstein, Subhash Kak, N Kazanaz, and Shrikant Talageri who offer dates ranging between the tenth to third millennium BCE. Frawley and Rajaram in *Hidden Horizons* believe that all the evidence points to the “indigenous” heritage of India “dating back” to the “last Ice Age 10,000 years ago” (ix). They argue “yogic culture” existed “at the beginning of human history” and these “seers”

founded “the paths to spiritual knowledge for humanity at the beginning of this world age” approximately in 10,000 BCE (13).

The survival of unwritten practices and beliefs over the millennia that were eventually written down is testament to the longevity of India’s prehistorical spiritual traditions. The United States Census Bureau sets Global human population estimates for 5000 BCE between two and twenty million, with a general consensus of five million (“World Population: Historical Estimates of World Population”). It is suggested a quarter of this population lived in the fertile regions of the Indian subcontinent. Roughly speaking, one million people lived in the Shiva Age, but it is impossible to know how many of them came in contact with Shiva’s ideology during his lifetime, whether directly or indirectly. Sarkar claims Shiva covered great distances by bullock cart, and evidence suggests Tantra spread north and west as far afield as Norway. Bjornes believes “the Gundestrup Cauldron (400-100 BCE)” discovered “in a peat bog in Denmark,” appears to depict the “image of Pashupati or Shiva,” “strikingly similar” to the “many seals attributed to Shiva found in the Indus Valley” (129). Mookerjee and Khanna also contend Tantra was not “limited to India alone.” Evidence that the “precepts of tantrism travelled to various parts of the world” exists in “Nepal, Tibet, China, Japan and parts of South-East Asia.” Tantric influences are further seen in “Mediterranean cultures such as those of Egypt and Crete” (12).

Despite the spread of Tantric philosophy through Asia, its esoteric elements were guarded by practitioners, limiting widespread knowledge of how Tantric meditation was to be practiced. By the time the first scripts appeared in the fifth to third millennia BCE, practical Tantra had almost completely disappeared from common knowledge. Possibly Shiva’s original teachings survived in isolated pockets to become the undercurrent of India’s later spiritual traditions. One possible mitigating factor against the complete disappearance of Shiva Tantra was its assimilation and diffusion into various shamanistic and religious

practices. Although disseminating Tantric techniques was prohibited, belief in Tantra's occult powers stimulated its wider dispersal by opportunistic practitioners. Finally, the historical incorporation and transformation of older esoteric practices to make new traditions acceptable to potential converts is historically well documented as seen by the great convergence of Buddhist, Jain, and Puranic deities that were originally linked to Shiva. Sarkar argues the present pan-Indian synthesis of Shiva deities in newer religions is grounded in the indigenous cultural memory of India, particularly in the Ráfh region of West Bengal.

Chapter Three explored research indicating “the worship of Siva goes back many thousands of years in the subcontinent to the Indus valley civilization.” “Steatite seals have been found suggestive of a deity akin to Siva. Seals dating back as far as 3000 BCE contain elements of Siva's “later iconography;” which remain “suggestive” until the “Indus Valley script is deciphered” (201). Stanley Rosen contends the Vedic tradition is the longest unbroken line of spiritual practice and believes the Vedas “were put into written form some 5,000 years ago by Vyasadeva,” considered an “incarnation” of the “Lord of the Universe.” While modern scholars sharing “an alternate view” date the Vedas to 3500 years ago, the “instigator of these dates, the German Indologist, Max Müller,” admitted his assessment was debatable. ““Whatever may be the date of the Vedic hymns, whether 1,500 or 15,000 BC, they have their own unique place and stand by themselves in the literature of the world”” (Rosen 53).

The only consensus Indologists have on the existence of indigenous Tantric praxes prior to Vedic thought is that they do not agree. There is even less accord as to Tantra's origins in mother-worship, shamanism, or asceticism — or whether it predates the so-called Aryan invasion. This is amply demonstrated by Wedemeyer's criticism of “retrograde writers” who maintain “the presence of large-breasted female terracotta figurines in the prehistoric sites of the Harappan civilization” provide “evidence of the antiquity of Śāktism

and Śākta tendencies in pre-Āryan Indian society.” Moreover, he argues that “virtually no serious scholar of today would advocate this view” because “the notions of Tantrism as a primordial tradition of matriarchal mother-worship, magic, and sex rites — or as representing a perennial “pre-Āryan” religion of India — are largely defunct” (24). Most of Wedemeyer’s arguments against the origin of Tantra in mother-worship and magic are reasonable, but his exclusion of Tantra’s pre-Aryan existence is problematic, particularly when the evidence of multicultural Indian civilizations following different practices prior to the AIT discussed in Chapter Two is taken into account.

Discussing the spread of Tantra in the first millennium CE, Wedemeyer acknowledges “more historically and anthropologically savvy writers” argue Tantric practices likely came from “primitive tribal communities in India” and this has attracted “considerable attention and assent” in “contemporary scholarly accounts.” Many first millennium CE proponents of Tantra ascribe to the view that the direct “transmission of Tantric culture” was from outside tribal culture and not vice versa, making them the “targets” of teachings rather than the source. Evidence for this is highlighted by Sanderson’s attention to a passage in the “Buddhist *Guhyasiddhi* that advocates Buddhist Tantric yogins traveling among untouchable communities, giving initiation and teaching Tantric scriptures to them” (26). These competing viewpoints make an etiological history of Tantra more educated myth than historical reality. Clearly, Tantra’s history is a “bricolage” of adversarial claims so that indigenous versus external origins, antinomian versus ascetic praxes, and shamanistic versus philosophical perspectives, to name a few, are synthesized into a search for an origin that is, as Dubuisson puts it, “fundamentally mythical, not scientific” (34). Indeed, Sarkar’s intuitive discourses are mythical if an etic lens is applied without comparative analysis, but Chapter Two and Chapter Three demonstrated that widening the focus of our research lens to include

textual, archaeological, and comparative spirituality shows his teachings clarify the long dormant prehistorical source of Tantra-Yoga.



#### 4.3 Shiva and Tantra-Yoga Praxes

Sarkar's claim that Shiva was the world's first Tantric guru in 5500 BCE radically diverges from most Western scholarship on Tantra's origin and dispersal. Shiva, Sarkar tells us, was a "*mahakaola*," a being not born into bondage who did not require a Guru or meditation to attain his *mokṣa* (*Ānandamūrti Yoga Sādhana* 207). He states the knowledge of Shiva's teachings weakened over the centuries leading to confusion about its technical application, yet some of Tantra's non-dual philosophy continued as an undercurrent in the Vedas and other spiritual writing. A noted Tantric scholar, Singh, supports Sarkar's position that Shiva introduced Tantra to the world:

In search of realization of philosophical truth and religious summum bonum [sic] of life Lord Siva expounded scientific and mystic tradition known as Tantra. Tantra forms the esoteric basis of all religion and provides sound philosophical foundation of spirituality. Tantra is a happy and harmonious blending of enjoyment (*Bhoga*) and salvation (*Yoga*). It is neither a dogma nor lifeless rituals. It is an intuitional science. (ix)

Eliade also claims "the rudiments of classic Yoga" are seen "in the Vedas," indirectly supporting Sarkar's contention that the latter Vedas were an unequal synthesis of Vedic ritual and Tantra (102). Eliade argues "ancient" Vedic texts reference "ascetic disciplines and 'ecstatic' ideologies" indirectly "related to Yoga" which, nevertheless, "finally found a place in the yogic tradition" (102). Yoga seeks "the divinization of man," and the "obscure hymn of the *Atharva Veda* (XV, 1)" discusses the "supranormal experiences" of various "mythical figures" which likely represent "the divinized archetypes of certain ascetics and magicians."

In this regard, the ascetic “*Ekavratya* very probably” represent “the prototypes” of a “mysterious group” known as the “*vrātyas*,” believed by many scholars to be “Siviastic ascetics (Charpentier, Mystics (Chattopādhyaya).”

The *vrātyas* were possibly “precursors” to the “Yogins (Hauer)” or “representatives of a non-Aryan population (Winternitz)” (103). Eliade notes an “entire book of the *Atharva Veda* (XV)” details their “practice” of “asceticism” and their familiarity “with the discipline of the breaths ” — similar to Tantric *prāṇāyāma* or breath control, which helped them “homologize their bodies with the macrocosm” (103). Feuerstein says *prāṇāyāma* is the fourth limb of Patanjali’s *YS* and is the “extension” of “life energy” via “breath control” (124). Similarly, Vivekananda considers *prāṇāyāma* the control of the “vital forces of the body” (16). Sarkar defines *prāṇāyāma* as “*Tasmin sati shvāsa prashvāsayoh gativicchedah prāṇāyāma*,” or “the process of breath control along with the imposition of the ideation of Supreme Consciousness” (*Yoga Sādhanā* 24). He further divides *prāṇāyāma* into two main types: *Prāṇāyāma* done without “fixing the mind on a particular point of concentration” and without imbibing Cosmic ideation” is “*hāṭha yaogika prāṇāyāma*” ‘hatha yoga breath control.’ Alternatively, *prāṇāyāma* practiced with the “mind fixed at a particular point” and with “Cosmic ideation” is “*Yudhiśṭhira prāṇāyāma*” which was popularized by the “eldest Pandava, Yidhisthira” (22). The eldest Pāṇḍava is mentioned in the *Bhagavadgita*; thus, *Yudhiśṭhira prāṇāyāma* is approximately 3500 years old and is a “Tantric method” (177).

Samuel presents another popular perspective that the “developed set of techniques” known as Tantra-Yoga used to control the “mind-body complex” likely developed in the “ascetic circles” of the “the early *śramaṇa* movements, probably around the sixth and fifth centuries BCE” (8-9). According to Samuel, “*Śramaṇa* is a generic term that was used by members of several ascetic orders,” including the “Jainas, Buddhists and Ajivikas,” and is assumed to have come “into existence in the time of the historical Buddha” in the “fifth

century BCE on current dating's" (120). Thus, Samuel focuses on Yoga and Tantra as systems of *developed techniques*, but he admits his timeframe is "somewhat arbitrary" (emphasis added 10). He also recognizes the "*vrātyas* in the earlier period" likely "represent an important prototype" of the "unorthodox group" of Tantric's whose practices although "dark and associated with death and transgression" were "somehow essential to the wellbeing of society" and were also "predecessors to the *śramaṇa* movements" (116). Most interestingly to the *vrātyas* ties with Tantra and Shiva, Samuel relates Falk's contention that the *vrātyas* were Rudra's dogs and "Rudra" was the "Vedic prototype of Śiva" (116). The *vrātyas* appear in "Book 15 of the Atharvaveda in the Śaunaka version" which is "generally" (if incorrectly) dated "between the sixth and third centuries BCE" (238). The text explains how a *vrātya* awakens "Prajapati and becomes Mahādeva (presumably meaning Śiva)." Although "early Western translators" dismissed the text calling it "puerile" or a "unique and obscure book" that idealized and hyperbolically valorized the *Vrātya*, a more recent translation by Sampurnānand views the *Atharvaveda* as "essentially" a "meditation on the nature of Śiva." Samuel supports both perspectives, pointing out that the "liturgy for self-identification of a *vrātya* practitioner with Śiva" is strikingly similar to the "much later deity yoga practices of Śaiva and Vajrayāna Tantra" (238).

#### 4.4 Sarkar on the Vedas

Throughout Sarkar's discourses he consistently claims the earliest composition of the "*Rgveda* was approximately between fifteen thousand . . . and ten thousand years ago," the "*Yajurveda* between ten thousand . . . and seven thousand years ago," and the "*Atharvaveda* between seven thousand . . . and five thousand years ago" ("Shabda Cayanikā Part 2" par. 4). The "*Sāmaveda*" is not considered a Veda: "sāma means 'song' so the "*Sāmaveda*" was created "from the music portions of the three Vedas." Sarkar argues the presence of "the



*Sámaveda*” found in the Jain scriptures proves the extant Vedas were “divided into three parts at the time of the origin of the Jain scriptures.”<sup>12</sup>

The *Rg* and *Yajur Vedic* era lacked a written script. Sarkar states written script came shortly after Siva’s birth “during the time of the Atharvaveda,” yet as the “*Rk* and *Yajuh* portions of the Vedas” were unwritten throughout their earliest composition, the people of that age superstitiously believed they should “not be written.” The *RV* is “mainly concerned with hymns,” yet it “contains various tales and anecdotes” representing the “cultural heritage” and “gradual advancement of human thinking” and the “structure of ancient society.” These anecdotes do not all “carry equal spiritual value,” although historically they contain “special value to the world.” Despite the *RV* era’s lack of script, “phonemes and phonetic expression,” and “the order of the sounds, interpolation and placement . . . were in existence.” The “different Rgvedic . . . pronunciation” popular at the time of “various letters” was taught “orally” by the “guru in subsequent times” to followers of the Veda (par11).

The *RV* was the “chief Veda in ancient times” because the system of “Vedic initiation” based itself on the “Savitr Rk” of the *Rg Veda* which was composed in the “*gáyattrii* metre” appearing in the “first maṇḍala of the Rgveda”:

*Tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ*

*Bhargo devasya dhiimahi*

*Dhiyo yo nah pracodayát*

The Supreme Father who did create the seven strata of manifestation – we meditate on His divine effulgence so that He may guide our intellect towards the path of blessedness. (par. 12-15)

Particularly important to the composition of this *Rk* was the use of the *gáyattrii* metre requiring eight syllables per line. Glucklich states “the three worlds” governed by the gods “are invoked at the opening of the great Gayatri Mantra.” Griffith’s translation is, “May we

attain that excellent glory of Savitar the God so he may stimulate our prayers,” Rig-Veda 3-62.10” In Sanskrit the *Gáyattrii* mantra is pronounced, “Om bhur bhuvah svah Tat Savitar varenyam . . . .” (29). Sarkar’s analysis of the first line reveals only seven syllables: “tat, sa, vi, tur, va, re and *nyam*” which violated the “unwritten grammatical rules” of the period.

Furthermore “*om bhúrbhuvah-svah*” is prefixed and suffixed to the *Rk* and was not “originally from the *Rgveda*”, it was expropriated from the “*Atharvaveda*” to more effectively express the addition of “meditating on the excellent effulgence of *Savitá*” and the “collective expression of the seven layered manifestation of Parama Brahma – *bhúrbhuvah-svah-maha-jana-tapa-satya*” which was a shortened expression of the “crude, subtle and causal worlds” in the form of “*bhúrbhuvah-svah*.” (par.18-20). Sarkar says the proper pronunciation of the mantra should read:

( ॐ ) *om bhúrbhuva-svah* ( ॐ ) *om tatsaviturvareṇyam Bhargo devasya dhiimahi Dhiyo yo nah pracodayát* ( ॐ ) *om*” ‘in this *bhúr-bhuvah-svah*, that is, crude, subtle and causal worlds, we are meditating on the excellent effulgence of *Savitá*, or the father, so that he might guide our *dhii*, or intellect, to the path of truth.

The *Savitr Rk* is the primary mantra of Vedic initiation; it catalyzes the desire to “get spiritual direction from Parama Parusa.” In contrast to Vedic initiation, discussed in a later section of this chapter, Tantric initiation introduced the praxis of meditating on Aseity and Metaseity symbolized as Shiva consciousness. Sarkar considers the *RV* an introductory Veda surpassed by the *Yajurveda* which adjusted the “spiritual world with the material world” and had “closer contact with Tantra.” The *Yajurveda* has a different “pronunciation and phonetics” to the *Rg Veda*. Finally, Sarkar states the “*Atharvaveda*” was “mixed with Tantra at nearly every step,” causing the orthodox supporters of the *RV* to declare followers of the Tantra influenced *Atharvaveda* “social “outcast[s].” This led to the orthodox injunction that

“*atharvánnam má bhuinjiitháh*” ‘food of the followers of the Atharvaveda should not be accepted’ (par. 21-22).

Initially, “the *Atharva* portion remained unwritten like the *Rk* and *Yajuh* portions” (par 6). Sarkar claims the *Atharvaveda*’s “*ádarsha puruśa*” ‘main propounder’ was likely from “Central Asia” or possibly “an original inhabitant of India” named “Brahmarśi Atharva.” His successors, who composed the “later portions of the Atharvaveda,” inhabited India: “Maharśi Vaedarbhi” came from “a settlement in the central-western portion of India” called “Vaedarbhi” (par.7-9). The formal division and categorization affected by “Kṛśṇadvaepáyaṇa Vyása” into the “*Rk*, *Yajuh*, and *Atharva*” occurred considerably later in about 1000 BCE. Sarkar argues the debate surrounding this division by *Vyása*, a name given to “many historical figures,” is resolved by realizing *Vyása* was not a name but a “hereditary title.” Consequently, many historical figures had their names suffixed with *Vyása* such as, “Vádaráyaṇa Vyása, Saiṅjaya Vyása, [and] Vivasvata Vyása.” The authorial *Vyása*, Kṛśṇadvaepáyaṇa Vyása, was born on a “blackish island” at the “confluence of the Ganges and the Yamuna at Prayag” (*Kṛśṇadvaepáyaṇa* means “coming from a black island”) (par.12). Kṛśṇadvaepáyaṇa Vyása was responsible for the composition of the *Mahabharata* which appeared “long after the Vedas, but . . . is undoubtedly more than 3000 years old” (par. 10-11).

#### 4.5 Tantric and Vedic Gurus

As far as Sarkar is concerned, the Vedic Aryans did not introduce the Guru-disciple structure: “There is no reliable evidence” indicating “that in the Vedic period spiritual knowledge was handed down from preceptor to disciple.” He states that “as far as we know from the history of spiritual *sáhaná* [meditation], Lord Shiva was the first” propounder and Shiva called “this spiritual cult . . . Tantra” (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 36) It is

accepted by Indologists that spiritual teachings were verbally passed from “ear to ear,” as discussed earlier, so the teachings were *shruti* (*Ānanda Vacanāmrtam Part 34* 20). The Vedas, as noted earlier, are also called *shruti* because when the Aryans came “to India from central Asia”; they were “illiterate” and the Vedic language was “spoken, not . . . written” — initially, there was no Vedic “script” (20). Scripts developed after the first wave of Aryan migrants came in contact with the indigenous inhabitants. The parts of the *RV* predating the Aryan arrival in the Indian subcontinent retained its ritual content, but later portions of the *RV* and subsequent Vedic hymns imbibed the non-duality of Tantra and diverged from strictly liturgical themes.

To gain access to the esoteric Tantric practices, a disciple would seek direct transmission from a Guru. Eliade states in *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, “One does not learn Yoga by oneself; the guidance of a master (guru) is necessary. Strictly speaking, all the other “systems of philosophy” — as, in fact, all “traditional disciplines or crafts” are transmitted directly through initiations “from mouth to ear” (5). The role of direct transmission is attested by the Buddhist Yoga text, *The Yogiivacara’s Manual of Indian Mysticism as Practiced by Buddhists* that appeared in the “sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.” Eliade posits the “*yogiivacara* practitioner undoubtedly received oral instruction,” and the text was “only a mnemonic aid” to help memorization. This holds true for “the majority of Indian works on meditation,” inasmuch as “the real technical initiation was transmitted and preserved orally” (194). Hence, the value of the Guru’s direct guidance is reiterated throughout works on the transcendental traditions in India and is endemic to texts on Tantric *sādhana*:

An essential prerequisite to the world of tantric *sādhana* is the guidance of a competent spiritual preceptor, the guru, who can initiate the aspirant into the correct application of methods commensurate with his temperament and

competence. Just as an unknown journey becomes easier with the help of a competent guide, in the same manner the best way to commence the spiritual journey is with the help of a guru. (Mookerjee 128)

Sarkar explains “*guru* is a very old Vedic word” meaning “one who dispels darkness” (206). Etymologically, the compound *guru* consists of two Sanskrit parts: the prefix *gu* means “darkness” and *ru* means “dispel” (204). An individual capable of removing the darkness of ignorance is a Tantric Guru. Teachers initiating people into “*Vaedikii diikśá* [Vedic initiation] are also called gurus,” but Tantric gurus are differentiated by the prefix *sad* which in Vedic Sanskrit indicates “that which undergoes no change” (204).<sup>13</sup> Immutability is found only in Metaseity so a *Sadguru* must be free of all qualifying attributes. Sarkar considers Tantra’s concept of *guru* different to the Vedantic because the former appears only when “the human mind becomes restless for the attainment of freedom from the bondages of *Maya* [illusion].” Therefore, when an individual’s desire for liberation predominates, Aseity manifests as a “*Sadguru* . . . before the seeker” to impart the lessons of *dīkṣā*” (219). Milojevic recognizes that this desire for a “spiritual education focuses on the relation the individual has with the universe/collective consciousness” (8) and not a narrow religiosity that she, quoting O’Sullivan, says leads to “conflict rather than unity” (9).

I hypothesize ancient Vedic gurus were likely responsible for maintaining clan fire and fulfilling the Vedic rituals connected with fire, but this role was officary and the ceremonial rather than spiritually liberating in the Tantric sense. André Padoux notes that in some Tantric systems “the *acarya* or guru” must have “a number of social, physical, and mental qualities” that “vary according to the doctrines, preferences, or prejudices of the different Tantra traditions.” These qualities could include concerns of “caste . . . gender . . . beauty” and “knowledge of the Scriptures” (44). Padoux also points out that the “thirteenth chapter of the *Kularrayavatantra* mentions different kinds of guru” and “warns against bad

gurus.” Therefore, “only the *sadguru*, the real guru, the embodiment of absolute truth, says and is to be worshiped,” yet he notes the Tantric guru, according to the *Kularrayavatantra*, “is not above human frailties” (44).

The *Kularrayavatantra*’s criteria do not agree with Sarkar’s explanation of the *Sadguru*’s power to liberate individuals in all “strata of human existence” (206). Likewise, Pandit also claims the “*Sastra*” considers the Guru to be the “Divine in human form” according to the “Yogini Tantra:

He who is first the Lord and is called Mahakala is the Guru, 0 Devi! in all Mantras. None else is the Guru. He is verily the Guru of the Shaivas, Shaktas, Vaishnavas, Ganapatyas, Moonworshippers, Mahashaivas and Sauras, He and none else is the promulgator of Mantra . . . (13)

#### 4.5.1 The Qualities of the Tantric *Sadguru*

The *Sadguru* or *Mahákaola*’s consciousness is the realized expression of Aseity and is capable of granting spiritual emancipation; both “Lord Shiva” and “Lord Krśña” fell under the definition of *Sadguru* (*Ānandamūrti Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 227). Kang notes that the bridge between Metaseity and Aseity is “*Taraka Brahma*” who “manifests in the created order as the *sadguru* and can “lead all beings to salvation” and “renew human civilization through his/her revolutionary ideas and projects” (45). Sarkar teaches a *Sadguru* aids human existence in three arenas: spiritual, psychic, and physical and is capable of responding to the needs of each sphere.

(1) In the spiritual stratum the Guru should be “thoroughly conversant with the minutest details of *sadhana*” and have the “capacity to teach those practices to others” (206-207). The Guru should possess “a thorough knowledge of the *shāstras* (scriptures),” including knowledge of the “important languages” required to understand the scriptures

because multilingualism, along with general literacy, would help preserve and disseminate the oral traditions of different language groups. Given this, the Guru should possess “thorough and authentic scriptural knowledge” to logically explain their spiritual “theory” supported by the *Shástras* (207). *Shástras*, according to Sarkar, are not merely written scripture: “*Shástra*, in the true sense, does not necessarily mean the Vedas” but includes practical methods and the “rigorous discipline” required to attain the “prosperity and welfare” of spiritual “emancipation.” Thus, “*Shásanát tárayet yastu sah shástrah parikiirtitah . . . Shástra* is that which disciplines and liberates humans,” not dogmatic adherence to scriptural injunctions (208).

The *Sadguru* loves and chastises practitioners to expedite their spiritual development: “*Nigrahánugrahe shakto gururityabhidhiyate . . .* The Guru must possess the capacity both to punish and to love, or bless, his disciples” (209). Because Spiritual punishment helps rectify against crudifying behavior, Sarkar argues punishment and love are synchronous; the “degree of punishment should never exceed the degree of love” (209). The Guru is duty-bound to explain the consequences of the negative thoughts and behaviors that lead into bondage and darkness. If the practitioner is unable to control, or is unaware, of the negative effects of their actions, the Guru implements rectifying counter-actions. Thus, appropriate punishment is determined by the Guru at every step of the practitioner’s spiritual development. In practical terms, punishment severity is equal to the force (speed) by which the negative propensities of mind are expunged. In other words, intense suffering occurs over a shorter duration, while milder suffering is drawn out.

Essentially, negative propensities are the thoughts and actions that contract consciousness, engender selfishness, and limit expansion. The egological model of mind and causal suffering has been adopted by many of the transcendental traditions. Buddhism and Hindu traditions consider egological activity the source of “*saṃskāra*” or ‘reactions in

potential form.’ The aggregate of all *saṃskāra* is known as *karma* ‘fate.’ These reactions may be pleasant or unpleasant but must be expunged so as to restore mental equilibrium and enhanced concentration during meditation. From this perspective, the Guru’s meting of punishment is a gift that actually accelerates the disciple’s return of the mental equilibrium required for deep meditation.

(2) In the psychic stratum, Sarkar says the Guru “must be aware of the nature of the human mind,” the means of its expansion from “crude to subtle,” and the means by which society is encouraged towards spiritual awakening. This psychological domain includes “both” a “theoretical” and “applied” side (210). Thus, a Guru must “be well versed in the humanities,” including “all branches of human knowledge.” More importantly, a psychological education requires the Guru understand “the style in which the human mind functions, as well as the methods to control and guide it properly” (211).

Postmodernist might find Sarkar’s simple phrase “style of thought” interesting given it is a harbinger of a postmodern concept that considers the mind a product of cultural and familial phenotypes. These factors aside, he explains the human mind is genotypically inclined towards expansion, but this inclination is transformed by the individual’s relationship to a specific society. Arguably, Sarkar considers Tantra a universal and acultural system of practice based on the *Sadguru*’s intuition of suitable avenues of spiritual progress transcending *a priori* cultural ossification. It has been admitted that the concept of a universal spiritual panacea vexes postmodern concerns surrounding the role idealized and monolithic faith systems have played in creating violence and suffering. Historically, “the battle between church and empire” or transcendentalism and “ever-expanding capitalism” has met with an unsteady alliance between the two so that “even the spiritual has become commodified” (S. J. F. Inayatullah 21). One way to look at this is to view commodified spirituality as



symptomatic of the mind's need to objectify abstract concepts and create a concrete object available for psychic assimilation. This ensures duality and the survival of mind.

Sarkar's understanding of the psychology underlying materialism reopens the perspective that the mind's desire for freedom is not predicated on faith but the zetetic impetus of ipseity. Tantra views "morality" not as a "goal," as it tends to be formulated in religions, but rather "a base upon" which the individual "builds the real purpose" of their life which is self-expansion (65). Hence, Sarkar's Tantric theory clearly destabilizes postmodern accusations of cultural and religious bias. The desire for complete freedom is not produced by social projections into the psyche; rather, it is intrinsic to the multidirectional expansion of ipseity towards infinity. The *Sadguru's* focus is not power for material ends but the expansion of social and individual consciousness — framed in a universal ideology capable of recognizing regional and cultural difference but devoid all geo-political sentiment.

(3) The presence of *Sadguru's* in history have been rare. Although Sarkar accords Shiva and Krishna this status, their historical existence is contested by modern scholars. Sarkar, himself, is considered a *Sadguru* by his followers vis-à-vis his provision of a Tantric system supporting all three strata of human existence. Inayatullah states the "*satguru*" (Sadguru) is the "taraka brahma . . . that restore the rightful balance in the universe" (*Understanding Sarkar: The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge* 51). In the physical stratum, Sarkar recognizes that people are made of "flesh and blood" and are "physical structures" subject to "sorrows and miseries . . . tears and smiles." Therefore, the "duty of a guru" is to "provide the means to resolve their "worldly problems" — including issues related to "food, clothing, education, and medical treatment" (211). The epistemology needed to effectively analyze these variables demands Sarkar's polymathic awareness of the human condition — and his precognition of future obstacles to human evolution. Effective guidance in all three spheres will necessarily demand a holistic

philosophy and spiritual praxes adjusted to the needs of a particular era. To alleviate suffering in the physical realm, Sarkar presents the political and economic model Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) which addresses all of humanity's material needs without encouraging the vast inequalities of capitalism, or the idealistic principle of the now failed equality promulgated by communist philosophies.

It is generally accepted that individuality is predicated on difference, and arguments that support notions of material equality are overly idealistic. Experience shows that human needs and desires consistently fluctuate as their capacities are impacted by spatiotemporal limitations. PROUT eschews capitalist and communist paradigms: it espouses the rational distribution of global resources via a future global governing body that recognizes the needs of different regions based on climatic and geographic location. Inayatullah, quoting Sarkar, says “the correct theory aids in finding” and mediating “balance between ‘the spiritual and material worlds.’” Universal theories become “a perennial source of inspiration for the onward movement of society.” In this regard, Inayatullah sums up Sarkar's “disguised critique of the most dominant strain[s] of Indian thought,” including “Shankaracharya's Advaita Vedanta (overly other-worldly) . . . Gandhism (impractical) and . . . Marxism (overemphasis on equality at the expense of individuality).” Sarkar's “criterion of a good theory” is one derived from the universal concept of Neohumanism and human welfare which meets basic “human needs,” including “shelter, food, education, health and security.” It must be “balanced in its approach to the physical, mental and spiritual realms,” and finally a good theory must “create an intellectual discourse” leading to devotion or “*bhakti*” in the “uninterrupted movement of mind towards transcendence (38). In sum, the *Sadguru's* material philosophy incorporates techniques that overcome the conundrums of human existence vis-à-vis the psychological reaction of individuals and collective groups as they struggle towards expansion.

Remarkably, and in contrast to the Vedic tradition, Sarkar states spiritual practitioners can reach Metaseity without a significant amount of “intellectual knowledge.” He acknowledges that individual liberation has no relation to “academic” qualifications. Liberation is a purely personal endeavor, only requiring a deep commitment to *sādhana* and service. Nevertheless, a *Sadguru* must possess the capacity to make spiritual praxes and ethics logical and clear. An enlightened person does not have the status of a *Sadguru* without the manifestation of all requisite knowledge and qualities. The absence of any one of these qualities disqualifies one from being “treated as a guru” (*Yoga Sādhana* 206).

John Newman states that “the Guru serves as the door for the yogi to enter into the practice of tantra.” Consequently, the Guru’s mediation of the Tantric techniques taught to the disciple makes the process of selecting a teacher “dangerous,” especially given the abundance of “false gurus” and distorted “instructions” that “lead” to “hell” (6). From the Tantric perspective, hell is not eternal suffering but rather the unchecked contraction of mind that severely retards spiritual growth. Sarkar says, “Happiness and heaven, afflictions and hell . . . are mental conceptions in the physical world” (43). Therefore, the seeker entering a spiritual practice for the first time should carefully understand its philosophical basis and evaluate the Guru’s realization before committing to a new path. I argue self-reflexively analyzing one’s emotional responses to the teachings, coupled with a clear understanding of the system’s soteriology and praxes, is critical when choosing a Guru.

#### 4.6 Tantric and Vedic Initiation

Once the mutual acceptability of Guru and disciple is determined, the “first truly Tantric element” occurs in the “guru’s initiation of the disciple” (7). Following India’s spiritual traditions, Newman says initiation, “in the Hindu context,” is called “*dīkṣā*” and in Buddhism “*abhiṣeka*” (7). The importance of initiation is widely recognized in the Tantric traditions:

Kang, referencing Sarkar, argues for the “crucial need” of a “perfect and fully-realized *guru*” and “the necessity for Tantric *dīkṣā* or initiation” (145). Singh explains “*dīkṣā* (initiation) is the esoteric process of imparting [the] secret of Tantra *Sādhana*.”

Attempting to understand Tantra without initiation is problematic for practitioners and researchers: the language of initiation is highly symbolic, only “correctly understood” through “intuitive experiences” earned by “initiat[ion] into the inner science of Tantra.” (116). Initiation introduces the practitioner to a “social environment” enhancing “the disciple’s spiritual advancement,” including *aśrama* ‘ashrams’ (“a place of religious retreat”) or other suitable places. Sarkar’s Ānanda Mārga has *jagritis* ‘centers for meditation practice’ which fulfil this role. (“Oxford English Dictionary Second Edition on CD-ROM” ‘ashram’ def.).<sup>14</sup> The nature of Tantric initiation, per different Guru’s prescriptions, varies with traditions, and these modifications highlight the crucial difference between ritualized Vedic and practical Tantric initiation.

Sarkar insists Tantra’s system of initiation hinged upon the Guru-disciple relationship introduced by Shiva: “[In Tantra] the greatest emphasis is placed on the preceptor-disciple relationship,” and in order to learn from the teacher the disciple must prove himself “worthy” through “intense spiritual practice . . . at every stage of development” (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 37). This personal relationship, sometimes mediated by authorized *acaryas* ‘spiritual teachers,’ is the primary factor granting emic insight into esoteric praxes and elevates the value of direct transmission over academic epistemes. We saw in section 3.2-3.2.1 that even after scripts were invented most Tantric praxes were not explicitly detailed in the early texts and (when included) were deliberately obscured.

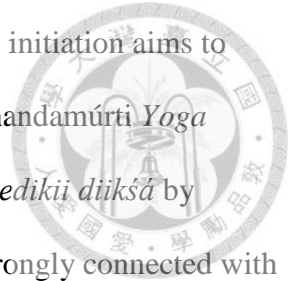
According to Sarkar, disciples had to express sincere commitment and demonstrate moral integrity before gaining access to Shiva’s Tantric meditation, and Shiva forbade simulacrum of these teachings: “Sadashiva never wanted the Tantric teachings to be written

down” (37).<sup>15</sup> Shiva’s restriction on textual dissemination eventually faded as the etiolation of Tantric meditation over the millennia threatened its survival. Eventually, because Tantra faced complete loss from “society” its “teachings” were put “in book form to save them from total extinction.”

Sarkar claims “there are presently sixty-four Tantric texts.” Roughly speaking, the Tantras can be divided into two parts “*nigama* and *agama*”. *Nigama* is primarily “theoretical” while *agama* is “practical.” Sarkar argues the theoretical focus of most of the Vedic scriptures causes “some people” to see them “as *nigama*.”<sup>16</sup> Mookerjee and Khanna note that “Satikara (8th century AD) mentions the existence of 64 Tantras in his *Ānandalahari*, a part of the *Saundaryalahari*,” but they acknowledge difficulty ascertaining the exact number of Tantras, although the number “is generally held to be 108” (37). Generally speaking, the emphasis on meditative practice rather than ritual thematically distinguishes Tantra from Vedanta.

Evidently, understanding the hidden meaning of Tantric texts hinges on initiation, and uninformed analysis of the Tantras is unlikely to produce profitable practice without scope for tremendous error. Singh’s translation of the *Kulārṇava Tantra* shows Shiva’s teachings on this issue: “It is laid down by Lord Śiva that there can be no liberation (*mokṣa*) without initiation (*dīkṣā*). There cannot be any initiation without Guru and hence it comes down to the line of Guru-paramparā” (116). Kang emphasizes the position of Tantric initiation in the transcendental journey: “The most important event in the spiritual journey of an aspirant is *dīkṣā*” (149). One way to differentiate Tantra from the Vedic tradition is to understand their different approaches to initiation.

In the past, Vedic initiation ‘*Vaedikii diikśá*’ employed the verbal repetition of “words or sounds . . . without the *shuddhis*” (visualizations which accomplish the systematic withdrawal of the mind from external and internal distractions).” Sarkar does not consider



*Vaedikii diikśá* to be part of “a spiritual cult or practical process” as this initiation aims to entreat “*Parama Puruśa* to show one the path of spiritual progress” (Ánandamúrti *Yoga Sádhaná* 24). He states that “in ancient India” people would first get *Vaedikii diikśá* by entreating “the Lord” to reveal “the right path” (204). This initiation, strongly connected with the Vedic ritualism imported by the Aryans, was sacrificial and ceremonial. If, following Vedic initiation, the practitioner discovered ritual observances unsatisfactory, they would seek out practices giving direct access to the transcendental ideas interspersed in the Vedas.<sup>7</sup> Thus, “after a long time, when the Lord [Guru]” was “satisfied,” arrangements would be made for Tantric initiation “*Tántrikii diikśá*” (204). This initiation “with all the *shuddhis*” constitutes the system of “*Tántrikii diikśá*.” It detailed the “personal mantra repeated in meditation,” a specific “*cakra* of meditation,” and provided devotional instructions that expedited the process of merging into “*Parama Puruśa*” (25).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, Shiva Tantra explicated the exact techniques leading mind from duality to singularity. In other words, Tantra clarifies the appropriate “object” of meditation and promotes a direct experience of its objective in *nirvikalpa samādhī* [Metaseity].

#### 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter established an emic episteme while outlining Sarkar’s Shivology vis-à-vis Vedic and Tantric systems of initiation within the religious and spiritual traditions of prehistorical India. A number of Sarkar’s claims were put forward: First, the early appearance of the *R̥g Veda* in about 12,500 BCE as a primitive attempt by the Aryans who later migrated India to understand the cosmos. Second, the indigenous Indians possessed their own set of proto-Tantric praxes which were un-systematized until Shiva’s advent in 5500 BCE. He

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 3 section 3.3 for further details

created a Tantric tradition to harmonize relations between the indigenous and Aryan population of India by providing an all-inclusive spiritual outlook. Third, Sarkar recognizes that the Vedic religion and Tantra mutually absorbed elements from each other but remained separated by the ritualized dogma of Veda versus the practical spirituality of Tantra. Fourth, Sarkar explained the difference between Vedic and Tantric ideology: the former is supplicatory while the latter provides a realized guide for spiritual seekers. Finally, a *Sadguru* is understood to be a being capable of liberating human society in all strata of existence. When the seeker takes initiation from a Sadguru, they gain access to the inner meaning of Tantra.

## Chapter Five

### Shivology Part II: Shiva's Era and Later Transformations



*This chapter introduces Sarkar's description of the indigenous and Aryan society of the pre-Shiva Era. It looks at Indo-Aryan conflict, and Shiva's solution via the development of Tantric spirituality. The expansion of Post-Shiva Tantra into new transcendental traditions and religions is outlined vis-à-vis the later developments of Sāṃkhya, Vedic casteism and Tantric medicine. The evolution of Shiva worship in the iconography, festivals, and Tantric deities of the Buddhist, Puranic and Tantric traditions are also explored. Finally, the inner ontological and transcendental meaning of Shiva and Shakti to the Tantric sets the stage for Part Two's focus on Tantra's relationship to mind, meditation, and Metaseity.*

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#### 5.1 Introduction: The Pre-Shiva Era: Indo-Aryan Conflict

The 1978 discourse “Bhaerava and Bhaeravii” gives Sarkar's overview of India's ancient cultures and the rise of Shiva Tantra. His description of this prehistorical age is indirectly supported by contemporary research, the archaeological discoveries in the Indus Valley basin, and the recently proposed primeval course of the Sarasvati River as detailed in Chapter Three. Sarkar claims that thousands of years before Shiva's birth considerable conflict existed between the “different clans and tribes” of ancient humanity making it safer for people “to live on hills” away from predators and human attackers. Hilltop settlements and cave dwellings are found wherever ancient humanity rooted itself because living in “hill caves” whose “entrances” could be “blocked with big rocks” provided increased safety. Sarkar argues the “development of civilization” and effective use of fire prompted migration from caves to the “plains” and the appearance of communities in “woods and forests.” The lack of protection from “burning fires around their encampments in forests and woods” meant



the early people found relatively more “security” in caves. These hillside dwellings were called “*gotras* in Vedic Sanskrit” (*Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 164).

Lending credence to Sarkar’s hill-dwelling hypothesis, anthropologists have made significant discoveries of Neolithic art and tools in cave dwellings. Ian Tattersall describes cave discoveries such as the “finely drawn animal figures, liberally interspersed with obscure geometric and abstract designs” found in Chauvet, France dating back “32,000 years ago” (97). A horse pendant, “perhaps 34,000 years old,” was found in a cave in “Vogelherd” in Germany as well as 30,000 year old flutes made from “vulture’s bones in the Pyrenees Mountains.” The Czech Republic is home to the discovery of “molded ceramic figurines” nearly “30,000 years old” and at the same site the discovery of “delicate bone needles” signifying the beginning of “tailored clothing” dating back 10,000 years (98). In general, cave dwelling goes back far longer than 30,000 years. In Africa, some archaeologists believe they have uncovered the “organized use of living space” starting “100,000 years ago” in localities such as the “caves of Klasies River Mouth” (100).

Sanderson, discussing the modern Tantric context, states “all Yoginis belong to the family (*kula*) or lineage (*gotra*) of one or other of a number of higher ‘maternal’ powers” (“Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions” 672). On the other hand, Samuel points out the “Brahmins of a later period . . . still traced their ancestries to *dans* or *gotra*” belonging to “one or another of the original seven *Rsis*” ‘sages’ (155). People were named after the *gotra* they lived in and vice versa.

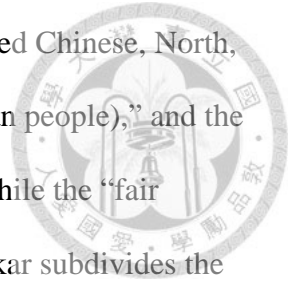
In ancient society matriarchy prevailed so “each hill was ruled by a *gotramāta*, or clan mother” (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 164). Gradually matriarchy gave way to the patriarchal system with each hill “named after its sage.” Inhabitants of the same hill considered their neighbors siblings, but males of other hill clans were considered “deadly enemies.” Because familial association within the same clan made sexual relations between

clan members somewhat taboo; women were stolen from neighboring clans during battle and forcibly dragged back to the victorious hill clan where they entered “a life of domestic servitude” while defeated males became “slaves.” Sarkar says the ancient practice of enslaving women is symbolized in India by mothers asking their sons before marriage where they are going, with the expected response: “I’m going to bring you a maidservant.” The traditional iron bangles now worn by married women symbolize the ropes that bound captured women and their “early servitude.” During that ancient era, women fought alongside men and “were often hit on the head and severely injured,” modern Indians use “a small vermilion mark” to represent the “blood” of those earlier wounds (164-165).

## 5.2 The Shiva Era

Sarkar states Shiva possessed multiple “endowments” so his contemporaries held him in awe and named him “*Guṇātīta* or *Nirguṇa* (Transcendental or Non-Attributional) *Puruṣa*” (251). The historical Shiva is also referred to as “Sadashiva.” The prefix *Sada* means “always” and Shiva means “welfare”; thus, Sadashiva means “one whose only vow of existence is to promote the all-round welfare of all living beings” (252). Sarkar claims Shiva’s “greatest contribution” to the progress of humanity was “the concept of dharma.” The Aryans of the Shiva epoch lacked a “clear-cut concept of dharma.” Each *rṣi* (teacher/sage) “propounded” different “views” as they competed for disciples which diluted the “spiritual awareness or spiritual urge” and distorted the praxes leading to liberation.

Although the Paleolithic composition of the early *RV* about 15000 years ago points to the development of organized system systems of practice, belief, and some technological advancement, the ancients maintained some “animal traits.” For this reason, Shiva “trained those ancient humans” by introducing “a fixed system in every sphere of life” (Ānandamūrti *NamāMi KṛśṇAsundaram* 10). During Shiva’s time, there were “three main ethnic groups”:



“Austrie, Mongolian, and Negroid” (165). The Mongolian group included Chinese, North, and North-Eastern Asian Oriental races. The “Austrie” (black non-Aryan people),” and the “Mongolian group” entered India from the North [Tibet and China],” while the “fair complexioned Aryan group . . . entered India from the west” (166). Sarkar subdivides the Aryans into three groups: the far Northern Aryans, the Alpine Aryans, and the Mediterranean Aryans. The latter group made up the majority of the Aryans that eventually settled in India. Ultimately, the three groups “in (East) India” blended, giving rise to a single race, “the dark complexioned non-Aryan Austries,” who constituted “the original people of India”; thus, “Austrie blood” is found “in most of the present population of India.” Michel Danino argues there is “no trace of ‘demographic disruption’ in the North-West of the subcontinent” between 4500 and 800 BCE,” negating any “possibility” of a “massive intrusion, by so-called Indo-Aryans or other populations” (2). Danino references studies showing a “genetic connection between India and Europe,” supporting Sarkar’s position that the connection was “far more ancient” than was “previously thought” (6).

Sarkar contends intermingling led to severe internecine conflict and “numerous feuds and clashes among the various hill clans” in “predominantly racial” conflicts. Shiva, as the first “Tantric *Mahākaola*,” considered his mission “*Kurvantu vishvaṁ Tāntrikam* — ‘to get the whole universe initiated into the Tantric cult’” and to alleviate the harmful consequences of clan violence (Ānandamūrti *Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 163).

In *Yoga Sādhana* Sarkar says that sometime after the first waves of “Aryan settlement,” Shiva was “born into a Mongolo-Aryan family” when “many Aryans had already arrived in India.” Other Aryans “were on the way” and more “were still preparing to come” (253). The Aryans that arrived in India “roughly during the period of the Atharvaveda” learned Tantric meditation from the “Indian *Tantrics*” so that the Atharvaveda was “pervasively influenced by Tantra”<sup>18</sup> (251). Singh, quoting Sarkar, in *Tantra: Its Mystic and*

*Scientific Basis* says. “The Atharva-Veda was compiled mostly in India” where the contact between indigenous and Aryan groups caused “a mental or social blending amongst the Āryans who were highly influenced by non-Āryan Tantra” (19).



### 5.2.1 Vedic Religion and Patrilineal Connections

In relation to the Vedic religion and the gradual appearance of a patrilineal system, Sarkar states the Aryan clans living in *Gotras* slowly accepted the Vedic teachers as their clan fathers. These *rśis* propounded their “views differently from the others: *Vedāh vibhinnāh smrtayo vibhinnāh; Naekamuniryasya mataṁ nābhinnam*. The Vedas differ, the social codes differ; Each sage has a different opinion” (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 32) The collection of the disparate teachings was called “*Ārśa Dharma*,” the “religion of the sages” or the “Aryan Religion.”

Glucklich notes the early Indo-Aryans speculated widely on the nature of the universe which they “intuited” was made up of “concrete individual substances squeezed into fundamental categories (forms) by means of numbers.” Indo-Aryans worshiped by “slaughtering animals to feed specific gods” and to attain “prosperity, health” and “children” (30). Glucklich, like Sarkar, claims “no one edited” the *RV* to “reduce” all the proposed viewpoints to a “unified doctrine” (32). Because the Vedic teachings were fragmented and did not provide a “systematic dharma,” they were subject to change: “the *Ārśa Dharma* of the Rgvedic” era was “different to the Yajurvedic” culminating in great changes in the “Atharvavedic” era (Sarkar, *Yoga Sadhana*, 18). These adaptations transformed the ritual pronunciation of the associated chants, and subsequently the “system of incantation of mantras, and their pronunciation, also varied.” (18). The “Bengali language,” for the most part, is pronounced according to the “Yajurvedic” lineage while “Gujarati follows the RgVedic system.” Sarkar gives three examples of Vedic variations to highlight differences in

the pronunciation of the Vedic teachings: (1) “*Sa bhúmīrvishvato vrtvá tyatiśhaddashamgulam.*” (2) A different Veda writes this “*Sa bhúmiṁ sarvato sprśtyá atyatiśhaddhashámgulam,*” and the final (3), “*Sarvato vrtvá tyatiśhaddashámgulam*” (18-19).



### 5.2.2 Shaeva Dharma

Certain mantras were considered so sacred that they were monopolized by the controlling Aryan classes. The Aryans enslaved non-aryanized locals who were not “allowed to utter *oṃ*,” the “controlling mantra of the Aryan Vedas” (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 36). Moreover, the early Vedic religion was unsystematic, clan leaders encouraged “geo-sentiment, sometimes combined with socio-sentiment,” by promoting clan differences through fealty to a small social group. Their *Ārśa Dharma* was formulated to help maintain and justify dominion over the non-Aryan populace — this forced Shiva to state that the early Vedic religion was “not *Dharma* at all” (36). Realizing people desired “absolute peace” above temporary happiness, Shiva taught a *dharma* of direct spiritual realization: “*aparokśānubhūti*,” ‘Shaeva Dharma’ or Shaivism. By synthesizing “existing Tantra” and Shiva’s “practical processes,” this new path strove to balance “the objective world and the Subjective world.” Teleologically, Shaeva Dharma’s single object was the practitioner’s unity with *Parama Puruṣa* ‘Aseity’ devoid all “external ritual,” and it categorically eschewed “self-gratification” or “the path of animal enjoyment” on the “path to supreme peace” (39).

Chapter Two highlighted Sarkar’s distinction between hedonistic practices cloaked in the guise of Tantra versus Shaivism’s asceticism and meditation. While proto-Tantra predated Shiva, he codified and extended the “scattered Tantras” in a “synthesis” of the spiritual inclinations and proto-mysticism of the non-Aryans to establish a transcendental philosophy that mediated both “the practical world” and “the supreme truth” of existence (*Ānandamūrti*

*Yoga Sādhana* 253). Shiva's balanced approach was India's first "ideal" philosophical "adjustment between the objective world and the subjective world" (253). Shiva was therefore "the founding father of yoga *sādhana*" and "the first Guru of *Tantra sādhanā*" (xvi). He introduced the science behind spirituality and prescribed the ideal times for "physical, psychic or spiritual activities" determined by the predominant flow of air through the individual nares, "depending on whether the *idā*, *piṅgalā* or *suśumnā* channel was active," and under what "circumstances" the practitioner should engage in "*asanas*, *prānāyāma*, *dhāraṇā*," and "*dhyāna*" (254).

### 5.2.3 Conflict

The Shiva Age did not confront "economic" or "politic[al]" problems as they exist today. Shiva worked in the intellectual sphere to prevent the division of society by the power-hungry who tried to "erect walls of artificial separation" and encourage socio-geographic sentiment (10). While politics was undeveloped during the Shiva era, Sarkar notes racial and clan discrimination was already prevalent. The non-Aryan Asuras from central Asia and Assyria were "hostile to the Aryans" with conflict stemming from the Asuras' antipathy to the "code of conduct" and "religion" of the Aryans. Many Aryans considered it an "act of virtue to kill the Asuras," forcing the Asuras to request Shiva's protection. They are typically depicted "praying before Shiva" to help them resist the Aryan "gods" bent on their annihilation (23). Talageri's *Rigveda and the Avestha* argues that the conflict between the *asuras* and *devas* 'gods' in the "Hindu and Zoroastrian traditions" actually represents "memories of ancient conflicts between the Vedic Aryans and the proto-Iranians who were known as *Anus*." In fact, both words in the two traditions are synonymous so that "*Ahura*" (from which *asura* is derived) in Zoroastrian is a synonym for "God" and "*Daēva*" is a synonym for "demon" (262).

#### 5.2.4 Shivagotra

Shiva wished to ameliorate the racial conflict between the Aryan and indigenous groups by providing a single “supreme ideology.” He determined that “ideological differences” were the direct cause of conflict between people. Consequently, he promoted a universal ideology elevating every human as a child of the “same Cosmic Father,” with each individual having the “right to cosmic inheritance and a truly ideological life” (24). Despite the prevalent conflict, Shiva recognized people were inherently “contemplative” and, therefore, he designed a “particular discipline” beneficial to “psychic progress and spiritual elevation” of humanity through meditative praxis that increased the “subtlety” of mind. Shiva determined to unite people under a common ideology to preserve his “spiritual cult and ideology” and to ensure the continued transmission of his “unique school of medicine” (Ánandamúrti *NamáMi KṛṣṇAsundaram* 11).

During the early period of the *RV* the “matriarchal social system” declined giving way to the “patriarchal system” (7). Sarkar argues matriarchy prevailed before the introduction of marriage in Shiva’s time: matrilineal parentage was easily determined but men who denied biological kinship with their progeny were not easily disproven. Given the sexual mores of the time, polygamy was likely endemic and paternal acknowledgment entirely dependent on the man. Sarkar claims that during the “early and mediaeval periods” of the *RV* human life was not regulated by an “evolved” social system. Without a “recognized marriage system” it was obvious that the “matrilineal order” made the most sense because it was “impossible to identify” paternity (15). This partially explains why clansmen considered each other de facto siblings before the socialization of marriage. Most of the burden for rearing children fell on women, and social development, lacking the stability of the family unit, stagnated. Shiva grasped that social development required systematizing codes of gender conduct through the “system of marriage which has continued until this day.” The Sanskrit word for marriage is

“*viváha*,” literally interpreted: “to follow a particular system.” Shiva's egalitarian system of marriage is known as “*Shaeva viváha*” makes “the bride and the bridegroom” equally responsible “for their marriage” and disregards “caste or community” (14-15).

To promote social unity, Shiva married three women from the warring ethnic groups. The Aryan wife was “*Párvatii*”; the Austrico-Dravidian, “*Kálii*”; and the Mongolian (Chinese) “*Gaṇḡá*.” Shiva’s kinship with these groups, coupled with their acceptance of him “as a god,” and the assistance of his three wives, helped spread his “gospels of Dharma and the practices of Tantra.” Sarkar argues later “Buddhists and Jains” accepted Shiva’s role “as their god” because he helped blend “the human race” through these actions (167). Subsequently, the widespread acceptance of Shiva’s ideology established the first spiritual lineage which subsumed all former clan affiliations under the guiding umbrella of Shiva Tantra giving rise to a new universal clan, *Shivagotra*. Shiva proclaimed:

You are all mine. Whatever hill you live on you are still my own. I will think well of you. I will think about your collective welfare. I will work for your collective well-being. Come one and all to me safely and fearlessly and tell me your needs. I will help you. *Átmagotram parityajya Shivagotrāṁ pravishatu* (‘leave your own *gotra* and enter *Shivagotra*’) (169).<sup>19</sup>

Shiva was also opposed to racial and gender discrimination: having “taught the secrets of Tantra to his son Bhaerva, who was the child of *Párvatii*,” he determined his daughter, Bhaeravii, the child of *Kálii*, should also learn the *sāadhanā* and *Kápálik sāadhanā* known as “the Tantric *sāadhanā*” utilizing “the human skull” (168).<sup>20</sup> The names of Shiva’s offspring created the Tantric custom of naming male Tantric initiates “Bhaerava” (169) and female adepts “Bhaeravii” (170).<sup>21</sup>



### 5.2.5 Praxis

Shiva's contemporaries required a practical method to awaken their "spiritual urge" rather than complex. And Shiva intuited their relatively undeveloped intellect would evolve through Tantric meditation and encourage a sense of unity amongst all Indian people exposed to the practices (Ānandamūrti *NamāMi Kṛśṇasundaram* 26). "To unite the scattered human groups into a well-knit social system," he implemented a universal spiritual ideology and Tantric practice that would spark their latent humanism (26). Shiva taught systems of "spiritual dance" and the Tantric medical science known as "*vaedyaka śāstra*," running parallel to "*āyurveda*" (the "school of medicine" based "on the Vedas"), yet he subordinated philosophy to praxis, given people were "intellectually" undeveloped, adjusting Tantra to the needs of the milieu. (27). Although philosophy was already nascent, Shiva cautioned his followers against dabbling in philosophical argument because the primitive philosophers were "confusing people's minds and misguiding the masses." People who misled others through "confusing philosophical ideas" were called *Lokavyāmohakārah* "those who inject diseased philosophy into the world' and were driven from society" (28). Thus members of Shiva's *Gotra*, the Shaivites, received the instruction from "Lord Shiva to steer clear of any philosophical discussions." Shiva, as the first Tantric Guru, promulgated spiritual liberation was available to all devotees of "spiritual *sādhana*," irrespective of gender, race, clan affiliation, or learning and further proclaimed a world philosophy would appear at an "opportune time" in future generations (27).

### 5.3 Post-Shiva Philosophy

Sarkar contends Shiva Tantra is the original source of Patanjali's Yoga, including the systems of "*Raja yoga*, *Auśtāṅgika* (eight-fold) yoga," and *Rājādhirāja yoga*" (xvi). Shiva was the founder of the "two branches" that roughly divide Tantra between "crude" and

“subtle” (252). One of India’s greatest followers of the former path, Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ramji, born in 1937, became a member of the peripatetic Tantric cult of *Aghor* (the most famous of the cremation ground dwelling antinomian sects) frequently associated with the left-handed path. He states that Aghor renounces “alcohol, sex, lies and deceit” and requires a constant state of dwelling in “Self-consciousness” to attain Shiva consciousness (222). In the *Shiva Purana*, a hymn “to the glory of Shiva” called “Shiva Mahimnah Stotram” connects Shiva’s is recognized as the preeminent guru: “*Ahgoranna paro mantrō. Nasti tatvam Guro param.*” The term *Aghor* goes back “to the farthest reaches of time” and names one of the “five faces of Shiva.” *Aghor* used as a mantra was “above all other *mantras*” and it facilitates realization of “the real nature of the Guru” (vi). The prehistoric practices of *Aghor* linked to Shiva went through phases of quiescence and resurgence until after thousands of years the “lineage became dormant.” Eventually, its transmission continued in the “guru-disciple relationships” although the “practices continue to be little-known” (vii). Whether the left-hand or right-hand path of Tantra, Sarkar categorically states the “Tantric *sāadhanā* introduced by Sadāshiva was the first *sāadhanā*” taught to the world” (Ānandamūrti *Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 135).


### 5.3.1 Saṁkhyā

After Shiva’s death “the system of yoga *sāadhanā* underwent much refinement,” developing in “different times and in various ways” while “its main feature” remained secret or “beyond the reach of the common people (xvii). By 3500 BCE “alphabetical (or written) script had been invented,” and three and a half millennia after Shiva’s death the *Rār’h* Sage, “Maharishi Kapila, wrote *darshana śāstra* for the first time” (254). Maharishi Kapila introduced to “the society of scholars” a systematic ontology behind the “mystery of this creation,” earning him the title of “*Ādividvan* (First Scholar).” Kapila claimed “twenty-four

principles” were “at the beginning of creation.” Because Kapila decided the “total *sāṃkhya* [number]” was twenty-four principles, his philosophical school was “known as *Sāṃkhya*.” While Kapila remained silent about “*Parama Puruṣa* [Aseity],” he supported the existence of an entity called “*Janya Iishvara*,” or the “Creator of this universe” (Ānandamūrti *Namāmi kṛśṇasundaram* 28).

Sarkar draws an ontological distinction between “Shiva’s teachings and the assertions of *Sāṃkhya* philosophy.” Shiva proposed that “a conscious Entity” is the noumenal cause of this universe, known in Tantra as Shiva consciousness (Ānandamūrti 254), but *Sāṃkhya* philosophers could not grasp the import and impact of Shiva consciousness and were unable to “give any idea of Shiva [consciousness] to humanity” (255). Nevertheless, *Sāṃkhya* philosophy excelled at defeating “later schools of philosophy” by utilizing the tripartite method of “*vāda*, *jalpa*, and *vitāndā*.” Sequentially, the terms mean “to strengthen one’s position through logic,” “to demolish the structures of the other philosophy or doctrine through logic,” and “to capture the zone of intellectual influence of the defeated philosophy.” Thus, over time, subsequent schools of philosophy misunderstood “the great practical personality of Shiva,” so that the importance Shiva placed on meditation gave way to practicing rhetoric. About 1500 years after Maharishi Kapila’s *Sāṃkhya* philosophy first appeared, Maharishi Patanjali was also born in *Rārḥ* and attempted “to correct some of the basic defects of the *Sāṃkhya* philosophy.” Patanjali’s contributions notwithstanding, he could not “conclusively” explain “how *Iishvara* (God, or the supreme controller)” fulfils its capacity to control “the universe” or “why people should practice *yoga*” and “suspend all their psychic propensities” in Aseity (255-256).

### 5.3.2 Vedic Casteism and Tantric Medicine



Sarkar says the migrating Aryans that arrived in India before and after Shiva were “egotistic.” Driven by a sense of racial superiority, they contemptuously called the “indigenous population of India . . . Shúdras” (low caste) and refused to accept them into their society. The Aryans also called the indigenous people “*asuras* (‘monsters’),” “*dánavas* (‘demons’),” “*dásas* (‘slaves’),” and “*Shúdras*” Despite the disdain felt by the Aryans, the original “Austrico-Mongolo-Negroid” inhabitants had their own “civilization and culture.” They were a developed people practicing the “science of Tantra” and “medicine” (52). Nevertheless, the Aryans invented the Shúdra class which existed at the bottom of their “previous three-level [caste] system.” Out of this initial discrimination, contemporary Puranic society created three classes of Shúdras: 1) “*Ácarañiia Shúdras*” whose cooked food is acceptable to upper caste people apart from “boiled, roasted or fried” food. 2) *Anácarañiia Shúdras* whose food is unacceptable but “whose shadow can be accidentally stepped on without the need” for a “purifying bath.” Upper caste people may “worship the deities” in *Anácarañiia Shúdra*’s homes without jeopardizing their superior “caste.” 3) The final class, “*Antayaja Shúdras*,” are completely avoided by the upper castes, and even “stepping on their shadow” requires a “purifying bath” (30).

Prolonged conflict between the Aryan’s and indigenous groups retarded human development in all spheres; moreover, the Aryan caste system negatively impacted medical research. Shiva was opposed to casteism, and his medical science, “*vaedyak shástra*,” made significant progress in “regions where his “influence” was greater and “caste distinctions . . . not very rigid” by encouraging “the science of dissection.” Mookerjee and Kahnna claim “the most important centers where tantric worship is still prevalent are Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Maharashtra, Kashmir, the foothills of the north-western Himalayas, Rajasthan and parts of South India” — synonymous with the areas Sarkar contends were home to Tantric medical

practices (13). Progress in dissection stalled when non-Aryan healers were prevented from touching Aryan “corpse[s]” for fear the dead would lose their caste. The Aryans considered practitioners of this art “inferior” inasmuch as they dealt with corpses indiscriminately (31).

The Puranic age commenced in about 700 CE and heavily influenced modern casteism, negatively impacting further research into dissection and medicine. This era established the absolute authority of the Vedas and the latter concept of modern “Hinduism” in colonial era scholarship. In 700 CE all Indian Brahmins that supported the “Puranic religion” convened in “Prayaga,” and stated their acceptance of the “supremacy of the Vedas without reservation.” Even Brahmins not strictly following the Vedas confirmed Vedic “authority” in religious life. Thus, a decision was made that adherents of the “injunctions of the Vedas and the Puranic system of religion” would be Brahmins regardless of their “moral standard.”

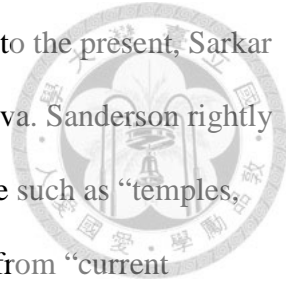
The convention recognized “ten classes of Brahmins” equally distributed between northern and southern India. In the north the “Paiṅcagaodii” constituted the North Indian Brahmin caste and included the “Sārasvata Brahmins” found in “Punjab, Kashmir, Southern Russia and Afghanistan”; the “Gaḍa Brahmins” found in “North Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh”; the “Kānyakubja Brahmins” found in “Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh”; “the Maethil Brahmins of Mithila”; and finally the Nāgar “Brahmins of Gujarat.” In the south, the southern Indian Brahmins were called “Paiṅcadrāvidii” and included “the Utkal Brahmins, the Traelaṅga Brahmins, the Dravid Brahmins, the Karṇāt Brahmins; and the Citpāvan Brahmins of Maharashtra.” Given the taboo against ignoring “caste regulations” in the “Vedic code of conduct,” contact with an untouchable body would jeopardize the Brahmin’s status. Another group, the “Sacdonian Brahmins,” who did not practice dissection but were versed in the studies of “astrology and āyurveda [the Vedic system of medicine]” arrived after the convention and were duly granted Brahmin status.

The Prayaga convention refused to recognize the “Rárhii and the Várendra Brahmins of Bengal,” or the “Namboodris of Kerala, the Gaóda Sárasvata Brahmins of Konkana, [and] the Kraoiṇcadviipiis of Magadha.” Nor were the “Sarayúpádii Brahmins of the western parts of Bihar and eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh” accorded Brahman status. These groups were supporters of Shiva’s *vaedyak shástra* medical system and possessed “advanced” medical knowledge (31-32). In sum, Puranic followers’ dogmatic exclusion of Tantric medical practitioners from the Brahman group was justified due to the medical liberalism and non-casteism expounded by the Tantrics.

#### 5.4 Shiva Evolving

The history of Shiva’s presence in Indian traditions is highlighted by the great variety of festivals, idols, iconography, and ritual worship permeating India’s spiritual life. Sarkar devoted a significant number of discourses to Shiva between 1955 and 1982, including seemingly anecdotal accounts of the geographical locations where Shiva Tantra spread. Yet, what appears anecdotal has profound contemporary significance as Indologists re-examine the flawed work of 18th and 19th century researchers.

Shiva Tantra was successful, but it did not survive the passing millennia unchanged. As we have seen, Tantra was passed directly from Guru to disciple. Likewise, the Vedas were not written down until much later with “many portions” already “lost” as with Shiva’s “teachings.” Still, the loss of Shiva’s original teachings hardly limits his significance to India’s religious life. The Rárh areas where Tantra predominated produced numerous philosophers and spiritual teachers who rose to prominence around 600 BCE. Their teachings spread rapidly during the periods traditionally attributed to classical Yoga and the Tantra Age — European late antiquity. This post-Shiva era saw the rise of new traditions and new forms of worship.



Tracing the evolving systems of Shiva worship from 5500 BCE to the present, Sarkar details how the newly developed post-Shiva religions mythologized Shiva. Sanderson rightly states that the various surviving material sources of ancient religious life such as “temples, monasteries, and images of deities” — along with information gleaned from “current practices, sects, and beliefs,” and “the works of rival religious traditions” such as the “Śaiva and non-Śaiva” — delineates some of the amorphous boundaries that still confound Tantric research (“The Impact of Inscriptions on the Interpretation of Early Saiva Literature” 217). Sarkar argues a strong undercurrent of Shiva worship is still visible in the village life of West Bengal and Rárh, the first Indian centers of humanity’s transcendental quest. Therefore, as home to some of India’s most important philosophers, particularly those connected with Shiva Tantra and the Post-Shiva schools, Rárh inspired humanity’s earliest mystical inclinations.

#### 5.4.1 The Shiva-*liuṅga* and Phallus Worship

Sanderson does not regard reference to “*śiśnádevāh*” “those whose God is the phallus” in the *RV* to be indicative of Shaivism’s presence “1000 years before Patañjali,” arguing the meaning of the term is more likely “those whose highest object of veneration is (their own) sex organs” — which suggests “godless carnality rather than Śaiva religious practice” (“The Impact of Inscriptions on the Interpretation of Early Saiva Literature” 219). For Sanderson, the “earliest evidence” of the Shiva cult is “the testimony of Patañjali in the second century BC” (220).

Sarkar sheds some light on the prevalence of Shiva-*liuṅga* ‘phallic’ worship in Post-Shiva Tantra. In *Rárh-4: The Cradle of Civilization* he explains the invention of phallic worship symbolized the hill clans desire for increased “populations” and numerical strength in battle against enemies. Thus, many of the Shiva temples in the Rárh area contain

“numerous Shiva *lingas*” in “almost each and every village” dating back “2500 to 7000 years ago.” Moreover, this form of worship was also “prevalent in the Mayan civilization of Mexico in Central America” (par.9).

Possibly phallic worship was a primitive expression of the fundamental mental attribute and psychology of expansion, combining material need (increased birthrate) with belief in the practical benefits of psychophysical symbolism. As such, Sarkar considers phallic worship the “most ancient system of worship in the world”; sociologists consider this worship “humanity’s first step on the path of dharma,” yet there is no evidence to show “Shiva upheld idol worship.” (*RáRĤ: The Cradle of Civilization* par. 9).

Phallic worship gradually moved from the crude pragmatism of an increasing population to symbolize a new mystical aim, “subtilized by infusing it with spiritual ideations.” The relative simplicity and cruder nature of the people led them to consider phallic worship symbolic of “the relationship between *Puruśa* (Consciousness) and *Prakṛti* (Operative Principle or energy). Essentially, the association between the potential creativity of unqualified consciousness and manifest creation was nicely ensconced in the Shiva-*liṅga* and the manifestation of worldly aims was gradually expanded to include transcendental inclinations. It is possible that humanity’s first steps towards idol worship vis-à-vis phallic mimesis actually mediated its earliest mystical inclinations which were inspired by the “natural landscape of Ráfh”:

At the very sight of the natural landscape of Ráfh, tears welled up in their hearts, and their entire beings quivered, for the great unknown entity. This longing in their hearts made the people of Ráfh mystical. What is mysticism? Mysticism is the never-ending endeavour to find out a link between finite and infinite. So the people of Ráfh are all mystical by birth. When they look up at



the boundless sky, their inner self becomes eloquent in this way. (*RáRĤ: The Cradle of Civilization* 81)



#### 5.4.2 Shiva and Rárh Festivals

Shiva’s influence in Rárh and on India’s religious festivals is illustrated by Sarkar In “Shiva – the Focal Point of Everything.” Even though Buddhism and Jainism were dominant in India during the late Vedic era in 500 BCE, “Shaeva Dharma maintained its influence among the masses” and was “discernible in Indian society” — particularly in Bengal where Shiva Tantra was first adopted (*Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 33). The indigenous Bengalees consisted of six groups: (1) the Kurmii Mahatos of western Rárh, (2) the Máhisyas of Midnapur and Parganas Districts, (3) the Sadgopas of northern and central Rárh, (4) the Rájavaṁshiis of Varendrabhúmi, (5) the Namahshúdras of the eastern Samataí and southern Dabák areas, (6) the Chakma's of Upabaunḡa. Despite Buddhist and Jainist influences, the groups “remained followers of Shiva.” Eventually the Chakmas accepted “Hiinayána Buddhism,” yet other communities “adhered to their original cult” (34). Ultimately, in about 300 CE the Puranic religion was accepted even though during Buddhism’s ascendancy the Shaeva traditions continued.

Contemporary Shiva worship continues in overt and metamorphosed forms. The Caṛaka festival is a “Shiva-oriented festival,” incorporating the “dharmacakra of the Maháyána Buddhists” (34). It began after Shiva’s death and was an expression of the “great reverence and love” Shiva’s original followers felt towards their Guru. The Caṛaka festival is mainly practiced by the original six Bengalee groups and is also connected with Buddha’s first “preaching in Sarnath” near an area in “Benares called Sáraunḡanáth.” The latter had an older name, “Iishipattana Migadáva,” known in Sanskrit as Rśipattana Mrgadáva” (34). The first instruction Buddha gave the first five disciples was to ““always keep the wheel of

dharma moving. Take care that it never ceases to move.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, Dharma’s movement is represented by erecting “an artificial tree” with a continually revolving “bamboo pole” to symbolize its ceaseless progression (35).

During his initial discourse, Buddha sat in a specific “mudrá” or physical posture which was called “*dharmacakra pravartanna mudrá*”; hence, the festival came to be known as *Caṛaka* — derived from “*cakra-cakkara*” (34-35). Numerous localities in Calcutta, West Bengal were subsequently called “*Caṛakadáuṅgá*.” The *Caṛaka* festival merged Buddhism and Shiva Tantra when the Bengalese relinquished Buddhism and adopted the Puranic religion. They removed “Buddha” and placed Shiva as the “presiding deity of the wheel” because Shiva worship remained as an underground stream in Bengali village life (35).

Another Shiva festival, The *Jhánpán* festival was introduced by “King *Vána* of *Varendrabhúmi* (the Northern part of Bengal)” in about 500 BCE. The King was a devotee of Shiva; his system of worship was named “*Vánavidha Haoyá* after him.” Various places in North Bengal are prefixed by *Vána* such as “*Vánargarh* and *Váneshvara*.” The *Jhánpán* Festival requires devotees jump on “thorns, pointed iron bars,” and “iron nails,” get pierced by hooks while “suspended” in the air — all without displaying pain. The devotees intense “devotion and love” of Shiva creates a concentrated spiritual trance temporarily numbing the physical body which becomes insensate despite the extreme torture and “heavy bleeding” (36).

*Bolán* is another common post-Buddhism and Jainism festival celebrated in Bengal arising from Shiva worship. During the festival, skulls are held in the devotees’ hands while they “dance and shout the name of Shiva” and beg for alms. The devotees chant, “*Vandaná kariba ámi Shivere ámár Yini púrńa, yini nitya, yini sárátsár*. I will surely worship my Lord Shiva. The absolute, eternal and supreme essence of all” (36).

### 5.4.3 Tantric Cults: Buddhist, Nátha, Jain, and Puranic Philosophy

In most gradual transitions from older to newer systems, the adoption and adaptation of previous praxes is common. Each evolutionary step of religious and spiritual life modulates preceding beliefs and praxes, and when religions compete, legacy is often downplayed or ignored. While Sarkar sees Tantra as the first central synthesis of humanity's mystical inclinations, he connects Shiva and Tantra not to deify — Shiva nor to build a monolithic faith — but to reunite India's transcendental history by understanding Tantra's revolutionary effect on society and the progression of spiritual thought. Shiva's Tantric ideology has its present apotheosis in Ananda Marga's goal of building an entirely classless society devoted to enlightenment. Sarkar's 1957 explanation of Ananda Marga's role in this paradigm illustrates the spirit of Tantric ideology:

The revolutionary character of our Marga is evident from the way it tackles one of the oldest vices of human beings, the vice of dividing themselves into classes for their own benefit. These artificial classes get a logical support by the fact that they have sprung up from the grouping together of persons of similar aptitude for better utilization of their capacity. For instance, the learned and the statesmen all combined together and formed the class of Brahmins. Similarly, the strong and the brave formed what is called the *Kṣatriyas*. The *Vaeshyas* and the *Shúdras* were formed in a similar way. Ananda Marga's approach is not to call these classes bad but to make all the members of Ananda Marga practice and develop the good qualities of them all. For instance, the developed mind required for a Brahmin is necessary for every member of Ananda Marga. Every person who joins Ananda Marga, whether of the *Shúdra* or *Vaeshya* or any other class, has to strive to develop and strengthen the mind. Everyone has to work for a strong and healthy body.

Everyone has to work for a living. This has been given so much importance in our Marga that it has been declared that to work as a sweeper — the most menial of tasks — is far more respectable than to depend upon others for one's daily needs. ("Ananda Marga: A Revolution" par. 5)



Unfortunately, inclusiveness and recognition are rarely apparent in the history of world religions and, for that matter, within Indological research which is often suited to a particular niche that eschews comparative bridge building. Typically, younger traditions brand their philosophy unique and obscure or deny its connection to early traditions. I have shown the Shiva-Tantra connection is readily recognized in the eighth to eleventh centuries, proven by the plethora of Tantric commentary from that era, yet the earlier connections of Tantra to other transcendental traditions are generally refuted or downplayed. Nowhere is the etiolation of Shiva Tantra's impact on a specific tradition more visible than in the form Buddhism took after the Buddha's physical departure and the subsequent appearance of the Natha Cult. During the decline of Buddhism ("popularly known as Baoddha Yogácára or Vajrayána at the time") and Jainism, there was a "transitional stage" before the rise of the Puranic or "*Shaevácára*" religion (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 37).<sup>8</sup>

The Nátha Cult "synthesi[zed] Buddhist and Puranic thought." According to Sarkar, the word *nátha* was appended to its main preceptors e.g. "Ádinátha" and "Matsyendranátha," the inventor of the well-known yoga pose "*Matsyendrāsana*" or 'spinal twist,' "Miinanátha, Gorakśanátha, Gohininátha, Caoraungiinátha" etc. The Nátha cult incorporated many elements of Buddhism although it maintained "Shiva" as the "predominant God of the sect" and was widely influential in "Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal." The Nátha Shiva was mythological and lacked any real connection to the "actual Shiva's" teachings (37).

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<sup>8</sup> Note that *Shaevácára* should not be confused with Shavea Dharma.

Further assimilation and differentiation within the Puranic religion generated five sub-cults listed as “*Shaevácára*, the Shiva Cult; *Sháktácára*, the Shakti Cult; *Vaeshnavácára*, the Viśnu Cult; *Saorácára*, the Súrya Cult; and *Gáñapatyácára*, the Gañapati Cult” (37). The *Shaevácára* and *Vaeshnavácára* cult emerged “simultaneously in Southern India” while it had yet to evolve in Bengal. The Shakti Cult emerged in certain parts of Bengal and included sacrificing “animals at the altars of the deities.” “*Gáñapatyácára*” originated in the “Maharastra area of western India during the “decay” of “Buddhism” and the strengthening of the Puranic religion, and revered “Gañapati or Gañesha.” Sun worship in “*Saorácára* was popular only among the *Shákadviiipii* Brahmins” who were “opposed to the Vedas.” From their study of “astronomy,” they determined “the sun” to be their “planet-god.” The *Shákadviiipii*’s “presiding deity [was] attired in “loose trousers” and a “loose jacket” with a “rosary” in hand, and a “fez” on his head — in other words, the clothing of an “Afghan Muslim” (37). All of these cults represented the interim phase between Buddhism and Jainism that eventually gave way to Puranism.

## 5.5 Shiva Deities

### 5.5.1 Buro Shiva

Certain scholars believe Shiva Tantra is post rather than prior to Buddhism, but Sarkar says the former preceded the latter, although during the transition stage “Buddha and Shiva were often merged in the minds of the people” vis-à-vis Shiva’s close association with traditional village life in India and the early importance of Buddhism in India (38). This blending generated a concept of “*Ba’uka* Buddha,” later morphing into “*Ba’uka Bhaerva*” by Puranic adherents. Sarkar says *Ba’uka* means “greatest” in Sanskrit. It eventually changed in the language of “*Mágadhii Prákṛta*” to become “*badua*” and “*ba’uá* in *Ardha-Mágadhii*,”

then “*baṛuyá* in old Bengali,” and finally “*boṛo* in medieval Bengali.” Notably, the “Hiinayánii Buddhists of the Chittagong region,” often have “Baṛuá” as a surname, and Bengali speakers with this name are invariably “Hiinayánii Buddhist[s] of the Chittagong area.” *Baṛuá* is also found in Assam amongst adoptees of the Puranic religion. In Bengal, the adoption of *boṛo* from *baṛuá* caused the loss of association with the original *Batúka Bhaerava*, or *Boṛo Bhaerava*. Moreover, similarities in pronunciation changed “*Boṛo Shiva*” into “*Buṛo Shiva*,” although the derivation of *boṛo* from the Sanskrit *batúka* has been lost, the Bengali meaning of *buṛo* ‘old’ is easily understood. Thus, “old Shiva” is the name for the deified Shiva used in Buddhism which has “no relation” to the Shiva of 7000 years ago, and *Buṛo Shiva* is a strictly “Buddhist deity” (39-40).

### 5.5.2 Lokeshvara Buddha

The merging of Shiva with Buddhism is further attested by the synthesis of “Buddhism and Vaeśṇavácára” leading to the conception of “*Lokeshvara Buddha*” who, under certain circumstances, became known as “Bodhisattva,” appearing as “Viśnú” with the image of “Buddha affixed to the diadem on his head” to “identify the Bodhisattvas.” Consequently, in the early phases of the Puranic age “*Lokeshvara Buddha*” was transformed into “*Lokeshvara Viśnú*” and was worshiped in that guise. In the same era another Bodhisattva, “*Niilanátha*,” emerged as a blended form of “declining Buddhism and *Shaevácára*” (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 37).

Evidence for the synthesis of these two traditions can be found in the Puranic ritual for worshiping *Niilanátha* which is closer to the Buddhist worship of lighting “oil lamps,” offering “salutations,” and chanting “a few mantras” without the “ritualistic religious services of a Brahman priest.” Typically *Niilanátha* “worshippers come in the evening, light a few lamps, sprinkle some Ganges water, offer their salutations,” and complete the ritual by

“reciting some rhymed verses dedicated to the deity.” Village women worshipping this deity utter “*Niiler ghare diye báti, Jal khaóse putravatii*. If you really want welfare for your sons, light a lamp at the shrine of Niilanátha before you drink water in the morning.” The worship of Niilanátha prevalent during Bengal’s Buddhist era 1500 years ago changed into “Shiva Niilanátha” when the Puranic religion started to take root. People “indirectly” believed Niilanátha was “half Shiva” and Niilanátha was worshiped “one day before the Cafaka festival” mentioned earlier (40-41).

### 5.5.3 Dharma-Ŧhákura

After the arrival of the Puranic age, the Bengalis were unable to “worship Buddha directly” for fear of reprisals from the “upper-caste people.” Buddhist belief required a sincere follower adhere to “the Three Jewels (*Triratna*)” and its fundamental concepts: “Buddha, the holy preceptor; *Samgha*, the organization; and *Dhamma*, the ideology” (41). Buddha’s philosophy was “*Shúnyaváda* (the Doctrine of the Void)” which proposed origination emanates from *Shúnya* ‘void,’ is “maintained in *Shúnya*,” and ultimately “merge[s] in *Shúnya*” (42). Thus, the principal argument of Buddhism is “*Shúnyát agacchati, Shúnye tiśthati, Shúnyam gacchati*.” The concept of *Shúnya* can be represented by “zero,” and Bengalis who wanted to maintain their Buddhist practice worshiped “a round-shaped stone” like a “tortoise” which came to represent the “nothing” of the void to disguise their worship as “*Dharmaráj*.”

At present “*Dharmaráj*” is often “accepted as Shiva” because of the earlier prevalence of Shiva worship in Bengal during the “dominance of Buddhism and Jainism.” In time *Dharmaráj* became known as “*Dharma-Ŧhákura*,” that is “Shiva.” The prevalence of temples adhering to worship entirely unrelated to the Puranic religion in that their “priests” are “not Brahmans” but the “original Bengalees” gives credence to Sarkar’s contention that

“*Dharmarāj* or *Dharma-Īhākura*” was significantly influenced by Shaeva ideology. Directly opposing the teachings of the Puranas, fishermen are often given priestly duties in *Dharma-Īhākura* temples and have “full right to perform” all “priestly duties” because “Shiva recognized no caste distinctions.” In “Angadesh people of all classes and castes . . . march in procession in the evening of the Shivarātri day” while dancing and shouting “*Hara Hara vyom vyom*” [chants “in praise of Shiva”] (42). It is evident to onlookers that racial and caste distinctions are irrelevant during the religious ceremonies of *Dharma-Īhākura*. Moreover, Calcutta has streets named after this tradition: “Dharmatala at Salikha in Howrah district” and in the city, itself, “Dharmatala Street” (43). Sarkar emphasizes recent changes to street names have distorted some of the history of the places because their previous association with important events linked to those geographical names are being elided from common memory.

## 5.6 Buddhist-Tantric Deities

Buddhism’s bifurcation into the Northern and Southern branches, respectively called the “Mahāyāna” and Sthavirvāda” schools, in about 200 BCE was a major source of new Shiva idols and deities (46). Mahāyāna Buddhism gained popularity in “Tibet, China, Mongolia, Outer Mongolia, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, The North Eastern Frontier Agency, southern and eastern Russia, Japan, and Korea.” Sthavirvāda Buddhism garnered support in “Sri Lanka, Chittagong of Bengal, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines” etc. The writing of the Northern school were primarily in “simple Sanskrit” while the southern school were written in “Pali” or its other name “Magadhii Prākṛta,” and Sarkar claims Buddha propagated Buddhism mostly in Pali. The fundamental split of Buddhism into northern and southern branches was followed by further subdivisions. The northern Mahāyāna sect eventually divided into two subgroups, the



“Mantrayāna and Tantrayāna.” The Tantrayāna further divided into two subgroups: “Kālacakrayāna and Vajrayāna” (47).

Buddhist tradition, Eliade tells us, considers Tantra’s inclusion in Vajrayāna a second to fourth century phenomena by “Asaṅga (c.400) the eminent Yogācāra master” and later by “Nāgārjuna” in the second century CE, but Eliade also notes, “the problem” of the “origins” of Buddhist Tantra is “still far from being solved” (201). The subdivisions of the northern schools caused their followers to invent “various new Buddhist gods and goddesses” to satisfy the “psychological needs of the people.” Sarkar doesn’t consider these changes necessarily beneficial. They did, however, bring a new psychology to Buddhist practice. The Buddha preached the notion of “Duhkhavāda” ‘suffering’ as an integral part of existence in his Four Noble Truths, “*Caturājjasaccam*.” The evolving Buddhist practices and rituals prescribed to bring about the alleviation of suffering gradually became “estranged from the practical world” (47). To reinvigorate Buddhism’s popularity, the schools of Kālacakrayāna and Vajrayāna <sup>23</sup> circa 300-400 CE preached a new philosophy eschewing the Buddha’s unequivocal detachment and adopted a new doctrine called “Atisukhavāda.” It espoused “extreme hedonism” and prayer was directed at Buddha to gain “various objects of pleasure” (48).

### 5.6.1 *Paiṇcabuddha*: The Five Stages of Buddha

The creators of Atisukhavāda invented the concept of “*Paiṇcabuddha*” which was seen as a “stage immediately preceding enlightenment.” *Bodhisattvas* existed in “the Five Stages of Buddha”<sup>24</sup> Each stage provided its followers certain boons. *Paiṇcabuddha* were believed to be the logical outcome of Buddha’s control of the operative forces of “*Paiṇcabuddha-shakti*” that enabled a *bodhisattva* to influence material existence. “The byproduct of the *Paiṇcabuddha-shakti* principle was the development of five Buddhas:

“Akśobhya, Amoghasiddhi, Amitábha, Vaerocana, and Dhyániibuddha” whose faces were “covered in gold” (48). Sarkar says the five earliest *buddhitattva* manifestations worshipped in different countries were “Ugratára,” worshipped in India; “Bhrámariitára,” worshipped in China; “Vajratára,” worshipped in Tibet (or “Kimpuruśavarśa”); Vajrayoginii; and Vajraváráhi.” Following these initial five, further deities were added: “Háritii, Máricii and Shiitalá, a *laokik*<sup>9</sup> goddess.” After this, the “*laokik*” goddess “Manasá” was also incorporated (49). Many deities found in Buddhist Tantra duly crossed into “Post-Shiva Tantra, and conversely, many of the goddesses of Post-Shiva Tantra were accommodated . . . in Buddhist Tantra” in a “continual process of mutual exchange” (50). Other local deities, including “Maṅgalácaṇḍii, Oláicaṇḍii, Banabibi, Shaṅkaṭácaṇḍii, Káluráy, Dakśínaráy, Suvacanii,” were worshipped by the common people “out of fear” and took root in Buddhist Tantra and “the Puranic religion.” Most of these deities became “popular” in “the Puranic age” (50).

### 5.6.2 Durga

The evolution of Post-Shiva Tantra maintained Shiva’s *devatá* or divine status, nevertheless the prevalent “Buddhist and Jain Tantra” of the era influenced Shiva’s appearance. “New elements” were added to Shiva’s “existing image” in an attempt to create “a new entity.” The Puranic age saw Shiva “invested with a sacrificial thread.” Ultimately “many gods and goddesses” were “linked with Shiva” to legitimize their existence and “recognition” vis-à-vis association with Shiva (50). Durga, purported to have been Shiva’s wife, was not originally associated with him until the Puranic era. Durga worship is predicated on the “*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* and to a lesser extent the *Devii Purāṇa*, the *Káliká*

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<sup>9</sup> “Something created relatively recently out of popular sentiment,” or a deity of the people.

*Purāṇa*, the *Brhatnandikeshavara Purāṇa*, the *Durgābhaktitaraunginii*,” and the “*Deviibhāgavat*.” The “*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*” (or “*Durgāsaptashatī*”) is colloquially named “*Shrīi Shrīi Caṇḍī*” and consists of “Seven hundred *shloka*s (couplets)” collected from the preceding books not extant during Shiva’s lifetime. Moreover, Durgā worship is not seen in the Vedas: “To put a Vedic seal of approval on the worship of Durgā, the famous *Deviisūkta* of the Vedas is cited.” Sarkar maintains this is fallacious; “Haemavatī Umā” (who is also known as Durgā) “mentioned in the *Deviisūkta* of the Vedas, has no relation whatsoever to Pārvatī (or Gaorī), the wife of Shiva, nor to Durgā, the Puranic goddess.” None of these books are “older than 1300 or 1400 years” and lack any tangible historical links to Shiva (54).

### 5.6.3 Kālī

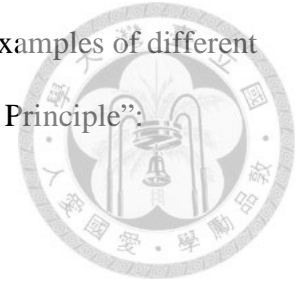
The goddess Kālī’s mythical concatenation with Shiva is a prime example of religious conatus. Although Shiva’s Austrico-Dravidian wife was called Kālī, the Kālī of Post-Shiva and Buddhist Tantra appeared about “1600 or 1700 years” ago. Her worship stems from the “*Kālikā Purāṇa*” and is long after “the Vedic” and Shiva Age (56). Kālī worship, therefore, unfolded from Post-Shiva Tantra and was accepted “in Buddhist Tantra.”

### 5.6.4 Shiva’s Consorts

Post-Shiva Tantra evolved into three synchronous divisions that mutually exchanged “ideas”: “Jain Tantra, Buddhist Tantra, and Post-Shiva Tantra” (79). These schools “broadly accepted the division of Tantra into sixty-four main branches,” coinciding with their mutual episteme that “human life” has “sixty-four types of expression.” Differences between these Tantric schools was primarily semantic; “each school retained specific terms of its own.” For

the most part they were internally consistent. The following are some examples of different terms for “*Mūlā Prajñā Shakti* ‘aseity’ or the “Fundamental Cognitive Principle”:

- (1) Post-Shiva Tantra – *Shiva*
- (2) Jain Tantra — *Jinaratna/Jinaraana*
- (3) Buddhist Tantra —various epithets of the Buddha (80).



The sixty-four Tantras were given a “*yoginiitattva*” or “presiding deity” who was considered a “wife of Shiva” to “maintain” the “popularity” of a Tantra-derived form of worship sanctified by mythical union with Shiva. The three traditions broadly accepted the *yoginiitattva*-Shiva concatenation, and in Jabbalpu, there is a hill with “sixty-four small temples” dedicated to the Jain deities.<sup>25</sup> “Vajrayānii Buddhist Tantra” and “Shivottara Tantra” also accept sixty-four controlling deities (80). In this regard, Feuerstein says that “tradition speaks of 64 Tantras” although this is an “ideal figure” not reflecting “historical reality” (2). According to Sarkar, once the use of script became common, it accelerated the hitherto silent synthesis of the three traditions via the sharing of ideas.

In the first century CE “Ambika” was a “Jain Tantra” deity that gained acceptance “in Shivottara Tantra” and in the “Puranic Shakti Cult (Paorāṇik Sháktácára) . . . as the goddess Laksmii.” From Buddhist Tantra, the “goddess Tara” was incorporated in “Shivottara Tantra” and later in the “Puranic Shakti Cult . . . as the goddess Sarasvatii.” Finally, Shivottara’s Tantric goddess “Kálii” found acceptance in Buddhist Tantra” (81).

Sarkar’s considers the floruit of adaption and borrowing during Tantra’s classical era to be its great “age of synthesis.” Shiva’s sixty-four hypothetical wives were precursors to the Puranic religion, germinating in “Paoranik Shaevacara (the Puranic Shiva Cult) and the Puranic Shakti Cult in somewhat changed form.” Synthesis between the three schools stimulated an orthogenetic response in the new concept of “*Dashamahavidya* (Ten Mahavidyas) which elevated ten deities from the three “systems of Tantra.” These deities,

arising in the early centuries of the common era, about 5000 years after Shiva's birth, were claimed as "the wives of Shiva" because without this status society "would not recognize and worship them" (85). "Kálii, Tára, Sódashii, Bhuvaneshvarii, Bhaeravii, Chinnamastá, Dhúmavatii, Bagalámukhii, Mátauṅgii and Kamalá" were accepted in Paoránik Sháktácára, Vaeśnavácára, Shaevácára and Ganapatyácára (the Puranic Shakti Cult, Visnu Cult, Shiva Cult and Ganapati Cult)" (82). During the Puranic age the deities names diverged: those derived from Post-Shiva Tantra were "designated as 'Dakśiṇá Shakti' and those from Vajrayána Buddhism were 'Vamá Shakti'" (85). A.L. Basham states that by the ninth century the "Śaiva sects" increasingly focused on "Śakti" — the "feminine aspect" of Shiva — and her various manifestations as "Kālī (Dark One), or as Śiva's wife, Pārvati or Uma." Thus, the Śākta cults were influenced by "the fourth century" worship of "Durgā, Śiva's consort" who, as explained earlier, was never the historical Shiva's wife (112). Sarkar provides a few examples of the most influential of these deities in later religious thought:

Káliká, typically depicted with four hands, is the first of the "controlling deities" of "Shivottara Tantra" later absorbed into "Buddhist Vajrayana" (83). Tára, the second deity, who originated in Vajrayána Tantra, was "later" than the "Buddha," became known as "Ugratára" in India, "Bhrámarii Tára (black as a bumblebee)" in China, and in Tibet she was "blue-coloured" (84). Sódashii, the third deity, originally from "Vajrayána Tantra" was included in Post-Shiva Tantra under a new name "Rájarájeshvarii." Eventually, the "Puranic Shákta Cult" assimilated Rájarájeshvarii. This deity's initial lack of support was reversed at the end of the "Mughal period" during early British colonization when "Krśnacandra, the king of Nadia," introduced Rájarájeshvarii worship under the new name of "Jagaddhátirii." She became exceedingly "popular in Krishnanagar" (86). Once again, cementing Shiva's preeminence, Jagaddhátirii was declared his consort despite her very late appearance in the Shiva context.

### 5.6.5 Shiva and Puranic Deities

The Puranic religion that followed the Buddhist and Jain age absorbed the Shiva “myth” in order to win over the support of the “simple indigenous people” who had worshipped Shiva’s numerous iterations for thousands of years (43). When Shankaracharya, the main “propounder of the Puranic religion,” appeared during the transitional period “an attempt was made” to make him an incarnation or “*avatāra* . . . of Shiva” to ensure his doctrine would be accepted “without any reservation as the words of the Shiva” (43).

K. Chakrabarti explains Puranic accounts of Shiva give him a “fair” complexion and “five faces”; Shiva maintains an “ascetic” nature and is “deeply engrossed in meditation much of the time.” Shiva is also considered the God of destruction in the Hindu Trinity that incorporates “Brahma” and “Visnu.” Nevertheless, Chakrabarti argues that regardless of which deity Hindus “worship” it is “clear to nearly all Hindus” that they revere the same God “irrespective” of its name (69).

Flood also explains that the “Puranic followers of Śiva” were “Maheśvaras concerned with ritual purity” and “orthodox” puranic worship of Shiva (60). Initiates such as the “Paśupatas” were “Śaivas” classified by the “outer path” or *atimarga* and the “path of mantra” or *mantramarga*, “which follows the revelation of the Tantras”(61). In all likelihood, Shiva’s relationship with many Indian deities supports Sarkar’s argument that Shiva was preeminent in the religious and spiritual life of India holds although these inferences depend on oral accounts as much as scripture.

## 5.7 Shiva and Shakti

### 5.7.1 Invocation

An “acoustic root” or “*bijja mantra*” is a specific word or mantra that invokes and symbolizes a deity (84). Mantras and acoustic roots will be discussed later in this work in

sections on Husserl and Parmenides. For now, it should be understood that acoustic roots are fundamental to Tantric praxes. The Acoustic roots that invoke a specific deity are based on Sanskrit phonemes which condense the essential quality of the deity into a single incantatory word. Hence, the mantra is the de facto controlling nexus of the deity. According to Sarkar, Shiva did not have a *bijja mantra*: “The people loved Shiva so intimately that they did not think it necessary to worship Him with a particular *bijja mantra*,” but over time Shiva and all his associated deities were given acoustic roots. In Vajrayāna Buddhism Kālii’s acoustic root was “*raṁ*” — the “acoustic root of energy” signifying “the application of energy in action.” Post-Shiva Tantra changed the sound to “*riiṁ*”; *Ra* is the “acoustic root of energy” and suffixed by *ii* it references the “feminine gender.” Not unsurprisingly, Kālii’s identity as the wife of Shiva meant that energy became a “female entity.” After Kālii was accepted into the Puranic Shakti cult, the acoustic root morphed into “*klrṁ*,” and her invocation became *Klrṁ Kāliikāyae namah*” (84).<sup>26</sup>

### 5.7.2 The Inner Meaning

Tantra’s connection to the historical Shiva and the esoteric symbolism of Tantric deities which represent philosophical concepts related to duality and singularity are little understood, and the spiritual import of the term *Shiva* is also obscured by myth. From “The Pervasive Influence of Shiva,” we see Sarkar’s explanation of “*Shivatattva*, the inner meaning of Shiva . . . , *devatātattva*, and *daevii shakti*” (44). Once an individual’s personality is completely identified with their life’s philosophy they become a god. Shiva was considered a *devatā* because his “ideology” was completely “identified with His life.” Although all occult entities radiating from the “Universal Nucleus” (Aseity) or primordial *causa sui* are called *devatā*, Shiva is not a separate component of Aseity’s manifestations, but the “aggregate” of all those *devatās*.” In this sense Shiva is the supreme expression of all the

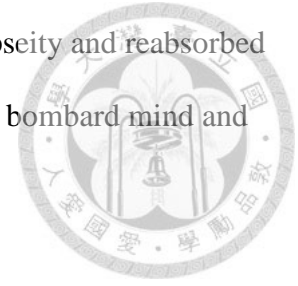
radiating *devatá* and is the “God of gods” — “*Devatánám devatá, devanám devah ityarthé Mahádevah*: The God of all gods and goddesses is Mahádeva.” (45). Shiva is therefore the ontological compound of all Indian gods and goddesses.

When the relationship of *Shakti* to Shiva is understood Tantra’s cosmology is clarified and this is critical for the discussion that follows in Part Two of this work. *Daevii shakti* is the energy principle or the quality of duality existing within Aseity. If Shiva consciousness (Aseity) is the ontology of phenomenal existence, understanding its relationship with *shakti* (the universal creative force) helps clarify why the latter’s quiescence in Cosmic Consciousness (Metaseity) permanently removes all mental limitations. Sarkar maintains the absolute quiescence of mental energy eliminates all spatiotemporal limitations, removing the distance between subject and object to unite the perceiver and the perceived. When Metaseity is expressed as Aseity two fundamental forces or qualities arise: Cognitive force or “*Prajiñátattva*” and the operative force or “*Shaktitattva*.” These two forces are also called, “*Citishakti*” for *Prajiñátattva* and “*Káliká Shakti*”<sup>27</sup> for *Shaktitattva* (45). *Káliká Shakti* gets its name from “*kalácakra*, the eternal time factor” that maintains creation. Sarkar contends “applied” Shiva Tantra recognized “different forces,” but, importantly, they remained undeified.

To clarify the Tantric concept of energy as time/change —the critical experience shaping mental experiences — energy should be conceptualized as motion, or the potential for motion. In reality, the mind perceives motion as an object’s departure and arrival between two points or conditions. Thus, energy has a temporal measurement that quantifies rates of change, simply known as time. And when the mind becomes associated with spatiotemporal phenomena, it effectively perceives energy. Perception is followed by subjective mental interpretation of an apparently continuous flow of objective data. The gap between the subject and object is practical duality. The Tantric principle of monism is realized when



mental energy and perception are channelized during meditation into ipseity and reabsorbed into Shiva consciousness. This is not easily achieved given phenomena bombard mind and leave it navigating incessant modes of duality.



## 5.8 Concluding Remarks on Shivology

Sarkar is acutely aware that history is frequently manipulated to suit political and religious narratives. He presents Shivology not merely in “opposition to casteism,” or to criticize “orthodox schools of Indian philosophy,” but situate these now etiolated systems within Shiva Tantra (Inayatullah 1). Sarkar’s details Shiva’s liberatory Tantric history to present alternatives to religious dogmas, radical fundamentalism, and global suffering. He explores the Shiva era not to satisfy political or religious agenda but to demonstrate how Indian religion and spirituality diverged and the spread — presaging a global trend.

It was shown that Indological research into India’s spiritual traditions has frequently created academic historiographies derived from supposedly objective evidence, later touted as factual accounts of India’s spiritual development. This chapter reviewed some of Sarkar’s comparative analyses of Shiva Tantra’s assimilation and transformation by other transcendental traditions. Sarkar offers intriguing historical details, but his trenchant comparisons rarely have specific dates. Further exploring these details will require archaeological research in undeveloped and inhospitable areas of West Bengal. Fortunately, a number of discoveries based on his discourses indicate this could be time well spent for interested historians, archaeologists, and comparative scholars.

Shivology is Sarkar’s unique and timely study of humanity’s ancient spiritual achievements that elucidates pre-historical transcendental philosophy formerly considered myth. Shiva, the first *Sadguru*, codified and systematized proto-Tantric practices in about 5500 BCE and disseminated first science of liberation. It was the indigenous inhabitants of

Rárh who practiced the Tantra that influenced the Vedic religion of the Aryan migrants. In this regard, important Indologist's like Radhkrishnan have claimed Vedanta "dominated" Indian epistemology for "three thousand years" and was "definitely pre-Buddhistic" (37). Sarkar contends that most Indian traditions employing meditative praxes implicitly inherited Tantric techniques first adopted by Yogic, Buddhist, and Jainist sects, and Kang considers Tantra "a pan-Indian movement" that "straddles Buddhist, Hindu, and Jaina traditions" by exhibiting "practical commonalities . . . despite varying philosophical speculations" (277).

It was shown that during the Aryan Vedic age prior to Shiva, there were gods and goddesses, "but no system of idol worship" (45). Acts of reverence were carried out through "sacrificial rituals" so that the Vedic gods such as "Indra, Ágni" and "Varuṇa," to name a few, "were not worshipped with idols." Furthermore, there was no system of worshipping "*Parama Brahma*" (Aseity) with idols. During Shiva's era "*kálíka shaktis* (deities) were accepted but "idol worship" was "eschewed." However, the development of "Shivottara (Post-Shiva) Tantra" during the Buddhist and Jain periods created a multitude of systems "for worshipping different gods and goddesses in the form of idols." Subsequently, while post-Shiva Tantra maintained some of the original Tantric practices it became "largely influenced by Buddhism and Jainism," and the idolization of post-Shiva deities became prevalent (46).

For Tantrikas, "Sadáshiva was the first Guru who came to this planet; he was the living embodiment of divine power and intuition"; Shiva consciousness and attaining Metaseity are frequently used in the same context. Hence, Yogis may talk about the complete merging of his individual consciousness with Shiva consciousness in the state of trance or *samādhi* (158). *Samādhi*, discussed in 7.4.1-7.4.2, culminates in *nirguṇa* when ipseity merges with Aseity and then transcends into Metaseity. The state of *samādhi* causes the "pineal gland" to secrete hormones, and the "crescent moon" on the head of Shiva idols represents a specific psycho-spiritual center known as a *cakra* which is impacted by the pineal hormones.

The intoxication of “spiritual ecstasy” is often erroneously associated with stimulants and “the up cast third eye” of Shiva is mistakenly seen as the “influence of cannabis and bhang” (a cannabis derivative used by some traditions in Bihar). In practice, Shiva is “engrossed in enjoying the nectar” of the pineal *cakra* and this is why Shiva’s epithet is “*sudhāmshusekhra*” (one who has the nectarean moon on the head)” (240).

In closing, this overview of Sarkar’s Shivology and Tantra’s influence on later traditions is not a definitive historiography. The actual date of the Vedas and Tantra’s influences are not, and may never be, fully addressed. Nonetheless, as Sarkar’s historical perspectives have not been widely presented in comparative accounts of India’s transcendental traditions, I believe his synthesis challenges us to revise previous assumptions about the development of Vedanta, Buddhism, Jainism, and casteism. It is likely that future comparative work on the linguistic and practical elements of these traditions will revise entrenched ideas

Moving forward, Part Two of this dissertation explores Sarkar’s emphasis on transcendental praxis over theoretical knowledge because, as Sarkar puts it, “strictly speaking, theoretical knowledge cannot be called Tantra” as “Tantra is a practical science.” Nevertheless, in the emic comparisons that follow, I propose understanding theoretical ontologies of consciousness and mind remains relevant to transcendental praxes that progress from “the physical, . . . physico-psychic, . . . psycho-spiritual,” into “ensconcement in the *ātmā* [ipseity].” This experience of transcendence is mediated by the Tantric meditations that move the mind towards Aseity and, ultimately, liberates consciousness in Metaseity. Although Tantric cosmology posits ultimate reality to be infinity, its attainment is mediated by a *Sadguru* who provides mind with a tangential link to its ultimate goal. Gerald Larson states it succinctly: “In Tāntrika” practices, “Śiva is utterly transcendent” (494). The comparative discussions in Part Two investigate the praxes giving ipseity entry into

Metaseity. Sarkar considers these techniques the practical elements of spiritual development that separate Tantra from many other traditions (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2-37*).





## **PART II**

### **PHILOSOPHY AND PRAXIS**

## Chapter Six

### Mind and Metaseity

*This chapter looks at comparative ontologies of mind, consciousness, and infinity. Questioning the legacy of empirical and materialist cosmology, it introduces Greek thought and Cartesian duality — followed by contemporary theories of ipseity and mind. Thereafter the ability to reduce mind to ipseity through meditation demonstrates how quiescence may be reached. Next, emic and etic viewpoints on cosmology and consciousness introduce the key concept of infinity (Metaseity). An argument for infinity as a transcendent conscious singularity is contrasted with material monism. Finally, this chapter suggests Sarkar's evolutionary Tantric meditation provides practitioner-researchers with unique insights into ipseity and mind.*

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#### 6.1 Introduction

Chapter Six and Chapter Seven explore causal theories of mind, consciousness, and infinity, contextualized by Cartesian duality, material monism, and Sarkar's Tantric cosmology. Sarkar's contention that consciousness is non-dual, precedes matter and is thus the sole object and objective of meditation is discussed in relation to Cartesian mind and duality. These two chapters set the framework of Part Two which compares Sarkar's Tantric<sup>10</sup> meditations that liberate ipseity in Metaseity with other Western transcendental praxes. Specifically, Husserl strove to establish an ontology of the sciences, and he believed knowledge of *a priori* consciousness (ipseity) through his transcendental reduction critical to this endeavor. With this goal in mind, Sarkar's *pratyāhāra* efficiently prepares the mind to

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<sup>10</sup> Henceforth when talking about Sarkar's Tantra I will use Tantra as the single term for his philosophy unless otherwise qualified.

experience ipseity prior to realizing Aseity. Two and a half millennia before Husserl, Parmenides, the acknowledged father of Western logic, had a monistic theory that profoundly influenced Western philosophy. It is intriguing, then, that Parmenides's meditative praxes originating in the *Iatromantis* tradition are almost unknown. The *Iatromantis* were Greek yogis with transcendental and a devotional techniques likely derived from Tantra-Yoga which influenced the Socratic philosophers. Intriguingly, in Plato's *Symposium* the seer, Diotima, speaks of *eros*, or devotion, as the path to realizing immortality in Parmenidean monism (Aseity). Indeed, there are distinct parallels between Tantric *bhakti* (devotion) and Socratic *eros* for practitioners seeking liberation. Metaseity, explained in this dissertation's introduction, is a new term for the ineffable infinite. Becoming one with Metaseity is *mokṣa*. This unqualified state is the desideratum of India's transcendental traditions, including Buddhism, Jainism, Tantra, and Vedanta.

It was pointed out in Chapter Two that the critical role of escape from rebirth was not “new” at the time of Buddha even though it was “not present in the Vedic material”; liberation likely “had an earlier presence outside the Vedic region” in the traditions of the “wisdom kings of Mithila and other early renunciate rulers” (Samuel 174-75). Eliade argues it is not knowledge of “truth that is the supreme end of the Indian sage,” rather “it is liberation, the conquest of absolute freedom” (3). Sanderson notes in certain “Śaiva” traditions the Tantric “yogically” raises “consciousness through the central channel” and ascends to “a paradise or liberation” (183-84). Glucklich also states Tantra uses “specialized ritual techniques to achieve both spiritual liberation (*jīvanmukti*) and worldly perfection (*siddhi*) without renouncing the world” (143).

Tantra does not demand the practitioner disengage from worldly responsibilities. Flood rightly states liberation is attainable while being engaged in “fulfilling” all “social obligations.” In the *Gita*, Krishna, the Tantric *Sadguru*, proclaims “there can be liberation

from the world of action through acting with detachment from its fruits” (46). Hence, Sarkar teaches detachment from action is possible when the spiritual seeker awakens to the experience that all actions are rooted not in their individual mind but in Aseity. This knowledge naturally arises during the practice of *dhyana* or ‘meditation’ and the ascetic cultivation of nonattachment to the outcome of one’s actions: “one who is associated with everything but is not emotionally involved in anything,” or is “not influenced by anything” has *vaerāgya* or spiritual detachment (270). For this reason, meditation is considered “an indispensable part of the path toward liberation” in “Indian Buddhism,” “Classical Yoga,” “Jainism and Vedanta” which, as we have seen, was derived from Siva Tantra (Sarbacker 1).

Scholarly research broadly recognizes the interrelationship between meditation and consciousness, but these studies are often limited by their conception of what precisely the meditator is doing and the philosophy that inspires the praxis. Therefore, Part Two details the philosophy and praxis of Tantric meditation and explore similarities in Socratic *eros* and Husserl’s Phenomenological Reduction to Tantric praxes. The primary direction of these chapters is to investigate the object and objective of Tantric meditation and how Tantric epistemology either influenced or complemented Western transcendentalism.

Before venturing into this comparative study, it is imperative consciousness as Cartesian duality or Tantric singularity is clarified because these considerations underpin the comparative discussions that follow. Furthermore, it must be remembered that Brahma, Tao, and infinity (grouped as Metaseity) are an ineffable abstraction eluding description. Out of the many possible portrayals of Metaseity, it could be “described” as the causeless, motionless thing within which the universe’s movement is contextualized. In this study Sarkar’s tetrad of Metaseity, Aseity, ipseity, and mind is the ontological and cosmological hierarchy of Reality. Sarkar’s cosmology provides a viable and rational alternative to the material models of reality proposed by contemporary theoretical physicists such as Lawrence



Krauss whose 2014 bestseller, *A Universe from Nothing*, hypothesizes the Big Bang came from “nothing.”

Even from the rarefied perspective of quantum physics, Kraus’s definition of “nothing” is, itself, ambiguous. While praising the work, astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson includes the paradoxical recognition that “Nothing is not nothing. Nothing is *something* [emphasis added],” which is “how a cosmos can be spawned from the void” (Krauss frontmatter). Semantics aside, Sarkar would agree that Metaseity, although unquantifiable, is not *anything*, nor is it *nothing*; it is beyond mind and matter. Because Metaseity transcends mind, ontological knowledge of its existence is experientially deferred and only ascertainable post *nirvikalpa samādhi* when the meditator returns to normal consciousness. Metaseity, itself, is changeless; therefore, those attaining this rarefied state are liberated from cause and effect. Sarkar states, when “there is no expressed activity of *Prakṛti* [force],” the void remains “objectless or *nirguṇa*” (Idea & Ideology 1), and “*Nirguṇa* is neither perishable nor imperishable. It is beyond these. It is absolutely liberated” (41).

## 6.2 There and Back Again: Consciousness and Materialism through the Ages

*A voice said to him, — why do you stay here and live this mean moiling life, when a glorious existence is possible for you? Those same stars twinkle over other fields than these. — But how to come out of this condition and actually migrate thither? All that he could think of was to practice some new austerity, to let his mind descend into this body and treat himself with ever increasing respect. (Thoreau 104)*

Thoreau’s story about John Farmer comes at the end of his chapter on “Higher Laws” from *Walden* published in 1854. After exposure to the teachings of the ancient Greeks and Scottish empiricists, Thoreau was dissatisfied with Western cosmology and sought out a practical means to self-realization. Inspired by his mentor Emerson, he turned to India and in

“a Hindoo book,” he discovered monism: ““So soul from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be *Brahme*”” (48). *Brahma* or Aseity is the “grand expression” of “Cosmic Consciousness” and the terminal witness of its own creation (Ānandamūrti 189).

The *Gita* states “the Real is the absolute Brahman”; Brahma is the noumenal alpha and omega of the mind and reality. Radhakrishnan argues epistemological attempts to restrict Reality to the mental domain are futile as Reality transcends mind and this realization is only possible “intuitively” when ipseity awakens to its source in Aseity (77).

Generally speaking, monistic Tantric philosophy, and similar forms of Idealism, are not considered viable ontological theories by material monists who argue the universe originates in matter so that consciousness can only be a byproduct of material interactions. Towsey states “Western science rests on the philosophical foundation of materialist monism, according to which only physical matter exists and therefore only physical matter can be known.” Material monism asserts “that mind and consciousness are epiphenomena of matter” (“Eternal Dance of Macrocosm: An Encyclopaedia of Matter, Mind and Consciousness” 1).

Scientifically speaking, materialism has become the dominant view, and Jennifer Fitzgerald points out the status quo that “the material” has prevailed “over the spiritual” in all spheres while “positivism has captured the ethical ground” (62). Consequently, this study redefines material monism (materialism) as de facto duality while discussing mind and consciousness. My rationale is that materialists who argue mind comes into being due to sensory interaction rely on subject object distinctions. Furthermore, this refutation of material monism depends on our previous understanding that energy is a temporal vibration — hence subject to change. Thus, quantum physics must accept that materialism is not monistic but essentially dualistic. For this reason, physicalist arguments that consciousness is essentially material are juxtaposed against transcendental perspectives. The latter argues that Aseity

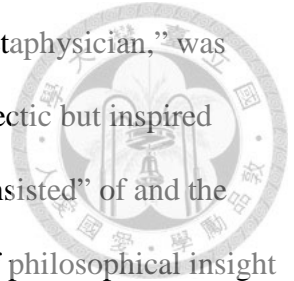
precedes materiality and gives rise to the physical law of action and reaction along with the contraction and expansion of consciousness. In short, both materialists and transcendentalists agree energy cannot be self-caused. This fundamental principle thus supports an ontological inquiry into the nature of consciousness itself.



### 6.2.1 The Greeks

The material-transcendental juxtaposition of consciousness is not new; the Greeks engaged in cosmological philosophy 2500 years ago, and, a millennia earlier, Indian philosophers actively explored mind and consciousness during meditation. Western theories of mind are traceable two and a half millennia back to pre-Socratic ideas that developed into “a long and complex history” (Webb 5). The true dawn of metaphysical praxes, Sarkar says, was Tantra.

Uriah Kriegel states “much of the [Western] philosophy of discourse on consciousness” focuses on “the issue of reducibility” (53). Although reasons abound for the modern division of science and philosophy, Daniel Kolak says it is incorrect to think “philosophy” was “opposed to the different [scientific] disciplines to which it is both originating mother and stern, hypercritical father”; the pre-Socratic’s did not make “sharp divisions between the various disciplines of knowledge.” By the beginning of the fourth century BCE, Greek philosophers realized “arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music were related but distinct fields.” During the middle ages, these disciplines were grouped within universities where empiricism gradually began to dominate, yet the ancient philosophers recognized “the importance of seeing the limitations of knowledge in all forms” and “following Socrates” lead they called philosophy wisdom to differentiate it from the natural sciences (xxx).



The father of Western philosophy, known as the first Greek “metaphysician,” was Thales of Miletus, who lived between 624-546 BCE. Thales was an eclectic but inspired thinker, concerned with the “question of what reality in and of itself consisted” of and the development of “nautical science” and “geometry.” The combination of philosophical insight and his keen eye for the natural world enabled him to “calculate the height of a pyramid by measuring its shadow at the time of day when a man’s shadow is equal to his height” and the accurate prediction of “the solar eclipse of May 28, 585 B.C.E.” Theory and practice were equally important to this early philosopher. During the Persian war, he taught the army how to cross a river by “diverting its flow into two narrow streams.” The technological advancements derived from Thale’s understanding made Miletus a hub of trade in the ancient Grecian world so that “riches and knowledge poured in from Europe and Egypt and the Orient.” New wealth led to an “unprecedented amount of leisure,” giving the Greeks time to “turn their hearts and minds to art and science” and to speculate on the nature of existence” (15). These speculations were the genesis of Western concepts of reality and mind.

What did Thales have to say about existence? Perhaps not coincidentally, he echoes the ancestral *RV* “Hymn of Creation,” (discussed in Chapter Three) that symbolized Reality with water: “Then existence was not nor non-existence, the mid-world was not nor the Ether nor what is beyond. What covered all? where was it? in whose refuge? what was that ocean dense and deep?” For reasons still not understood, Thales share the Vedic concept and proclaimed “everything is made of water” (16). Taken at face value, the assertion must have been confusing (if not nonsensical) to the ancient Greeks, and for many it implied Thales believed in a material cosmology. However, Kolak argues Thales does not present a statement to be accepted or rejected by appearance alone. Thales could have been suggesting that truth is not given to the senses, and real wisdom requires the individual test the validity of the statement for themselves. Unfortunately for this transcendental argument, Aristotle

then analyzed Thales pronouncement in terms of material taxonomy which has been wholeheartedly adopted by empiricists ever since:

Now, most of the earliest philosophers regarded principles of a *material* kind as the only principals of all things. That of which all things consist, from which they originally generated, and into which they are finally dissolved, is substance persisting though its attributes change; this, they affirm, is an element and first principle of Being. Hence, too, they hold that nothing is ever generated or annihilated, since his primary entity always persists. (Taylor 80)

Aristotle neatly describes one of science's founding principles, which Craig Dilworth explains in *The Metaphysics of Science* "manifests in modern science" as "the conservation of mass," or the "principal of the conservation of energy" (63). Yet it was Aristotle, two millennia earlier, who determined that a primal, unchanging essence was part of pre-Socratic cosmology. Unfortunately, Aristotle's predilection for analytic reduction introduced a material basis for Thale's statement and Aristotle further ignored another transcendental statement made by Thales and the metaphysical orientation implicit in it:<sup>11</sup>

In the same way they held, nothing else absolutely comes into being or perishes. For there must be one or more entities which persist, and out of which all other things are generated. They do not, however all agree as to the number and character of these principles. Thales, the founder of this type of philosophy, says it is *water*. Hence, he also put forward the view that the earth floats on the water. Perhaps he was led to this conviction by observing that the nutriment of all things is moist, and that even heat is generated from moisture, and lives upon it . . . There are also some who think that even the men of remote antiquity who first speculated about the gods, long before our own era,

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<sup>11</sup> This statement will be discussed in Chapter 9.4

held the same view about the primary entity. For they represented Oceanus and Tethys as the progenitors of creation, and the oath of the gods as being by water, or, as they (the poets) call it, Styx. (82).

Aristotle epitomizes classical reductionism. His exegesis, perhaps not unsurprisingly, conflates Thale's "everything is water" to the necessity for water to sustain life. Kolak thinks Thales did not truly understand Reality but used water to symbolize the epiphenomena of transformation and formation or duality so that, ultimately, all physical manifestations are "different aspects of one and the same thing," Reality (20). Kolak gives a sharply succinct description of the history of ontological philosophy and scientific materialism over the past 2500 years by modifying Thales statement for each era: "Everything is made of water. Everything is made of air. Everything is made of the infinite boundless. Everything is made of fire. Everything is made of numbers. Everything is made of atoms. Everything is made of quarks."

This history aside, most of what we know about the pre-Socratics demonstrates the unity of Greek transcendental philosophy with its natural sciences. The transcendental and the empirical were not opposing domains for the Greeks. The latter was rooted in metaphysics and during Hellenic development, "the long-standing battle in the philosophy of science between empiricists and realists" was not the all-consuming match of wits it became (Dilworth 2). Dilworth argues it is more likely the ancients had access to the transcendent because "what is transcended at one point in time need not remain so — what is at one time hypothetical may become factual" (2) Thus, for the Greeks, the transcendental basis of Parmenides's poem on the one hand and the empirical basis of Pythagorean mathematics on the other were equally relevant to ancient metaphysical discourses that understood levels of transcendence. Science itself "has a metaphysics" of transcendence inasmuch as "physical atoms may be viewed as transcendent with respect to particular empirical laws concerning

gases, while quarks and leptons may be considered transcendent with respect to physical atoms” (3). The Greeks set the stage for Western philosophy to begin a detailed ontological analysis that pinnacle in Descartes’ method as the prelude to the study of mind through phenomenological duality.

### 6.2.2 Cartesian Reductions: Mind and Duality

“Descartes is a more important figure in the history of scientific method” than is often acknowledged (Gower 8). He, like Bacon, “sought to preserve the traditional view that science is concerned above all with knowledge of causes,” and methods “should be devised” to “help us achieve this aim” (67). It is evident that the Western understanding of existential subjectivity owes much to the reductive praxis of Descartes whose *cogito ergo sum*, I think therefore I am, both proved the existence of a self and established its dependence on duality. Descartes’ method of solipsistic skepticism validated mind’s existence by reifying its epistemic experience to the level of ontic existence. Descartes’ Second Meditation claims that while perception is subject to distortion the presence of a knowing “self” is crucial for all cognition. To wit, his Method of a Doubt acknowledges mental phenomena are potentially “non-existent” illusions, yet deception is “absolutely impossible” if a *cogito* does “not itself exist” (19). The Cartesian model claims the only entity “clearly” proven is “a thinking thing, or a thing that has in itself the faculty of thinking,” in other words, human mind (15). After Descartes’ proof, the reduction of reality to the duality of perception, vis-à-vis the subject-object content of mind prompted the development of Husserl’s Phenomenology, and the latter inspired Heideggerian and Sartrean Existentialism.

Phenomenology profoundly influenced cognitive research and modern ontology. Eagleton further states phenomenology, “like the philosophy of Kant before it,” is a “‘transcendental’ mode of enquiry; and the human subject, or individual consciousness” is a

“‘transcendental’ subject.” Unfortunately, the transcendental subject has remained elusive and phenomenology has become stuck in the gyre of epiphenomenal analysis mainly due to overzealous interpretations of Husserl’s oft quoted motto: “Back to the things themselves!” (88). To date, Phenomenology has become a key form of inquiry for the “science of human consciousness” and the analysis of the “deep structures’ of the mind itself” (87). Importantly, the deep structures of mind have not been satisfactorily defined or understood by Western philosophy, and this is where Sarkar’s meditative praxes (explained in Chapter 8) which are dedicated to illuminating mind’s dependence on higher-level consciousness can offer new insights.

While Aristotle initiated taxonomy, the journey away from singularity towards duality was completed by Descartes’s *Meditations* which entrenched consciousness dialectically with mental phenomena. Cartesian methodology reified empirical reason even while the “utility of a Doubt” appeared to detach mind “from the senses,” seemingly delivering it “from every kind of prejudice” (Descartes 19). The apex of this method was the certainty that a self, or ipseity, is required for cognition so that ipseity and consciousness became a subject-object binary. This position quickly gathered steam given body-mind models could utilize the duality of experience to prove a biological basis for consciousness.

Descartes’s powerful duality paradigm likely overshadowed the quandary of singularity at the end of his *Meditations* and the argument that an “infinite” God could be inferred from the mind’s capacity to *think* on “the nature of God” which originated in perfection or singularity (65). According to Descartes, the imagination of perfection (read singularity) is possible because God, being perfect, contains no deception (read duality), and the concept of singularity ipso facto originates in singularity. The elegance of Descartes’s existential argument made his imaginative proof of Aseity exponentially weaker, the final



lines of the *Meditation* embody the principle of sustained concentration used in Tantric and Buddhist meditation, albeit in a distorted sense:

He [God] has at least left within my power the other means, which is firmly to adhere to the resolution never to give judgment on matters whose truth is not clearly known to me; for although I notice a certain weakness in my nature in that I cannot *continually concentrate my mind on one single thought, I can yet, by attentive and frequently repeated meditation, impress it so forcibly on my memory that I shall never fail to recollect it whenever I have need of it, and thus acquire the habit of never going astray* (emphasis added 69).

Descartes's final lines lament how the weakness of anthropical mind limits sustaining concentration on singularity. However, Tantra accepts that trained concentration on singularity provides ipseity an increasing ability to transcend noetic mind by traversing the causal relationship between the different qualities of M.A.I.M. Thus, Tantric meditation ignores the qualia of infinity and strives to eliminate mental fluctuations so that singularity (ipseity) spontaneously reasserts its dominance. This gives meditators a taste of Aseity and makes the issue of memory — itself a binary distinction between what is and what was — irrelevant. Tantric meditation provides subjective proof of what is objectively unprovable by awakening human consciousness to its source. Although I constantly use the term *experience*, with its connotations of phenomenal cognition, does not fit Aseity whose realization is atemporal. Descartes, however, did not possess the meditative techniques which could have proven that existential mind only appears conscious because of the noumenal existence of ipseity. Without this knowledge, the wholesale adoption of the Cartesian reduction and mind's duality has all but fossilized material explanations of mind.

I contend the conflation of mind with ipseity has fossilized the scientific dogma of consciousness existing only in duality. Furthermore, the view of consciousness is an outcome


of cognition encourages epistemic and ontological paradigms that confound ipseity with mental content, bogging phenomenology in detailing mundane perception. In a similar vein, neurocognitive models insist sensory perception generates mind and the attendant awareness that is determined by the *consciousness of* phenomena. Phenomenology's emphasis on understanding "things" forces a vision of reality as ultimately dual and does little to move ontology past binary perspectives. This phenomenological shortsightedness exemplifies Kant's fears of philosophers "constantly mov[ing] around the same spot, without gaining a single step" (Kolak 345).

In summary, although Descartes's 1641 Method of a Doubt introduced a valuable reductive technique to isolate mind from the physical world, the implication of this process went unnoticed for the next 225 years. It was not until 1906 and Husserl's evolution of the Cartesian method via the Transcendental Reduction that the West had a means to analyze the validity of sensory perception and was, after a long hiatus, reintroduced to the transcendental *a priori*.<sup>12</sup> In this respect, the American Transcendentalists, whose "verbose" texts (Miller 4) were the forerunners of modern transcendental philosophy, included Indian ideas that were "transnational and transhistorical" (Pietrantonio 1). The New Englander's, Emerson and Thoreau, intuited ipseity was a part of Aseity: "the human soul is part of the ultimate, the Over-Soul" (Kasturi 1). Their works portended the monogenesis of consciousness that phenomenologists have hesitantly entertained since Husserl reinvented Descartes's reduction and grounded scientific reason in a homogeneous Reality.

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<sup>12</sup> Husserl's *epoché* will be analyzed in detail and contextualized with Sarkar's *pratyāhāra* in Chapter 8.

### 6.3 Modern Problems of Mind and Ipseity


 Ipeity, derived from “the Latin, *ipse*,” is a term for the most basic level of self-awareness, the point at which the sense of “I” becomes cognizant of itself, and has gained popularity in modern neuroscience. Ipeity, according to Dan Zahavi, originates from the early phenomenological philosophy done by “Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and Henry” (114). Certain scientists contend ipseity is synaptic electro-chemical activity creating “complex” survival responses in the organism and establishing consciousness of a phenomenal world for the organism to interact with. This theory of mind requires a biological basis for consciousness and ipseity to exist and is exemplified by neuroscientists who disagree that consciousness or any form of “mind” can exist “independent of the human brain.” (Deshmukh 276).

Whichever view is championed, the need for appropriate methods in grasping the ontology of consciousness was voiced by Thoreau: “I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things” (48). Thoreau’s intuition that the mind’s is unable to penetrate Reality echoes the Cartesian ignorance of ipseity which is simultaneously source and witness of mind. According to Evan Thompson, the Buddhist perspective considers ipseity self-illuminating “or self-revealing” because “consciousness also witnesses its self” and does not require another object for “reflexivity.” Thompson defines consciousness as “luminous, knowing, and reflexive”; it “makes manifest appearances, is able to apprehend them in one way or another, and in so doing is self -appearing and pre-reflectively self-aware” (17).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Thompson's 2014 *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy* is an excellent resource for Buddhist approaches to comparative transcendental science.

*The Thomson Gale Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, “the dominant view” held by the “hard sciences” is a “materialist and reductionist” account of consciousness (158). Material causality proposes mind is the reactive aggregate of the brain’s neurochemical responses to extrinsic and intrinsic physical stimuli. In other words, anthropic mind is a reaction to cellular survival needs predicated on sensory perception. The sensation of physical existence is vitalized by the data coursing through the sensory organs to the mind creating the awareness of embodiment and physical reality. The body-mind is an integral unity in quotidian experience. As such, a disembodied but conscious existence is almost incomprehensible to the mind whose survival depends on the body. Survival of consciousness without the mind and body is a difficult proposition as long as the mind’s primary frame of self-reference is its relationship to the perception of phenomena. This materialist framework essentially suggests consciousness is present only when data (sensory information) is presented to the brain and essentially functions as a CPU.

In this regard, “cognitivism” — the theory of mind modeling cognition on “computation” with the brain acting as “the hardware” — got its impetus in the middle of the 20th century from Norbert Wiener’s pioneering work on “cybernetics” and the Macy Conferences organized by “anthropologist Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and others” who introduced “systems theory” to a “cross disciplinary group” of researchers in 1947 (“Encyclopaedia of Science and Religion” 160). The decline of cognitivism encouraged a return to “naturalism,” the “study of cognition as it actually occurs in living human beings.”

Cognitivism was superseded by Phenomenology via the work of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenology is widely considered an invaluable tool in philosophy because it “seeks to ground everything in the actual experience of human beings” by taking a

first-person, experiential perspective.<sup>14</sup> Modern cognitive studies have shifted “towards neuroscience and evolutionary biology” with “neuro-reductionism” the “dominant position at the beginning of the 21st century” (160). Despite this dominance, there is no certainty that understanding the pathways of neural activity and its correlation to mental activity will “ever explain the nature of consciousness” (161).

Our present “neurobiological perspective, suggests a unified view of the brain-mind-reality.” Neuroecological proponents, such as Jarvilehto, Arthem and Liljenstrom, consider the “organism and environment” a “single, functional system” whereby “consciousness” is understood to be a “biological phenomena” (Deshmukh 276). Unfortunately, certain scientists believe philosophical inquiry into consciousness to be counter-productive, arguing “a precise neurobiology of consciousness is in part impeded by a series of philosophical confusions,” further saying it is “presumptuous” for philosophers to “advise scientists” in areas outside their “special competence” (Searle 1935).

The materialistic model has “objective” merit due to the trend of Western philosophy towards increasing reductionism culminating in the postmodern disavowal of an unchanging self, but empiricists generally ignore the reality that objective research is deeply interwoven with subjective cognition and the limits of scientific apparatus. Although rapid advances in particle physics, coupled with the use of particle accelerators, demonstrates the appearance of matter and energy, contemporary scientists are no closer to creating consciousness and understanding the qualia of subjective experience than they were a hundred years ago. The rise of consciousness studies in the 2000s, including the domains of “psychology, philosophy, physics, sociology, religion, dynamic systems, mathematics, computer science, neuroscience, art, biology, cognitive science, anthropology, and linguistics” amply indicate that

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<sup>14</sup> Phenomenology will be discussed in detail in chapter 8.

consciousness remains the “the most important unsolved problem in science” (“Encyclopaedia of Science and Religion” 158).

In most of the texts published since the nineties, scientists have argued discovering a physical location for consciousness was close at hand. But Dan Zahavi rightly notes the “nature of phenomenal consciousness, the structure of the first-person perspective, and the status of the self” are “the few remaining major unsolved problems of modern science” (3). The term consciousness itself is problematic, “pointing to two rather different directions”: “the sharing of knowledge in common” and “private, internal awareness” (Webb 4). Researching the mind and self is further vexed by conceptions of the fixed or fluid nature of consciousness and ipseity: postmodern philosophers like René Girard and Jean-Michel Oughourlain consider ipseity “not a strictly individual thing” but an abstraction “continually formed in and by relationships between different human beings” (5).

Philosophical and scientific studies of mind and consciousness are accelerating with researchers declaring “the notion of self” and mind as key issues “for a proper understanding of consciousness,” which has become “indispensable” to “disciplines such as philosophy of mind, social philosophy, psychiatry, developmental psychology, and cognitive neuroscience”. The fundamental concern of these disciplines is to give a “successful” account of the self and explain how the “experiential accessibility of the self to itself” occurs (Zahavi 3). Ipseity and mind are troubling starting points because both Cartesian mind and ipseity are poorly understood and come under attack from all corners:

The legitimacy of the concept of self has recently been questioned by both neuroscientists and philosophers. Some have argued that the self is nothing but an illusion created by an interplay of various subsystems and modules in the brain (Dennett 1991; Wegner 2002; Metzinger 2003a). Others have claimed

that the concept of self is a Eurocentric invention with limited historical relevance (Berrios and Marková 2003). (10)

Zahavi says, “Given the recent interest in the subjective or phenomenal dimension of consciousness, it is no wonder that many analytical philosophers have started to emphasize the importance of phenomenology,” while others have recognized the advantages of studying meditators in this field (4). There is tremendous demand for greater understanding of the “cognitive and affective processes that are altered by training in meditation” and why meditators may have deeper insights into ipseity and Aseity than those produced by the natural sciences (Lutz Antoine 500). Thompson notes “neuroscientists now appreciate much of brain activity arises from within the brain rather than being determined by the outside world”; this “intrinsic activity” is still not clearly understood in relation to “our subjective experience[s].” By carefully describing mind’s “stream of consciousness” and its “moment to moment” experiences, phenomenology can help “reveal and make sense of hidden patterns of brain activity.” However, as Chapter Eight discusses, this requires an “exacting exploration of the mind that Buddhists [or Tantrics] use in meditation” (loc. 164).

Presently, the “predominant” use of the term consciousness describes the “inner perceptions” of a “more or less self-contained individual” (Webb 5). This definition has fostered a “growing trend toward interdisciplinary investigation” between philosophy and “cognitive science and neuroscience.” Zelazo, Moscovitch, and Thompson note, “consciousness is such a difficult problem” that “progress in solving it depends on the convergence of ideas and methodologies” (2). These intersections suggest the synthesis of science, psychology, and philosophy is creating a “growing trend towards interdisciplinary investigations,” encouraging “cognitive science and neuroscience” to become “coherent fields” that recognize the demand to “acquire more precise descriptive first-person reports about subjective experience” (Zelazo 2). In this regard, Thompson recognizes the

groundbreaking work of Francisco Varela who was, himself, “a practitioner of Buddhist meditation”, a “cognitive scientist, and neurobiologist.” Varela proposed an essentially emic and etic approach to the mind and brain through “neurophenomenology” to measure brainwave activity through scientific imaging of the brain and correlate said activity to meditators’ phenomenal experiences (loc. 164). I argue a crucial aspect of this PR research is the meditator’s ability to remain detached even while describing the flow of consciousness and contrasting their quotidian physical desires with the mind’s experiences as it progresses towards transcendental expansion. With this in mind, the following section explores the concept of meditative detachment contextualized by Sarkar’s Tantric model of ipseity. It offers a practical conception of this status.

### **6.3.1 Detachment and Ipseity**

Certain psychological behavioral models consider the idea of transcendental consciousness a coping mechanism which helps mind face its inevitable demise with a pleasant delusion of continuity. Yet, scientists and psychologists acknowledge that despite the organic interface of the mind and brain, researchers do not actually grasp why mental actions or desires are frequently unrelated to physical survival or continuation of the self. The mystery of human desire is where practitioner-researchers of Tantra and science can expand knowledge of mind and ipseity. Both disciplines recognize survival drives and higher-level desires in the mind that are unusually complex demanding more than the simple model of sensory action and reaction to understand higher motivations.

Sarkar’s theory of consciousness posits that noetic mind does not experience ipseity while the endless flow of thought and sensations inhibit ipseity’s reflection to binary mind structures as opposed to its own homogeneous existence. Put another way, mind is a phenomenological machine thriving and surviving on duality. Everyday experience proves



how the mind longs for continuity, making subject-object distinctions intrinsic to survival.

The path of least resistance is the incessant experience of duality. I posit a brain in a vacuum completely isolated from external stimuli would employ memory, thoughts, and emotions to substantiate its existence vis-à-vis mental duality. Hence, in an embodied mind, hunger, thirst, and proprioceptive sensations are objectified as extrinsic *happenings*; these objects are then assimilated by the mind and as referential “others” whereby existential mind could certify its own independent being.

A simple instantiation of this experience is hunger. Signals transferred by the vagal nerve to the brain stimulate the perception of hunger which is initially extrinsic to the witnessing self. The sensation is intrinsically associated with both mind and body. In other words, existential mind takes “ownership” of hunger. However, hunger is a purely subjective phenomena; the qualia it produces causes the individual to say “I feel hungry.” In the early phases of hunger the association of existential mind with the feelings witnessed by actional mind is weak so that of hunger has minimal impact on it. When the signals from the stomach intensify, actional mind maintains the objectivated expression of hunger to the degree that existential mind strongly associates with its object of concentration. A person goes from feeling hungry to *being* hungry and may say, “I am hungry.” Intense hunger converts from a cognitive to a self-referential, existential state. Absolute identification with conditions that influence the body cloud the reality that ipseity is unaltered by experience because it witnesses but does not change.<sup>15</sup> Every individual experiences their existential mind engaging and disengaging with phenomena coming within its sensory ambit. Personal experience shows fasting for ten days causes the mind to detach from the perception of hunger. Admittedly, this detachment is partially physiological as the gastrointestinal tract adapts to emptiness. Evidently, mind can disassociate from bodily conditions that threaten its survival.

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<sup>15</sup> This will be detailed in Chapter Six and Seven.

Experiencing ipseity depends on the individual's degree of *a priori* mental attachment or detachment and the ability to move between mundane or transcendental consciousness. Long-term meditators know ipseity is changeless, only the mind changes. Therefore, meditators absorbed in ipseity master their physical responses to all stimuli whether psychological or physiological, including intense pain. The atemporal, non-spatial condition transcends the mind's lower order processing of sensory data which induce pain. Ipseity is the existential witness to these occurrences or the detached observer of the objective experiences that mind undergoes. For example, imagining one's hand on fire causes no pain because existential mind does not strongly identify with the event.

Exemplifying how ipseity could detach from mind is the iconic image of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk's self-immolated in protest of the "Vietnamese Civil War" (Koike 170). Immortalized in a black and white photograph, the meditating monk was photographed enveloped in flames. Eyewitness accounts usually mention his "unflinching demeanor," silence, and "perfect calm as his body was consumed by flames." But the man who captured the moment, war journalist, Malcolm Browne, describes the scene somewhat differently:

At the same time, there was a human element to it that was just horrifying, because the sequence of pictures showed the initial shock of the flames touching his face, and so forth. He never cried out or screamed, but you could see from his expression that he was exposed to intense agony, and that he was dying on the spot (Newton n.pag)

Perhaps it is inappropriate to this Buddhist monk's control definitively proves that his ipseity had transcended his mind. Possibly his existential mind was sufficiently developed to limit the typical uncontrollable agonized responses of untrained individuals to burning flesh and its association with the body. His stoicism does suggest strong detachment from the

body or the action, itself, would have been impossible. Witnessing the mind's often overwhelming desire to survive predicated on a physical body, there is much to suggest the monk's ipseity was dominant. Those who can stomach watching the 2015 ISIS video tape recording the immolation of a Jordanian pilot will see the normal response of a body in flames is frantic motion. If it is impossible to determine the state of the Buddhist monk's consciousness, his silence and steadiness indicates transcendence from normal associations. Likewise, there are countless reports of meditators ignoring the pain of dental surgery without anesthesia, others maintain meditation for weeks without food or sleep, and still others choose their moment to depart the physical body while meditating.

Detachment from existential mind and ipseity's self-realization helps the meditator experience the difference between quotidian perception and Reality. This position is an unusual balance between immanence and transcendence and will be explored in Chapter Nine as Parmenidean monism through the lens of Socratic *eros*. In short, the experience of infinity is found in consciousness. But before we delve into these particulars it is necessary to analyze transcendental and material cosmology

#### **6.4 Cosmology and Consciousness: Whose Truth?**

It is understood that psychological existence requires material resources, and as science and technology improved access to resources, transcendental philosophy was increasingly marginalized which led to the present conflict between metaphysics and physics. Material progress is now the valence of mental progress. Moreover, the instant gratification of physical needs in the developed world has engendered impatience with spiritual praxes that demand decades of discipline and asceticism. Even worse, the general conflation of religion with spirituality and the former's track record of bloody confrontations and intolerance in contrast to apparently undeniable benefits of "objective" scientific theory has done little to

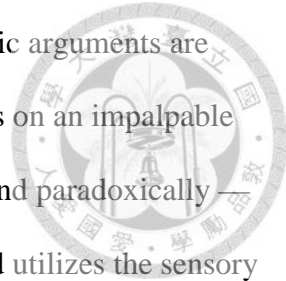
encourage philosophical introspection. As long as the sanitized first world keeps people fed, clothed, and entertained, many consider spirituality irrelevant in a world of endless comforts. When spiritual alternatives to materialism are presented, scientists often deem these ideas tainted by subjectivism, superstition, or bald irrationality. Nevertheless, in line with the thoughts of the ancient Greeks, there is the possibility of a common ground for both transcendental and material positions established via a cosmology that includes plural viewpoints and acknowledges the preeminence of consciousness or materialism has not been answered. Thus, Krauss, the voice of materialism, is forced to admit that “we may never have enough empirical information to resolve” the question of “how our universe could have arisen” (19).

David Cooper points out that “scientific realists,” such as Krauss, and the public who support the idea that “scientific descriptions of the world are true,” are frequently unaware of “the status of those truths” which usually depend on explanations “independent of human conception” (189). Cooper states scientific realists would never accept the “predominant” philosophical “conviction” of a billion people in “India” that the “physical realm” is a “manifestation of *brahman*” (189). He contends philosophers undermine scientific certainty by demonstrating “the complicity of scientific inquiry and its theoretical products with wider, extraneous dimensions of human life and endeavor” or by showing that “scientific inquiry owed its emergence, legitimation, and ‘shape’ not to its rational credentials, but to idiosyncratic historical developments.” Therefore, our scientific “worldview” is “only partly determined by research.” Moreover, Cooper, quoting Husserl, says “the crucial shift,” between conscious experience and scientific realism was orchestrated by Galileo via a movement “away from the world” as “actually given through perception” towards a “mathematically substructured world of idealities,” so that mathematical substructures prescribed the “concerns and methods of science” (191).

Despite these concerns, science has convincingly improved physical life creating the all but unquestioned public faith in the “practical superiority” of scientific theories to overshadow all “other accounts of the world.” Scientific reason, further, elevates its status by “explain[ing] away those accounts” which are empirically unverifiable and further “crediting” scientific reason “with a truth” other theories “lack” (192). In short, science disdains transcendental philosophy, conflates spirituality with religion, and associates the latter’s unverifiable doctrine with all forms of metaphysical understanding. Any “truce” between science and religion tends to balance on careful avoidance.

D.M. Armstrong, in *Consciousness and Causality*, argues the contemporary physicalist viewpoint based on “many centuries of accumulated scientific knowledge and plausible theory,” identifies “the mind with the brain” or the “central nervous system” (106). Consciousness and mind are seen as attributes of the physical structure of the brain; however, these structures inexplicably create awareness of dimensions and thoughts beyond the synaptic and electrochemical interactions required to maintain the body. Consciousness, therefore, is not akin to a memory bank in a hard drive because it transcends memories and even, at times, basic survival needs. It exists in the realm of imagination and experiences unlimited longing mediated by the environmental circumstances surrounding it.

Consciousness is not thought, memory or psychology: damaged neurons found in Alzheimer’s patients causes the loss of memories but consciousness continues unabated, even though psychological expression is altered. Apparently, consciousness is more than a retentive or survival mechanism; its zetetic processes extend into realms that appear to have no connection with physical survival. As yet there is no evidence restricting consciousness to the brain nor does the Lockean formula that “all knowledge is derived from experience and must be tested with reference to palpable evidence” carry much weight when consciousness is not palpable or communicable (Phillips 71).



The indeterminate nature of consciousness suggests that scientific arguments are fraught with contradiction when objective, “palpable” evidence depends on an impalpable subjectivity to ‘ratify’ the object’s existence while, simultaneously — and paradoxically — denying any empirical grounds for subjectivity. We have seen that mind utilizes the sensory organs to categorize objective data. Even though scientists consider electrochemical activity in the brain evidence of consciousness, quantifying or substantiating consciousness with some essence is beyond science. From any rational standpoint, appears purely subjective. Scientists quantify the byproducts of consciousness, not consciousness itself. However, individuals do not question the existential value of our consciousness. Consciousness is the only reality humanity experiences and underpins our epistemic choices.

We have seen that Cartesian logic is founded on the principle that our conscious experience is the only certainty — everything else is propositional. Slavoj Žižek helps illustrate the “paradox at the heart of postmodern theories of identity” and consciousness that insist “subjectivity” is a “dispersed multitude of shifting and unstable identity constructs” which only demonstrates the “necessity of positing a universal, empty, and contentless frame, a formal void” defining the “mad dance of identification” (Johnston 11-12). Žižek’s work is a “revival of the cogito” and he “praises Lacan” for retrieving the “subjectivity first formulated by Descartes and subsequently radicalized by Kant and the German idealist tradition.” But this *cogito* is very much misunderstood within the context of Žižek’s formal void (Aseity/Metaseity). The next step in this chapter is to attempt to define the nature of infinity as the *a priori* basis of a physical universe filled with expressions of Aseity. This requires examining infinity from materialist and transcendental perspectives.

## 6.5 Conscious Infinity or Unconscious “Nothing”?

Physicists consider infinity an empirical nightmare. Mathematically infinity is symbolized by  $\infty$ , the recursive horizontal circles suggests what Dubinsky et al call “potential infinity,” such as the “process of creating as many points as desired on a line segment to account for their infinite number,” whereas “actual infinity” (Metaseity) encapsulates “an object” and every object that exists (Aztekin 150). Tantra and Metaphysics strive to “comprehend” actual infinity not the spatiotemporal dimensionality of theoretical physics which avoids cosmological theories that exclude material space. Atomists theorize that material entities represent the temporary stasis of vibrational fields manifesting in specific forms. On the other hand, every perceptible and imperceptible wave-particle entity in this universe, Sarkar explains, are qualified expressions of infinite consciousness (Aseity), including light, dark energy, planets, stars, black holes, tables, chairs, the human brain, consciousness, and even the words on this page. Sarkar’s model situates consciousness at the highest level of transcendence, yet this paradigm is not in conflict with the causally tiered relationship between Metaseity, Aseity, materiality, and mind. The division of physicist and meta-physicist originates largely from their respective understanding of the essence of infinity — and the causal ordering of consciousness and materialism. As such, the perennial question confronting philosophers and physicists is whether infinity is material or transcendent, matter or thought?

Laurence Krauss’s 2012 work *A Universe from Nothing* is perhaps the most well-known “popular” scientific treatise on physicalist cosmology and reflects the widespread understanding that the universe is the product of nothing but hypothesized dark energy. Because is a scientific mystery, Krauss argues the universe comes from “nothing,” that is a “nothing” which actually has physical materiality. He correctly states “everyone . . . now knows the universe is not static but is expanding and that the expansion began in an

incredibly hot, dense Big Bang approximately 13.72 billion years ago” (3). The first-person to propose the Big Bang theory was ironically a “Belgian priest and a physicist” Georges Lemaitre who had “actually solved Einstein’s equations for general relativity.” Lemaitre “demonstrated that the theory predicts a nonstatic universe” generated from an “infinitesimal point” which he called the “Primeval Atom” (4). Krauss concludes his book with this line: “Philosophy and theology are ultimately incapable of addressing” the “truly fundamental questions that perplex us about our existence.” To ask why there is “something rather than nothing?” may have no more significance than wondering “why some flowers are red and some are blue.” Physical cosmologists present convincing theories that are often based on speculative premises with less substance than the tested experiences of meditators. For example, the philosophical and scientific concept of infinity is not clearly defined.

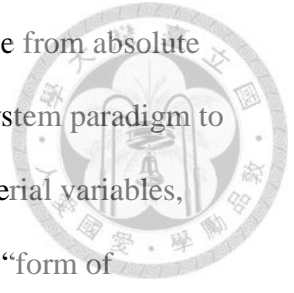
Krauss claims that although a “world without God or purpose may seem harsh or pointless,” that “alone doesn't require God to actually exist,” and while, “our minds may not” easily comprehend infinities,” that does not “tell us that infinities don't exist” (18). His plurality of “infinities” is semantically at odds with the philosophical conception of infinity. Krauss qualifies infinity by claiming the universe “could be infinite in spatial or temporal extent,” but this is neither scientifically demonstrable nor philosophically accurate. Given the Big Bang is the physicist’s equivalent of a cosmological *terminus a quo*, time, *ceteris paribus*, could not have existed for this universe before the big bang set energy in motion. Our notion of time complements a changing universe: while this universe expands, contracts, or remains in stasis time continues. As argued earlier, time is a relative measurement of physical change and anything a priori time is immutable. For this reason, actual infinity or Metaseity is necessarily beyond anthropical perception that is constrained within universal time. I argue universal time has a finite beginning because it measures the space-time continuum of an expanding universe from a *starting point*. Although this expansion may



continue indefinitely and consequently represents practical infinity to the human mind, it is not true infinity as it does not take into account the atemporal situation prior to the Big Bang.

Sarkar states only an infinite singular consciousness can be the source of diversity. Consciousness — not material forms — can be infinitely homogenous. Tim Maudlin notes there is not a single “model of physics” supporting “perfectly homogeneous matter,” and there are “no grounds” whatsoever to “suppose that homogeneous matter is physically possible” (186). Metaseity is incomprehensible precisely because it has no motion and no boundaries. There is no “in here out there” degree of separation, nowhere to go, nowhere to be, no boundaries that can be understood and no subject-object distinction. Regardless of the nature of the differences separating material space from Metaseity, it is reasonable to suggest that expanding material space is qualified. The backdrop to this expansion, the cosmic mind (Aseity) ensconced in Metaseity, is the constant singularity and true infinity. Krauss terms causal infinity “nothingness,” yet this contradicts his idea that the cosmological constant exists within the confines of a closed physical universe ordered by dark energy.

Farzad Nekoogar, Lawrence Krauss, Itzhak Bars, and John Terning’s work of theoretical physics, *Extra Dimensions in Space and Time*, puts the boundaries of the universe at a diameter of approximately “28 billion parsecs” and the “edge of the observable universe at about 47 billion light-years away.” Accordingly, the universe is expanding “1.96 million km/s” which is “6.5 times faster than the speed of light in empty space” (22). The speed of this expansion makes it obvious scientific apparatus or the human eye (which works with light waves) will be unable to catch up with the borders of this expanding universe. Sensory perception does not have the energy to project beyond the universe’s spatiotemporal boundaries— unless it eventually contracts and implodes, making this discussion moot. Accordingly, there is no objective data validating the existence of infinity, but physicists do not hesitate to accept that the universe is expanding.



To delineate and taxonomize the “physical” space of the universe from absolute vacuity or immaterial space (Metaseity), scientists employ the closed system paradigm to enumerate the laws of physics making “physical” space a metric of material variables, including the “curved physical space-times of general relativity and the “form of appearances” (155). Nevertheless, by reducing matter to energy — and energy to the Spherical Wave Motion of Space — this theory proposes that physical space is the single constant and frame of reference applicable to infinity. This inviolable metric is then used to quantify the physical universe, and physicists like Weyl seek this in “the one, unalterable Pythagorean *nature* of this metric, in which the *a priori* essence of space is expressed” (Ryckman 155). Modern physicists believe material infinity is produced by dark energy, but dark energy is not a truly infinite mass.

Krauss explains that the “*best, most accurate prediction in all of science*” is the use of “Dirac’s equation to calculate, to an arbitrarily high precision, the impact on the spectrum of hydrogen of all the possible virtual particles that may exist intermittently in its vicinity” (sic 59). These virtual particles (dark energy) are calculated by “theoretically” deducting them from actual particles in a specific location so that measuring their presence in “empty space alone” (in other words space that has no detectable particles) requires subtracting them from “nothing.” The sum is therefore theoretically “infinite.” Krauss justifiably notes “infinity is not a pleasant quantity” for physicists who “try to avoid it whenever possible” because the “energy of empty space (or anything else, for that matter) cannot be physically infinite” (60). Physicists have striven to find an inferential constant with which to measure dark energy. Deconstructing Kraus’s definition of nothing/infinity shows it is nothing less than the *something* of the mysterious and unproven dark energy/matter existing somewhere in space. Most importantly, if dark energy exhibits wave particle behavior it is something that is not infinite.

The dark energy model suggests that an infinite “immaterial” cause for the universe is actually embedded in the physical universe. This is equivalent to stating our universe could not exist without first being constrained, but what constrained the universe if dark energy did not pre-exist itself? Even if dark energy is the essence generating matter, it does not necessarily follow that it is the infinite container of this universe.

I suggest two ways of looking at the problem of dark energy. The first is to accept dark energy is constrained to our dimensional universe, existing in an inverse relationship to matter. Physics is not capable of proving that dark energy exists homogeneously in dimensional space. With this line of reasoning, claiming the universe exists because dark energy can spontaneously appear from nothing has less credence than proposing consciousness permeates the cosmos. Materialists argue universal law and balance came into being from the chaos of energy as the universe cooled down; this reasoning then segues into the acceptance of cause and effect. Ironically, cause-and-effect must operate in a finite, closed system.

What encloses this system if not a regulatory force that is transcendent to the universe and is, itself, unaffected by cause and effect? Moreover, regulation implies there is an operative awareness (consciousness) inherent in the universe. Krauss claims “the metaphysical ‘rule,’ which is held as an ironclad conviction” that “‘out of nothing nothing comes’ has no foundation in science.” He ends his critique of transcendentalism arguing against the shortsighted “unwillingness” of transcendentalists “to recognize the simple fact that nature may be cleverer than philosophers or theologians” lending credence to a universe from nothing (149). However we have seen that Kraus’s cosmological model is entirely dependent on a something: dark energy. Scientists call this non-anthropomorphized creative force nature. The difference between the transcendental and material perspective on infinity is not merely theoretical but also experiential. Over millennia, self-realized individuals

through intense meditation have experienced consciousness transcend physical limits and expand into infinity.

The second argument against dark energy's status is to consider the ministry of an ordered universe, its accidental appearance, and dark energy. Even Krauss acknowledges the "origin and nature of dark energy" is the "biggest mystery in fundamental physics today." Physicists have no idea "how it originates and why it takes the value it has," no idea of "why it has begun to dominate the expansion of the universe" in the "past 5 billion years or so," or whether that was a "complete accident." Nevertheless, he thinks it reasonable to suggest dark energy is "tied in some basic way to the origin of the universe" (77). Is it possible dark energy is one of many layers of physical expression Aseity expresses before physical creation occurs? Physicists know the universe is expanding implying an increase in qualified manifestation that must appear in the "physical" dimension as an increasing metric. Considering the correlation between thought and anatomical changes in the brain, I speculate an expanding conscious universe is likely increasing the elemental essences that produce energy and matter within a closed but expanding system.

It should be emphasized Kraus's nothingness and Tantra's Metaseity are not scientifically or philosophically aligned. Dark matter, anti-matter, or negative energy are terms used by physicists to define the manifestation of matter from its antithesis, nothing. Yet action and reaction — and the laws of physics — convincingly determine causal relationships between all universal phenomena. The creation of this universe was from an "explosion of matter," expanding from an "infinitely dense space" which within the first second was roughly the size of a marble (Krauss 61); this explosion of matter ostensibly came from nothing. At the end of his work Krauss admits to avoiding "the question of First Cause" and suggests the "simple answer" is that "either empty space or the more fundamental nothingness from which empty space may have arisen, preexisted, and is eternal," an

unusually transcendental argument for an avowed materialist (147). Krauss acknowledges the pivotal issue of creation is that the universe requires “some externality, something outside of the system itself, to *preexist*” which is usually where the “notion of God” or some external “agency existing separate from space, time, and indeed from physical reality itself.” He considers the God argument a “facile semantic solution” to the problem of creation (146) while still stressing the necessity of a “First Cause” for a “universe that has a beginning,” and, finally, accedes that “on the basis of logic alone” a “deistic view of nature” cannot be ruled out. Not unreasonably he argues this deity has no “connection to the personal deities of the world’s great religions” (148).

## 6.6 Transcendent Cosmology: Cause and Effect

The cause and effect model has always been a sticking point for both transcendentalists and materialists, and Krauss could reasonably argue that if Metaseity and its quality of infinite cognition, Aseity, is the cosmological cause, it, too, must have been caused, leading to Aristotle’s infinite regressions. Tantra does away with this conundrum through praxis. While meditating, ipseity leaves mind behind and realizes its unity with every other qualified form of consciousness in Aseity; in this state the meditator has the profound realization that consciousness itself is the container of creation. The problem of infinite regression is done away with intuitively: when Aseity transcends its cosmological stance into Metaseity no further regression is possible because nothing is there to regress. Thus, Aseity knows itself to be the causal cognition, with cosmic consciousness or Metaseity its terminus.

Tantric Meditation proves Aseity’s existence when ipseity ignores anthropical mind and expands into Cosmic Mind. This is not a hypothetical condition, but practical, unlike Kraus’s argument for “multiverses” existing “in a host of extra dimensions” — or existing as a set of “possibly infinitely replicating” universes. Krauss, pleading the possibility of

multiverses, makes the question of “what determined the laws of nature . . . less significant” because each universe may have its own environmental physics, suggesting all the “laws of nature [are] stochastic” (149). Contrary to his theory of multiverses, I contend so-called stochastic laws do not impugn infinite consciousness as the first cause. Each multiverse must have commenced within Aseity as the true transcendental “space” supporting these universes

Hypothetically speaking, a universe with light particles instead of carbon as the building block of existence, populated by entities that transmit information through radiation might not be subject to the same relativity laws governing our universe, but laws that depended on causal forces would undoubtedly apply. These would be regulated by the way light waves behave as they interact with other light waves and space. Regardless of environmental variations, functional laws make it just is likely that infinite consciousness and perception could serve as the non-variable element in a multiverse hypothesis. Unfortunately, the proof of this hypothesis will not be forthcoming while the physics of our universe are bound by the space-time continuum because experiencing other multiverses requires transcending these boundaries. Tantrics argue that only pervasive consciousness is capable of trans-dimensional leaps.

According to Krauss, if the laws of nature are absolutely random, there is no need for a “mechanism” and an “entity” to “fix the laws of nature to be what they are” — thus it “could *be almost anything*” (emphasis added 151). Almost anything seems entirely appropriate in a discussion of consciousness: the human mind, fueled by ipseity’s consciousness, imagines realms that are unavailable to all but the subject witnessing them. The human mind conceives things based upon past experience and does not create anything original within itself. Any individual can sit in a room and create an imaginary universe consisting of chimera and phantasms, empirically nonexistent, but, nevertheless, happening.

It is self-evident that Consciousness can demonstrably use its witnessing faculty to creatively alter the physical world at every level.

Studies show meditation induces actual physiological changes in the brain; thought changes matter. This is not analogous to the material cause and effect of weight training where muscle size increases through an empirically quantifiable increase in stress on the muscles. Meditation employs abstract consciousness, ideation, mantra, visualization, or thought, all of which have no measurable component other than subjective experience. Although it is impossible to determine the precise quality and nature of a meditator's thoughts, a small number of "structural MRI studies" performed on meditators demonstrate "larger brain regions" and "thicker cortices, more brain tissue, and a diminished age-related atrophy." Even more remarkably, "recent longitudinal MRI studies" show "actual meditation-induced increases in gray matter density as a consequence of mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions over eight weeks" (Luders et al. 1308). James Austin attests after eight weeks of regular meditation "increasing mental clarity" and enhanced "introspection, self-analysis, various degrees of intuition, and an incremental ethical character change" begin to manifest in new meditators (10). Quoting Cahn and Polich's review of recent studies on meditation, Austin points out "central nervous system function is clearly affected by meditation, but the specific neural changes and differences among practices are far from clear (13). Therefore, scientific research attesting to thought induced physical changes demonstrates how consciousness affects higher and lower levels of existence and material objects.

## 6.7 Conclusion

In closing this Chapter's survey of mind and Metaseity, I turn to the idea of synthesis between physics and transcendence. Reducing universal cause to immaterial nothing and

mind to consciousness is the intersecting point where transcendental philosophy and praxis can take over. Entertaining the possibility that consciousness precedes or extends beyond the manifest universe makes one religious in the broadest sense, yet the actual exploration of consciousness makes one a spiritual seeker. One of the tasks of transcendental cosmology is to give a convincing reason for scientists to entertain Aseity so as to expedite human understanding and realize purpose where it has been lost. Nihilism couched in the language of science and pessimism is not particularly appealing to most people. However, blind religious belief is untenable when it causes destructive behavior and is easily dismissed by scientists. Truth and knowledge is not about winning a race in which one argument is awarded a gold medal for brilliance. Scientific and transcendental arguments have often fallen into the trap of competition. Sarkar's mission is the bliss of truth gained through experience.

Physicists have long accepted the cause and effect paradigm in cosmology. It is accepted the Big Bang had a cause, and, according to Sarkar, our universe is a thirteen billion year old physical object expanding into the transcendent cause known as Aseity. It can be assumed that Aseity is the witness of its own existence (it is self-illuminated) and is more than the sum of its parts or no expansion would be possible. Transcendent to Aseity lies Metaseity, the "nothing-everything," the ultimate, causeless, primal, incomprehensible, infinite substrate. Metaseity is by definition not limited by the physical space of the universe or even the slight qualification of Aseity/Cosmic Mind. If Metaseity, Aseity, and the universe were practically homogenous within the system there would be no scope for expansion and the universe would already be infinite. Nothing that is expanding can be infinite; motion exceeding infinity is logically incompatible with the concept of Metaseity proposed here. Moreover, an infinite universe would have no beginning. Even if multiple Big Bangs occurred, it would still require boundaries between dimensions within Aseity or Metaseity.



Ancient Tantrics understood the recent discovery made only recently by physicists: “most of the energy in the universe resides in some mysterious, now inexplicable form permeating all of empty space.” This “discovery”, Krauss argues, “has changed the playing field of modern cosmology” (22). Despite this, modern cosmology has not moved beyond a closed model system nor provided a trenchant definition of infinity, and scientists are unable to determine what lies beyond the universe, although undeniably “something” must be out there. So what exists beyond the physical space of the universe? Tantra says it is consciousness. Sarkar asserts transcendental space is the infinite field of homogenous consciousness that underlies physical space: “The singular self [Aseity] is the root mental cause of all the diversities, that is, the essence of all physical and metaphysical diversities is the Supreme One” (Sarkar 9).

Both scientists and meditators work with consciousness to explore the infinity. For the Tantric meditator, infinity includes everything that can be. Multidimensional infinities are an impractical standpoint to take for a materialist because in essence they sidestep the issue of ultimate cause by arguing for anything other than consciousness. After all, Krauss himself admits that in science “any definition is just words” (19). Yet, the very definition of infinity is violated by his proposition of “infinities.” Hence, my new term Metaseity does not qualify *infinity* and is closer to the “nothing” that Krauss argues for without sliding into materialism.

Krauss argues, “invoking ‘God’ to avoid difficult questions of ‘how’ is merely intellectually lazy,” but the same can be said for dogmatic denial of other perspectives simply because they contradict an atheistic stance, which is, itself, deifying “nothing” under the banner of objectivity (20). There is nothing inherently wrong with making “nothing” the God of physics; one name is as good as another, but why deny the evidence that consciousness does cause material change? While scientists rely on sensory perception aided by equipment to enhance their powers of physical observation, Tantric meditators directly work with

concentration and quiescence to expand the active boundaries of mind into ipseity. If repeated meditations can verify the existence of Aseity and Metaseity, Tantra's transcendental science is a viable cosmological praxis. The next chapter details the object and objectives of meditation leading to this understanding.



## Chapter Seven

### The Object and Objective of Meditation



*This chapter introduces Sarkar's science of meditation. Accepting that Aseity is the cause of ipseity and mind, it comparatively considers how the mind realizes ipseity through an appropriate object of meditation. The importance of numinous versus cessative objects of meditation within the Tantric and Buddhist traditions informs this chapter's progressive development of savikalpa and nirvikalpa samādhi. Using the emic experiences of advanced Sarkarian practitioners and Sarkar's teachings it resolves misconceptions on the nature of embodied freedom found in Aseity and the absolute liberation of Metaseity.*

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#### 7.1 Introduction

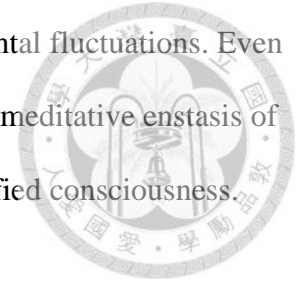
Chapter Six explored Cartesian duality and cosmology from Tantric and materialist perspectives. Duality, as Arne Grøn explains, “implies difference” between the “identity” of objects (124). From the Tantric perspective, the experience of duality sustains the mind as an entity separated from Reality, and, as Thoreau succinctly states, makes mind erroneously “think that that is [reality] which appears to be” (sic 48). Inherent in Thoreau's observation is the difference between monistic Reality and the seemingly iron-clad experience of duality; the latter has been elevated by science as the proposed basis of consciousness. Chapter Eight will detail Sarkar's meditative technique that shows the Cartesian self is a habitual condition derived from subject-object distinctions which ignore ipseity's essential unity with Aseity. It was shown in Chapter One that Sarkar's causal model of mind determines that consciousness is the cause of mind and not vice versa. The ontological experience of this state is attained during Tantric meditation. Thus, this chapter investigates the appropriate *object* of Tantric meditation — the object of concentration — which is not theophanic (or an external entity)

but singular Aseity reached through the withdrawal of mind from duality and its redirection towards ipseity.

Although ipseity is continually present, the possibility of experiencing ipseity without meditative training is slight. It is likely ipseity has moments of being conscious without being conscious *of*. This is the self-illuminating aspect of consciousness introduced in Chapter Six. There are infinitesimal pauses between mind's assimilation of objects when only pure awareness exists, and these lacunas points towards a continued singular awareness, ipseity. Thompson explains this "subtle consciousness" is "not an ordinary 'me' or 'I' consciousness, and is "rarely seen by the ordinary mind" except in "special dreams" and "intense meditation" (Loc. 274). I propose it is not tenable to argue the sense of self disappears from moment to moment, or that ipseity is nonexistent when mind is un-objectified, because ipseity must exist if our zetetic consciousness is able to assimilate a new psychic object. What prevents us from being aware of ipseity? One possibility is that the pauses between mind's movements between psychic objects are too short to deflect ipseity's attention from witnessing the mind towards itself. Given ipseity's consciousness is omnidirectional, it could turn inwards, but the association of ipseity with mind is so overwhelming that without training this seldom happens. This is where Sarkar's meditations and, to a limited extent, Husserl's Phenomenology can help create larger gaps between the consciousness *of* and singular consciousness.

Without ipseity, mind lacks cognitive awareness, and, simply put, would be blind with the brain an automated biological machine. A further argument was put forward that liberation from material causality demands unbroken concentration in order to experience mind as an entity separate from but related to the self, such experience being completely different from the usual condition of automatic attachment to phenomenal duality. Nevertheless, quiescence is ipseity's original ontic state and is awakened by eliminating

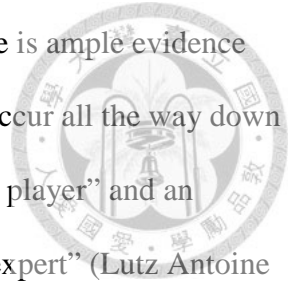
mind's fixation on external objects which minimizes the disturbing mental fluctuations. Even though the mind requires the brain for physical and mental expression, meditative enstasis of the mind within ipseity demonstrates that the latter is a pure un-objectified consciousness.



This chapter establishes how the objects of meditation impact the telos of liberation. It discusses emic and etic research into the science of meditation. A proposal is made for the development of a transcendental science incorporating practitioner-researchers experiences. This is followed by a comparative discussion on the thorny significance of ipseity or *ātman* in Tantric and Buddhist meditation with the argument made that denying ipseity severely restricts the insights of meditative praxis. Once the existence of ipseity is determined, the psycho-spiritual effects of cessative and numinous objects of meditation are discussed. Finally, realizing the objective of meditation in *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* is detailed and suspect conceptions of these states presented to the reader. The ability to enter *savikalpa samādhi* at will is known as *mukti* (freedom) and the attainment of *nirvikalpa samādhi* (Metaseity/*Nirguṇa*) is the permanent liberation sought by Tantrics and Buddhists alike known as *mokṣa*. As a whole, this chapter sets the stage for Chapter Eight which comparatively explores Husserl's transcendental reduction and the process of meditation beginning with *pratyāhāra* (the withdrawal of mind into ipseity). Chapter Nine demonstrates how Tantric *bhakti* or devotion to *Parama Puruṣa* (Aseity) aids the practitioner's progression into *savikalpa samādhi* (ipseity's enstatic absorption in Aseity), and, finally, the highest state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*.

## 7.2 The Spiritual Science of Meditation

Links between etic scientific methods and emic meditative intuitions that adequately explain cosmology are appearing slowly. Scientists are aware that the conscious force



generated by meditators physically alters the brain. More than this, there is ample evidence that quotidian cognitive tasks induce “alterations in the brain” which “occur all the way down to the level of gene expression” so that the “brain of an expert . . . chess player” and an experienced “taxi driver” are “structurally different from that of a non-expert” (Lutz Antoine 522). Evidently, the mind-brain connection is not a one way street: both the number of synaptic connections and the activity that creates them are mutually influential. However, it seems subjective cognitions (as the qualia of consciousness) create new synaptic connections. If mundane activities like playing chess influence the physiological development of the brain, meditator’s deep engagement with singularity must have significant systemic impact. Still, many devoted materialists are convinced there are no “substantive considerations” which “currently block the reductive and explanatory aspirations of the neurosciences,” and these diehard supporters claim empirical accounts are only vexed by ideas derived “from our current ignorance, from our limited imaginations, and from a careless tendency to beg the very questions at issue,” and “we should not be taken in by them” (Churchland 128).

Kriegel argues that overcoming scientific doctrine needs “philosophers” who are “willing to put forth certain empirical speculations, as wild as they may seem, based on their theories of consciousness” so that the “experimental sciences” will take an interest in the “intricacies” of said “philosophical theories” and “attempt to think up possible ways to test them” (54). From the outset, the central epistemological theme of this dissertation has been the importance of practitioner-researchers capable of moving between emic and methodology within consciousness studies and cosmology. We have seen that Sarkar’s causal model of mind dictates that the two fields are united. For Sarkar ontology is cosmology, and research that ignores the emic aspect of meditation by not critically examining the objects of meditation will be hamstrung and the results distorted. For example, in a 2014 study on the impact of Buddhist versus Hindu forms of meditation, Barbara Tomasino, Alberto Chiesa,

and Franco Fabbro demonstrated that different Buddhist meditations stimulated unrelated cortical activity:

Some authors (Manna et al., 2010) studied a group of Theravada Buddhist monks who were experts in both *Samatha* and *Vipassana* meditations.

*Samatha* triggered a wide pattern of deactivations mainly in the left hemisphere and was associated with increased activity in the left and right anterior cingulate cortex, as well as in the right medial anterior prefrontal cortex, while *Vipassana* meditation triggered activations in the left hemisphere (medial anterior prefrontal cortex, superior temporal gyrus and superior parietal lobule). (33)

Hence, I argue that although paradoxical, a subjective, emic methodology is etically objective where consciousness and meditation is concerned. Nevertheless, it is possible and preferable for the meditating subject to suspend judgment on the experiences of the practice until the mind no longer clouds ipseity's self-awareness. None of the etic questions regarding the validity of meditative experiences are ignored, but, at the very least, the influence of mind on the brain should be reduced to mere neurophysiology simply because of entrenched bias against subjective praxis. Effectively evaluating meditation could include aggregating the nuances of meditative trance to reach inter-traditional consensus amongst different practitioners. This is work for the future. Presently, most of the pioneering research into meditation has been conducted without careful consideration of the impact of the objects of meditation from a physical and metaphysical standpoint. It is high time Sarkar's trenchant rationale in support of Tantric meditation is brought into the picture.

Tantrics seek Aseity not for empirical validation of their cosmology, but to actualize ipseity's return to limitlessness or, in spiritual parlance, liberation. Scientists, on the other hand, desire to understand the physical world in order to create a reliable epistemology that

improves material existence. Put another way, the natural sciences satisfy the mind's desire to understand the laws of cause and effect relative to a changing universe, while the spiritual sciences satisfy the desire to transcend change and attain singularity. Nevertheless, these different aims need not prevent spiritual and scientific cosmologies from integrating because as human beings we live in a multidimensional physical and spiritual environment.

Transdisciplinary studies will encourage a contextualized universal epistemology and expand our collective ontological experiences beyond present limitations.

### 7.3 *Sāadhanā*: The Science of Meditation

Part One consistently emphasized that Tantric praxes were traditionally passed on by a Guru or *ācārya*, the spiritual teacher authorized to impart the meditations to new practitioners. George Feuerstein says after “initiation” the practitioner adopts “the spiritual discipline recommended by the guru,” which requires “awareness over unconsciousness, responsibility over negligence, and reality over self-delusion.” This spiritual life is “the yogic path or what the Tantras call *sadhana*.” The term *sāadhanā* is derived from the Sanskrit term “*sidh* (“to be accomplished”), forming the word *siddhi* (“accomplishment,” “attainment,” or “perfection”)” and *siddha* (“he who is accomplished/perfected”)” (112). Sarbacker notes that “*sāadhanā* represents . . . the integration of numinous and cessative qualities” of mind which he claims are “an extension of pre-Tantric conceptions of meditation” (2). While this work does not agree with the latter contention, the crucial impact of numinous and cessative objects of meditation is discussed later in this chapter. Trasi notes that “traditionally, spiritual effort (*sāadhanā*) aimed at achieving Enlightenment” includes “meditative (and other) mental and physical techniques (181).

White states Tantric meditation is “an effort to gain access to and appropriate the energy or enlightened consciousness of the absolute godhead that courses through the



universe,” thereby attaining the “salvation” intrinsic to “the goals of Tantric practice” (7). *Sādhana* defines Tantric meditations leading to permanent emancipation (*mokṣa*). I argue the contents of any meditation will impact spiritual progress, and Sarkar’s meditations efficiently guide the spiritual seeker’s mind to the “ultimate goal” of life, “*moksa*” (Laumakis 150).

Moreover, I contend elements of Sarkar’s meditative praxes, also known as *dhyāna*, are applicable to transcendental systems such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Taoism, amongst others, provided these contemplative traditions share the same soteriology of absolute transcendence and the direct realization of Metaseity.

In this regard, Buddha’s caveat to his disciples was “conditioned states bring no comfort,” supporting my proposal that all conditions, even philosophical, must be eliminated. Laumakis relates Buddha’s injunction to his disciple, Ananda, “conditioned states are impermanent, they are unstable, they can bring us no comfort, and such being the case, we should not rejoice in conditioned states, we should seek to take no interest in them, and be liberated from them” (128). Ricardo Repetti sums up the importance of meditation: “the goal of Buddhism is liberation from mental bondage, and meditation is the primary practice that leads to liberation” (169). Rabindranath Tagore recognizes that the “verses of the Upanishads and the teachings of the Buddha” are “things of the spirit” which “enlarge consciousness” through association of being and its “interpenetration” into all objects” (Tagore 3).

When a meditator enters the first level of awareness, they witness how thoughts spontaneously arise and create chains of association with patterns of memory sparking new thoughts. Furthermore, they see thoughts appearing automatically regardless of their conscious participation. Mind, it should be remembered, is an actional entity, readily performing without much need for our conscious engagement. This can be demonstrated in a simple self-experiment where one eliminates external visual and auditory distractions by closing one’s eyes, plugging one’s ears, and adopting a comfortable position that minimizes

proprioceptive awareness and holding this condition for some few minutes. Next, all active thoughts should be temporarily suspended, including internal dialogue, and even thinking about not thinking. Forget analysis and forgo following any deliberate chains of association, witness only what arises as it arises in the mind.

With only a small amount of practice this experiment conclusively illustrate how thoughts seemingly arise from nowhere and return to nowhere in the unconscious or subconscious psyche hidden below surface awareness. Sustaining such empty awareness may then allow one to direct attention to the deeper and quieter aspect of mind, the observer or true witness of the actional mind. Careful attention will further reveal that this witnessing aspect of mind is completely unaffected and unchanged by the vicissitudes of the usual, busy, everyday psychological life. Deeper concentration gradually announces ipseity's trans-experiential status a process of realization that necessitates the capacity to suspend mental fluctuations. With an appropriate object of meditation, the practitioner can intuit the infinite unity that eclipses the mind's limited cognitive force and projects oneself beyond previous horizons and into the singularity of Aseity. Hence, Aseity is the mediating point between ipseity and Metaseity. Tantric meditators understand that individual ipseity is the power of consciousness residing within embodied beings and should not be ignored.

### 7.3.1 To Be or Not to Be: Buddhism and Tantra

Chapter Two noted some Buddhists and scholars argue Buddhist meditation was independent of Tantra-Yoga. Moreover, researchers such as Larson recognize chronological discrepancies between the second and fourth century C.E. accounts of Patanjali and the origins of Yoga, attributed by "most scholars" to two individuals. The first Patanjali is "the compiler of the *Yogasutrapatha*" and the second the "grammarian" (488). I contend interdisciplinary studies into the different objects of meditation (OMs) employed by India's

transcendental traditions will reveal the argument made in Chapter Three that the meditations of Buddhism and Yoga were originally Tantric. We saw that Sarkar claims Shiva introduced the science of *mantra* and other OM's to Indian culture. "Mantras," Mookerjee says, are indispensable to Tantric discipline" and when "reflected upon" facilitate "liberation" (32). Both Tantric and Buddhist meditators commence with understanding phenomenal cognition. Shaw points out that although Buddhist mindfulness is complicated, its highest levels instill an awareness of "how things come to mind and pass away." She notes how "Saddhatissa describes the application of mindfulness at this stage as 'the most difficult but the most fruitful': an opportunity to see events and the mind that observes them in a completely different way" (142).

Apart from the practical differences between Buddhist and Tantric OM's, philosophically speaking, Buddhism's *Śūnyatā* is equivalent to Tantric *Nirguṇa*. Buddhism shares Tantra's understanding of "the fundamental nature of life" and its "acceptance of vegetarianism, non-violence, asceticism, yoga, *Kamma*, belief in rebirth," and "the cyclical nature of reality and existence" These concepts and principles are a vital part of Buddhism and were extant far earlier in "the Vedic 'vision' of reality (circa 1500-500 BCE)" (Laumakis 28).

Despite these similarities, there are difficulties confronting comparative research into ancient and prehistorical traditions which blended and borrowed from each other. The cross-embedding of Tantric, Vedic, and Buddhist ideas within each of these traditions highlights the problem of ascertaining what can be safely ignored as derivative and what is critically original to the esoteric techniques. For this reason, I propose ignoring sectarian ideology and later adumbrations that overly obscure the original Shiva meditations and, instead, focus on the core philosophical concepts of *ātman* (ipseity) and *citta* (objectivated mind). The former is refuted by Buddhists but recognized by Tantrics even while both traditions attempt to

transcend the latter by employing specific OMs. Nevertheless, both ipseity and mind are contested ideas that strongly influence Tantric and Buddhist meditative praxes. In this regard, Larson proposes that analysis of the Tantras should ignore “sectarian orientation” as one of the principles of Patanjala Yoga is “independence from religious authority” (488).

Furthermore, given Buddha’s encounter with “a large number of meditative techniques” already practiced by “various contemplative traditions in South Asia” which “broadly speaking” considered meditation to be “the search for one’s true self (often called *ātman*),” and despite commentary stating “belief in *atman*” is “completely mistaken,” Buddhist meditation clearly retains “some of the basic principles of inward focus [and] reduction of conceptuality . . . .” (Lutz Antoine 503-04).

Edward Conze highlights the conundrum at the heart of the *ātman* [ipseity] debate in Buddhism: “we cannot be quite sure what notions of an *ātman* were envisaged by the early Buddhists when they so emphatically denied it.” He argues that Buddhist approaches to ipseity were twofold: “the ideas implied in the use of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ by ordinary people and the philosophical opinion held by the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika, that a continuing substratum acts as an agent” outlasting the “different actions of a person” and “abides for one or more existences” to “‘support’ . . . the activities of the individual” (38). However, he notes that the “absence of a self is confined to the five *skandhas*” and “nothing is said either way about its existence or nonexistence” apart from them; furthermore, the Buddha never taught that the self ‘is not’ but only that ‘it cannot be apprehended’” (39).

Buddhaghosa explicitly rejected the notion of a “persistent ego reaping results in one life sown as causes in a previous life, and that it is not a different, and alien ego either” experiencing these actions. He teaches “the latter person (*attabhāva*) is the resultant, the creature, the ‘evolute’ of the former.” Accordingly, the *Pitakas* “categorically contradicted” the concept of a “persistent ego in the words *anekapariyayena paticca-samuppanna* (causally

evolved in various ways) (*Dialogues of the Buddha: Translated from the Pali of the Digha Nikaya* 46).

Rhys Davids, shares my position that the excision of *ātman* [ipseity] from Buddhism led to a great deal of “irrational denial of the man as man; he was reduced to his instruments, body and mind.” In the “original quarrel with the Ātmantist position,” characterized by the Tantric concept “I am *Ātman* or World-Self; He is I; ‘Thou Art That,’” the Buddhist “formula said the contrary.” Buddha taught that “Man was not the Self *i.e.* not ‘God’ because if he were, he could not be subject to suffering, to change, to shortcomings in body and mind; he could will his body and mind, that is his instruments, to be as he would have them to be” (*The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Sanyutta Nikaya) or Grouped Suttas Part III viii*).

The thorny issue of *ātman* and ipseity in Buddhism has been bogged down by millennia of interpretation but something seems to have been forgotten in this process. According to Sarkar, “Buddha did not say anything specifically about *Iishvara* [Aseity]” and his “views about *ātman* were vague,” but he “clearly rejected the Vedas”; therefore, “the doctrine of Buddha was branded as atheism.” Buddha never “explicitly mentioned” Aseity, yet he “never denied *Iishvara*” (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 263). Sarkar says when Buddha was asked “*Kim Bhagavata atthi* ‘does God exist?’ He “remained silent.” The reworded question “*Kim Bhagavata natthi* ‘Then does God not exist?’ was also met with silence. Buddha’s reticence was interpreted in three ways. Some thought that since Buddha did not answer the question about the existence of God he was an “atheist.” Others took his silence on “Does God then not exist?” to imply he was a “theist, a believer in God.” Another more introspective group realized Buddha “preferred to remain silent” because “God’s existence is beyond the *saṃkalpa* [mental determinations] and *vikalpa* [language of words and ideas] of the human mind, and so beyond the scope of *atthi* [existence] and *natthi* [non-existence].”

Although Buddha did not “use the term *jīivátmá* [ipseity],” he said “*Attáhi attānaṃ natha*” which has two interpretations: “one is the Lord of one’s own self” or “*ātman* is the Lord of *ātman*.” Sarkar argues the latter “is more acceptable” as the “Prakṛta language” uses the word “*appan*” to “generally . . . indicate one’s own self, while the word *attá* is mainly used in the sense of *ātman*, or soul.” Evidently, it is almost impossible to “conclusively prove that Buddha did not accept the existence of *ātman*, and there is sufficient scope for controversy on this point” (264). Critical to the inclusion of Aseity in Buddhism is the common knowledge that “Buddha clearly and firmly supported the doctrine of rebirth,” and, therefore, accepting this denotes the acceptance of “the existence of *ātman* also.” Who would “take rebirth” if the “*ātman* is nonexistent?” (265).

In 1957 Sarkar compared Buddhism and Shāun̄kara philosophy and proclaimed that “all theistic Indian philosophies unanimously believe that Ātman [ipseity] or unit consciousness is a continuous flow of Jñāna or knowledge” (par. 1). Thus, “according to yoga philosophy Paramātmán [Aseity] or Supreme Consciousness is an infinite flow” of knowledge. Because “Lord Buddha did not use the word Ātman” there was a “difference of opinion among the . . . Buddhist monks after his death” and “three conferences” were held to “compile the Tripitaka or Buddhist scriptures”, which then led to the division of Buddhism into the southern and northern schools of Buddhism. The northern school or Mahāsámghika developed “four kinds of philosophical doctrines” primarily because of the “difference of opinion” on “ātman and its object.” As “Bhagaván [Lord] Buddha use the word ‘Attá’ in Páli for Ātmañ,” and the “word Attá is also used in place of ‘Self,’ the monks “could not understand the sense in which Bhagaván Buddha used the word Attá” (Sarkar "Buddhism and Shāun̄kara Philosophy" par. 1-6).

I will forgo further discussion of the issue, proposing instead that Sarkar’s ontology demonstrates a causal link between mind and ipseity. Furthermore, once ipseity transcends

mind it knows itself as Aseity; this “knowing” is then ultimately eliminated in Metaseity, the unqualified absolute. According to Sarkar, there must be a tangential link for the unit consciousness (ipseity) to traverse expressed Aseity and non-expressed Metaseity. Sarbacker points out the “preparatory stage of meditation” in Buddhism also teaches the practitioner that *Śūnyatā* is “identified as the origin of all phenomena and the highest metaphysical reality” (114).

Before Metaseity can be realized, the Tantric is trained to ideate (think) on a single object that symbolizes the spiritual objective of Aseity. J Singh says “there are two basic characteristics” of the “thinking process”: at a particular instance mind can “think of one and only one idea” and this thought is “constantly being translated into human biology” that modulates its “behavior, physiology” and “even anatomy” (46). Likewise, Sarkar teaches the “innate characteristic of the human mind to become as it thinks — *Yādrshii bhāvanā yasya siddhirbhavati tādrshii*” ‘As you think, so you become’ Therefore, associating “oneself with *Parama Puruṣa* [Aseity], the Supreme Entity, is the actual *sāadhanā*” (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 119).

### 7.3.2 The Objects of Meditation

Given that what the mind perceives and thinks shapes our very existence, Tantra prepares the practitioner for the experience of the transpersonal via ideating on a spiritual object of meditation. This is an object or idea constructed and visualized in the mind during periods of extended concentration. These OM’s take different forms depending on the teachings of the guru but it must be remembered, as pointed out in Chapter Four, that the effect of an OM infused with subtle force by a *Sadguru* is particularly powerful. Certain schools of Buddhism incorporate “the image of the Buddha” or other “embodied images,” hoping to establish a “relationship between practitioner and divinity” similar in many respects

to Tantric praxes (Sarbacker 12). What traditions consider a suitable OM is frequently vexed by dogma and the misapplication of spiritual theory, limiting the object to theophanic symbolism often derived from the transformation of Shiva Tantra and Buddhism over millennia. However, Sarkar states spiritual force not belief determines the overall effect of the OM on the mind, and his OMs are spiritually designed to aid the meditator in freeing themselves from the constraints of mind.

Sarkar teaches the OM unites objectivated, actional, and existential mind in a single thought to quantifiably impact its expansion towards ipseity. The degree of subtle spiritual force the OM carries aids in establishing the practitioner in a steady state of enstasis which is a significant part of liberatory meditation. Thus, practitioners should heed Buddha's injunction not to believe "something" based on "who said it or where they heard it or where they read it" but to follow it if "it accorded with their own experiences"; experience can only be derived from a critical examination and emic engagement with different transcendental traditions (Laumakis Preface). Obviously, it is impossible for a practitioner to explore every tradition, and this is where an etic analysis of transcendental historiography, coupled with a sound philosophical rationale, can determine how to privilege certain OMs that guide the mind on the journey to Metaseity as opposed to the merely dogmatic.

Sarbacker's *Samadhi: the Numinous and Cessative in Indo-Tibetan Yoga*, contrasts praxes leading to *samādhi*, arguing Indian and Tibetan traditions were influenced by social, religious, and scholastic elements. I contend these elements distorted the original Tantric meditations by adding extraneous ritual, religious spectacle, and competition with other schools:

In the context of yoga and meditation, this is exemplified by the fact that even those textual and oral traditions that appear to emphasize the meditative dimension of religious life may be scholastic or second-order traditions that are



characterized as much by doctrine and ritual as by contemplation or meditation. Ideas regarding meditation have developed in a plurality of contexts, often taking shape in both dialogue and tension between different sects and schools, reflecting a process of mutual exchange and interdependence” (2).

Undoubtedly, “disparate traditions” have “independently developed techniques” leading to a “similar outcome,” yet this does not devitalize the empirical effect of specific OM’s on the mind (Lutz Antoine 501). One of the traditional measures of the power of an OM is the degree of detachment the practitioner gains from personal psycho-physical suffering, then burgeoning compassion, and the growth of intuition. Obviously, the qualia of this development are subjective and judged by each individual in testing circumstances.

Although Tantric schools clearly distinguish the function of their OM’s, many practitioners from other transcendental traditions and etic researchers are unfamiliar with the causal connection between OM’s and liberation. The “common problem with the literature on meditation” is that “boundaries” are ignored and “some vague universality in human experience” is emphasized (Zelazo 501). Both from a spiritual and research standpoint, practitioners and researchers must understand the links between the OM and its objective before embarking on lengthy practices or study. The next section explores the effects of two types of OM’s.

### **7.3.3 Cessative and the Numinous Objects of Meditation**

Many Buddhists utilize OM’s Sarkar considers nihilistic or cessative. Theoretically, Buddhist OM’s realize the nonexistence of the self via detachment from thought and the cultivation of “control over mental states that undermine freedom” (Repetti 2). The *Sayings of the Buddha* teaches the meditator to live “independently, not holding on to anything in the world” (Gethin 142). Sarbacker describes two types of Buddhist meditation (1) the numinous

OM linking consciousness to “the world-surmounting power of divinity” typically found in Tantric sects and (2) cessative OM’s whereby mind is decoupled from objectivated mind and freedom is reached “through separation from phenomenal existence” (1). Cessative techniques are typically practiced as OM’s of pure nihilism; they do not acknowledge Aseity’s existence, making the transition from ipseity to Metaseity extremely difficult in Sarkar’s opinion. There are also potentially harmful psycho-spiritual effects that arise from the misapplication of cessative techniques.

Understanding what an OM does to the mind is not a simple affair, although certainly the element of cause and effect is at play. In this regard, the Buddha taught some of his monks the “foulness meditation” and then he went to spend “some time in solitude.” The foulness meditation induced such extreme bodily shame into the minds’ of the monks that they embarked “on a series of mass suicides — with as many as thirty monks killing themselves on one day” (Shaw 107). Scholars (if not Buddhists) are uncertain if “the Buddha made some kind of mistake” or if the foulness meditation “was the only medicine that would work” for these monastics. Later Buddhist commentary suggests the Buddha intuited his monks were going to face a “violent” end by “either killing themselves or others” so he gave them the option of how to end their lives (17). This explanation notwithstanding, Buddha’s “general position” on “suicide” was that the practice was “wrong.” Kalaphana claims the incident resulted in more than sixty monks willingly submitting themselves to be killed by “Migalandika,” a sham recluse, “on a single day.” Noticing the absence of his monks Buddha sought out the cause, and he subsequently “proclaimed the third *pārājika*,” the “monastic rule prohibiting taking human life” (108). From the debate surrounding the foulness meditation as a nihilistic meditative technique, and regardless of the Buddha’s supposedly motivations, it is clear what is meditated on has a powerful psycho-spiritual effect not to be taken lightly. Moreover, the disturbing outcome of the foulness meditation highlights why Tantra’s more

esoteric praxes were kept secret and only transmitted by competent teachers. Inayatullah notes that Sarkar created Ananda Marga “with the intention of spreading basic Tantra meditation practices” across the globe so that this secrecy does not limit access to these important praxes (22).

To return to our discussion of an OM of nothingness, Sarkar states existential mind invariably perceives and assimilates objects while the former is operational. In effect, meditating on emptiness will associate existential mind with the empty “content” of objectivated mind — an abstract idea not readily grasped without actual practice. An instantiation of a negative OM is seen in the “gaps” between the shift in perception from one object to another, but meditators who concentrate on the gaps between perception do not enter is not enstasic or ecstatic trance. Instead, they cling to the stasis of objectivated mind which is temporarily pleasurable due to the decrease in mental wavelength and increase in steadiness, but mind remains and ipseity continues to witness mind making *savikalpa samādhī* impossible. However, Sarkar explains that “[*savikalpa*] *samādhī* is neither a positive nor a negative state of mind,” but “a state of equilibrium” after mind disappears (*Yoga Śādhana* 158). Therefore, repressing thought or sustaining static emptiness does little to help mind associate with Aseity.

Different OM's characterize the theoretical and practical differences between Tantra and cessative Buddhist sects. Tantra holds that liberation requires transition from personal to transpersonal consciousness via unbroken concentration on a numinous object. Cosmic Mind or Aseity is the bridge between immanent ipseity and transcendent Metaseity. Meditating on Aseity requires a positive OM in the sense that it symbolizes the “objectified” (only in theory) transcendent entity, and the OM fixes mind on a singularity which becomes, in due course, the true subject. Devotion or *bhakti* is the glue that intensifies attraction towards

Aseity; hence, paradoxically, desire and detachment go hand-in-hand on the path to liberation — if and only if the OM is empowered by the *Sadguru* to elevate ipseity.

Why is it that numinous OM's have such great spiritual effect? Tantra states that the *Sadguru* infuses spiritual force into specific Sanskrit words or mystical images. Sarbacker points out that a key aspect of *sādhana* practice is the “description of iconographic images . . . used in the visualization of Tantric divinities” (114). Furthermore, Samuel notes “many forms of Tantric ritual” require the practitioner identify “with the deity” meditated on (162). In relation to the spiritual power of an activated mantra known as ‘mantra *caetanya*,’ Sarkar’s discourse “Mantra Caetanya” quotes Shiva’s instructions:

*Caetanyarahitāḥ mantrāḥ proktāḥ varṇāstu kevalam Phalaṁ naeva prayachanti lakṣakotijapaerapi.* In order to make a mantra ‘live,’ the individual rhythms have to be made parallel to the Cosmic rhythms. Then the starting point of expression of the unit [ipseity] will have to be made to coincide with the starting point of expression in the Cosmic field

The Sanskrit apothegm says “if this has not been done . . . even hundreds of thousands, even millions, of repetitions of the mantra will not lead to mantra *siddhi*” (par. 14).

It has been stated that the *Sadguru* can infuse numinous mantras or images with a spiritual vibration that when meditated upon creates a parallel mental resonance. As concentration deepens the mind stills, and the objectified portion of mind holding the OM in unbroken concentration begins to merge with actional and existential mind. The known, knowing and ever present become pinpointed in the mind, and each layer of mind is absorbed into a higher level until ipseity realizes its continuity with Aseity. Hence, Tantra eliminates the epiphenomena of noetic mind, merges ipseity in the singular awareness that “I am the Universal Soul” (*savikalpa samādhi*) and this, in turn, opens the final gateway of *nirvikalpa samādhi* into Metaseity accessed through a secret OM provided by the *Sadguru*. In short,

meditating on nothing is inefficient and possibly useless for liberation. Sarkar explains this condition as follows:

The mind takes the form of the physical object or psychic idea it encounters. This assuming of a form in the mind is called ‘psychic pabulum’ or *ābhoga*. Unless the mind is liberated from its pabulum, permanent peace is not possible. How can one attain liberation from one’s pabulum? Liberation cannot be attained through repulsion. Repulsion towards an object is a negative tendency — this too is a kind of pabulum. Although the mind detaches itself from its object, it is nevertheless attached to the nonexistent form of that object. When the mind withdraws from its object, the *citta* becomes suspended in unmanifested *Prakṛti* due to the attainment of *vashīkāra siddhi*. This is not a supreme attainment. This state of *saṁādhi* is neither static *saṁādhi* nor *nirvīja* (seedless) *saṁādhi*, nor *samprajñāta saṁādhi*. Within the *citta* there remains the possibility of future rebirth, even after a million years, and thus the attainment of permanent *saṁādhi* (*kaeṇvalya saṁādhi*) is not possible. (*Yoga Sādhana* 165).

Meditating on nothingness or “*shunya dhyāna*” creates an object of negation in objectivated mind so that the “spiritual aspirant develops a psychic pabulum of nothingness.”

A spiritual aspirant attains the state of *videhaliina* as a result of *shunya dhyāna* or ideation on nothingness. Through such ideation a *sādhaka* develops a psychic pabulum of nothingness. Yet even in this state there remains the possibility of rebirth. Those who embrace nothingness as their absolute goal develop a void in their *citta* in the absence of Cognitive Faculty. As a result they are unable to establish themselves in the Supreme Cognitive Stance and

attain salvation. The spiritual cult which encourages this practice is certainly defective. (165)

Sarkar explains that meditating on “nothingness” as an “absolute goal” creates a “void” in objectivated mind. How can this be a true experience of Aseity? He advises that any “spiritual cult” encouraging nihilistic meditations “is certainly defective,” and the meditator will not “attain salvation” (165).

In closing the section, Tantric philosophy states liberation is more likely when the OM, to use Sarbacker’s terminology, is numinous and fills the mind with a spiritually illuminating force that guides the practitioner in an unbroken flow towards the infinite ocean of bliss and pure Being (Aseity). Cessative meditation lacks this vigor and is antithetical to the human desire and potential to merge with Metaseity.

#### 7.4 The Objective of Meditation: Samādhi and Liberation

We have seen Tantric cosmology posits Aseity to be a transcendent, although slightly qualified entity while Metaseity is absolutely infinite. Practitioners realize Aseity in *savikalpa samādhi* and Metaseity in *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Furthermore, the OM expediting these *samādhi*'s should be numinous and infused with a *Sadguru*’s spiritual force. Buddhist and Tantric philosophers acknowledge that Metaseity is inexpressible, and the two traditions primary ontological difference is their position on Aseity or *ātman* (Ipseity) — often used to refute Buddhism’s debt to Tantra-Yoga. This refutation is apparently the product of commentary centuries after the Buddha’s departure when some Buddhist scholars defined liberation as a nihilistic term for Metaseity because Buddha refused to qualify enlightenment, or explicitly address the issue of Aseity.

Buddhism’s philosophical refusal of Aseity notwithstanding, there is a paradox in experiencing bliss without the presence of a conscious entity. If ultimate reality is ineffably

blissful, something like witnessing Aseity must be present to substantiate that state. Tantrics argue “truth is reached” by going “through the dualistic world,” and merging into “the current of divine bliss by changing duality into unity” (Pandit 10). Evidently, the temporary qualification of ipseity generates the experience of duality. How can a non-entity experience bliss or “unification”? Bliss is experienced in ipseity’s oneness with the infinite Cosmic Mind of Aseity. Only the state of Metaseity is completely unqualified and beyond noetic mind, ipseity, and Aseity. Thus, the waves of bliss experienced during ipseity’s unification with Aseity indicate that despite the necessity for detachment from the conditioned reality demanded by Buddhism, the penultimate state of *savikalpa samādhi* is not nihilistic. Indeed, Tantric philosophy requires the same detachment from physical phenomena with all desire channel towards numinous Aseity.

While Zen Buddhism frequently favors a non-ideational or nihilist form of meditation that eliminates “suffering,” caused by “a set of correctable defects” affecting the “mental states of untrained people,” Tantra prefers numinous praxes that accord with the minds need for an object of concentration (Lutz Antoine 503). On the one hand, non-ideational meditation involves naked attention to still the mind, on the other hand ideational meditation utilizes mantra and images training “focus on an object for a theoretically unlimited period of time” (504). There is no denying that ideational and non-ideational praxes have a demonstrable impact on self-development, but, I contend, similarity between the spiritual object and objective coupled with a grasp of transcendental ontology will expedite liberation.

I would like to close this section on the objective of meditation with the emic perspective of my mentor as mentioned in the preface, one of Sarkar’s senior Tantric monks, Acarya Mānavendrānanda, on the impact of specific OMs:

The point seems to be . . . why meditate in this manner and why is the goal attained in this way? Why meditate upon the Form of the Guru, and why is

*Nirvikalpa Samadhi* attained through such practice? We understand that the transcendent states of *Savikalpa Samadhi* and *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* are the goal of First Lesson and Sixth Lesson, respectively. These states are the two fundamental yet different aspects of the Supreme Subjectivity. The purpose of *sadhana* [meditation] is to attain perfection in order to please *Parama Purusa* and assist Him in completing the task for which the Universe has been created, i.e. the permanent emancipation (*mokṣa*) of His innumerable unit beings.

Mind, which cannot exist without an object of its focus, cannot meditate directly on *Saguna Brahma* [Aseity], what to say *Nirguna Brahma* [Metaseity]. Therefore the mind must be given a very subtle and absolutely perfect representation as the object of meditation. The key element, then, in attaining perfection in *sadhana* is to have a perfect mental object combined with perfect ideation or conceptualization of that mental object — and absolute concentration upon or absorption with that perfect mental object.

In first lesson, the perfected mental object retains a connection to the Self. When total absorption in the object is achieved, that now perfected connection to Self yields *Savikalpa Samadhi*, One-ness with *Saguna Brahma*. *Saguna Brahma* certainly knows Himself. The practitioner awakens to the knowledge of their own Self as identical to the Supreme Self, the Supreme Subjectivity. This result is a natural course and follows the fundamental law or principle of Tantra Sadhana, which is — Oneness of Objectivity gives Oneness of Subjectivity.

The same process and concept applies in the practice of *Dhyana*, or Sixth Lesson, but with a very important distinction. The mental object or representation, as before, must again be absolutely perfect. However, for



realization of the Unqualified Supreme Entity, *Nirguna Brahma* [Metaseity], the object must not only be perfect but must have no connection whatsoever to one's individual Self. Therefore the Tantric Sages understood the sole object for the practice of *Dhyana* is the form of the Guru. Only the Guru can meet both criteria for the practice of *Dhyana*, where *nirvikalpa samadhi* is the goal. The Guru is perfect, and He is not our "Self." He is the giver of that ultimate state of perfection. The key element, then, in attaining perfection in *Dhyana* is to forget one's self. Total absorption in the object being achieved in this way, where one's self is forgotten, is the state wherein the Grace of *Taraka Brahma* takes its Divine Role.

In the most sublime way, a mystery of mysteries, *Saguna Brahma* takes one of His units beyond Himself into the absolute state of perfection, *Nirguna Brahma* . . . and in so doing, as Baba explains [Shrii Sarkar], He (Saguna Brahma) enjoys the greatest possible bliss. As Dada Chandranthji would say to me over and over and over, "Only He, Only He, Only He."

(Mānavendrānanda)

#### 7.4.1 Savikalpa Samādhi

The relationship between ipseity and mind is both the cause of bondage and the means of liberation with crude thought sustaining limitation and subtle ideation developing the expansion of mind. Tantric meditation guides ipseity towards enstasis by traversing the mental limits preventing ipseity's cosmic perspective. Sarkar's position is that Aseity is not the object of ipseity's perception; rather, the reverse is true. Because ipseity is the product of Aseity's consciousness. Experiencing this is *savikalpa samādhi*: I and the Infinite Being are one, literally "I am That." On the other hand, from the individual perspective, it is not

possible to actualize this perspective without mind first objectifying Aseity vis-à-vis a meditative construct such as a mantra or ideation and total absorption in spiritual ideation. Sarkar explains that “*Brahma*,” as “an abstract entity, can only be appreciated by mind in objective expression.” Thus, to realize *savikalpa samādhi* mind first “objectifies” Aseity (consciousness), followed by merging egological subjectivity into ipseity to discover Aseity is the true witness of mind, ipseity, and Reality.

The meditator who achieves *savikalpa samādhi* has no bodily awareness, no sense of duality, and knows an omnipresent omniscience. Access to Aseity’s cosmic mind saturates ipseity and upon reawakening the meditators mind manifests occult knowledge or abilities. The Tantric experience of Aseity in *savikalpa samādhi* confirms that Cosmic Mind is infinite and projects itself throughout the cosmos to create reality. This can be tested. According to Sarkar, during the enstatic “determinate trance of absorption,” the meditator removes the eight mental “fetters” including, “(1) hatred, (2) doubt, (3) fear, (4) shame, (5) censure, (6) attachment, (7) vanity of culture, (8) false sense of prestige.” Once these limitations are removed, the practitioner realizes “I am *Brahma*” (Aseity) and unity with every mind. In other words, during *savikalpa samādhi* the meditator is cognizant of every ipseity simultaneously. It is as if every cell in the body becomes aware that it was the sum of every other cell, and each cell is simultaneously the nexus of bodily consciousness. Ipseity will not experience *savikalpa samādhi* while it focuses on mental phenomena. Although Aseity is the ontic cause of the universe, it remains opaque to ipseity while mind’s incessant fluctuations misdirect ipseity’s awareness towards phenomenal duality.

We have seen that ipseity’s awareness of mind, and the relative “smallness” of this existence, instills a sense of “individuality” in the mind. Sarkar explains that “*sādhana*, or intuitional practice,” is the “effort to break through the barrier of this smallness.” Moreover, ipseity is bound by the activity of *prakriti*’s activities which establish the three states of

consciousness: “the waking state, the dream state, and the state of deep and dreamless sleep” Thompson notes these “three principal states of the self” come from “the Indian tradition” as the “world’s first recorded map of consciousness (loc. 383). If these states endure, ipseity is deluded, but after deeply sustained concentration on singularity, the illusion lifts allowing the practitioner to enter the fourth state of consciousness known as “*Turiya*” ‘non-duality’ or “*Kaivalya*” ‘absolute identity with [Aseity]’ (*Subhāsita Samgraha: Part 2* 71-72). This experience of Aseity is also known as “the state of pure awareness” (Thompson loc. 383). What follows is Sarkar’s description of *savikalpa samādhi*:

During the first stage of *Savikalpa Samadhi* the sense of “I” feeling still exists and so also does the process of cosmic imagination of the universe in its vastest scope. But when the *sādhakas* attain the zenith of this state, they gradually enter a realm beyond the reach of action and thought. At that time they regard their own characteristic Self as the absolute, Supreme Consciousness, devoid of good and bad. They do not then appear to themselves as the doer; rather it seems to them that they are but non-active witnesses to all the affairs of the universe. (95)

During the first phases of entering *savikalpa samādhi*, mind perceives a self-relational unity with Aseity so that some sense of self-presence remains. When meditation synchronizes ipseity with Aseity through mind’s “cosmic imagination” of a numinous OM, mind becomes completely absorbed in the OM. With dedication and sufficient practice the blissful experience of peace, characterized by “non-active” witnessing of “all the affairs of the universe,” awakens ipseity to its long dormant place in Aseity and *savikalpa samādhi* ensues (94).

### 7.4.2 *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*

From the above *Savikalpa samādhi* is understood as the state of omnipresence and omniscience attained when ipseity transcends mind's spatiotemporal limitations and actualizes its own infinity. Given there is no material counterpart to infinity, Cosmic Mind is the meditator's sole referential experience of infinity Sarkar describes *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* experiences as follows:

'Due to my limitlessness I have no body, no *indriyas* [sensory systems] and no intellect. Being always established in the Supreme Consciousness [Aseity], sin and virtue do not exist for me. I have no birth and no death; My existence is not dependent on earth, water, fire, air or ether.' This is how *sādhakas* [practitioners] in the state of [*savikalpa*] *Samādhi* feel when they realize their characteristic Supreme Self [Aseity], lying covert deep within their hearts; when they realize the pure consciousness [Metaseity], the witness-Brahma Himself. He is unique and pure, for He is beginningless and endless. In the absence of anything outside Him. He is without a second.

Being above the influence of *Prakṛti* [force] and without any action, any contraction or expansion, He (Metaseity) is the single Absolute Truth. He harbours no distinction, whether homogeneous, heterogeneous or internal. To reach this ultimate and absolute stage of homogeneity is the Supreme attainment of a *Sādhaka* or spiritual aspirant. (94-95)

Ken Wilber claims the Hindus call "*nirvikalpa samadhi* 'imageless awareness'"; the Tibetan Buddhists use the term "hzin-dan-bral-pahi sems, 'mind freed from all thought-concepts,'" and Chinese Ch'an or Zen Buddhists call it *wu-nien*: "the Mind in a state of 'no-thought.'" Thus, according to Wilber, "dualistic thought, which negates reality, must itself be negated" (*The Spectrum of Consciousness* 41). Wilber's definitions are philosophically

questionable. Talking about *nirvikalpa samādhi* in the Hindu, Tantric, and Zen sense is inexact and Wilber's contention that *nirvikalpa samādhi* is "imageless awareness" is a poorly worded definition introducing misconceptions. The meditator is surely not aware during *nirvikalpa samādhi*. There can be no self in *Nirguṇa* [Metaseity] which is the complete dissolution of Aseity into Metaseity. Nothing can be said of the Metaseity because there is no mind present. Singh says *nirvikalpa samādhi* is the "total transformation of mind into the Supreme Self," and "the mind ceases to exist. The self is merged into Divine Consciousness. There is no trace of duality," and a "state of objectlessness" is totally "beyond mental comprehension" (168). One could counter that semantically Singh's reference to a Supreme Self suggests *Nirguṇa* is aware, but the human mind does not exist in Metaseity; thus, what portion of the self is experiencing awareness? Even more damaging to Wilber's definition he further claims in *Eye to Eye* that Buddhism considers *nirvikalpa samādhi* the "high-causal of formless" *samādhi*; the "stage of effortless insight and beginning . . . the eighth of the ten ox-herding stages in Zen" is followed by another stage whereby consciousness passes "through *nirvikalpa samadhi*":

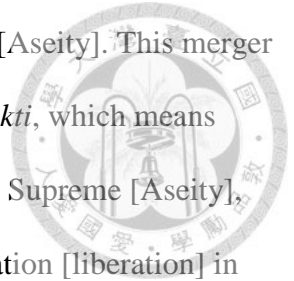
Consciousness totally awakens as its Original Condition and Suchness (tathata), which is, at the same time, the condition and suchness of all that is, gross, subtle, or causal. That which witnesses, and that which is witnessed, are only one and the same. The entire World Process then arises, moment to moment, as one's own Being, outside of which, and prior to which, nothing exists. That Being is totally beyond and prior to anything that arises, and yet no part of that Being is other to what arises. (63)

Attaining the "tenth" stage, according to "The Heart Sutra," the meditator realizes "Form is not other than Emptiness, Emptiness is not other than Form" (63). Wilber claims the highest *samādhi* is "*sahaja*" or the "ultimate Unity, wherein all things and events, while

remaining perfectly separate and discrete, are only One” so that “Consciousness” is differentiated from all “forms” in a Perfect Transcendence, which is not a transcendence from the world but a final transcendence as the World.” Furthermore, this is “the ultimate Unity toward which all evolution, human and cosmic, drives” (*Eye to Eye: the Quest for the New Paradigm* 64).

In effect, Wilber has inverted liberation, putting the cart before the ox, by elevating *sahaja samādhī* and positioning *nirvikalpa* as a stage on the way to *sahaja*, yet Sarkar’s descriptions of *savikalpa samādhī* are equivalent to Wilber’s *sahaja samādhī*, making *sahaja* the penultimate state of liberation. Sarkar, reflecting on Shiva’s words, says “where the worshiper, the worshiped and the worship unify themselves into one” there is “*sahaja samādhī*.” *Sahaja* is derived from the “prefix *saha* plus the root *jan* plus the suffix *da*” and means “easy.” Quoting Kabir, Sarkar explains, “*Sādhu sahaja samādhī bhalī* ‘the seeker attained *sahaja samādhī*,’” and “*Jīvātama* [ipseity] and *Paramātmā* [Aseity] are born together” (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 81). Connecting ipseity and Aseity to *sahaja* strongly supports the position that *sahaja samādhī* and *savikalpa samādhī* are the same state. Although Wilber accurately describes Aseity’s transpersonal expression of Cosmic Mind which establishes the unitary perspective, there is another troublesome element to his description of *nirvikalpa samādhī*: he claims liberation is a return to being in the world while not of it. This is not *mokṣa* in the transcendental sense but *mukti* ‘qualified freedom’ because the presence of a self remains. In this regard, Sarkar’s description of *mukti* in “What is the Aim of Humanity” is worth reading in full:

The wish of the Qualified Supreme Entity [Aseity] is to obtain merger with the Non-Qualified Entity [Metaseity] or the supreme rank for every one of Its units. This is not fulfilled on merger of unit consciousness [ipseity] with It either through the effort of doing *sādhana* [meditation] or in the natural course



of the flow of the thought-waves of the Qualified Entity [Aseity]. This merger with the Qualified Supreme Entity [Aseity] is termed *mukti*, which means freedom from the movement of the thought-waves of the Supreme [Aseity], from the creation. This *mukti* or freedom is not emancipation [liberation] in reality. Unit consciousness [ipseity] emerges out of the subtle Qualified Supreme entity [Aseity] in Its thought-waves and re-enters the *Srśticakra*, or *Brahma Cakra* (Cycle of Creation, or Cosmic Cycle) [reality], returning again to the path of emancipation [liberation]. So such a *mukti* [freedom] is not complete emancipation [liberation], since the intention of the Qualified Supreme Entity [Aseity] to achieve the non-qualified status for each one of Its units [ipseities] has not been fulfilled.

Freedom from the bondage of *Prakṛti* [force] is the merger with the Non-Qualified Supreme Entity [Metaseity] or attainment of the supreme rank, and that is termed *mokṣa* [liberation]. Merger with the Non-Qualified Brahma [Metaseity] relieves one from the influences of the Supreme *Prakṛti* [cosmic force] and She [cosmic force], not being able to influence That [Metaseity], will be incapable of dragging one [ipseity] into the creation. The unit [ipseity] will thus be relieved of its journeys through the creation, fulfilling the purpose or the intention of the Qualified Supreme Entity [Aseity]. Hence the aim of human beings is not to merge with the Qualified Supreme Entity [Aseity] and obtain *mukti* [freedom]. It is higher than that. The aim is the achievement of the supreme rank, that is, obtaining *mokṣa* or *kaeṇvalya mukti* [final liberation].

(*Ānanda Mārga Elementary Philosophy* par. 3-4)

Tantric philosophy notes embodied beings are unfit for normal activity during both *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* because there is no individual self in *savikalpa samādhi*

and no individual or cosmic mind in *nirvikalpa samādhi* to display agency. Nevertheless, there is the possibility of remaining in an attenuated semi-*samādhi* condition during everyday activities, but *nirvikalpa samādhi* is a state of complete and absolute transcendence, and individual agency is incompatible with Metaseity. Metaseity is, therefore, not a state of mind and indescribable. Sarkar teaches the sole proof of Metaseity's existence after the "utter destruction of the mind" in the ultimate state of "vacuity" materializes post-*nirvikalpa* when the meditator's "mind returns due to unserved *saṃskāras*" (the yet to be experienced reactions to past actions) because the mind experiences "trailing waves of exhilaration and joyous exuberance" helping the meditator realize their "'mindless' state had been one of absolute bliss" (Anandamurti 1-23).

*Acarya* Chandranath Kumar, the Tantric saint introduced in the preface to this work, was one of the first initiates of Sarkar and the only individual I have met capable of entering *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* at will. Kumar was interviewed by Devashish Donald Acosta for his book *When the Time Comes* which details Kumar's insights garnered from fifty years of *Viśeṣa* Tantra meditation which Kumar practiced a minimum of three hours per day.<sup>16</sup> When asked about the nature of *jīvanmukta* a 'realized soul' Kumar replied:

*Jīvanmukta puruṣh* means one who has no attachments to his personality or to his personal requirements. They think of the Cosmic Entity [Aseity] all the time, even when they're not in meditation. They never think of themselves or their self-attached objects . . . A realized soul means one who is capable of merging their unit mind [ipseity] into that Cosmic Mind [Aseity] at will . . .

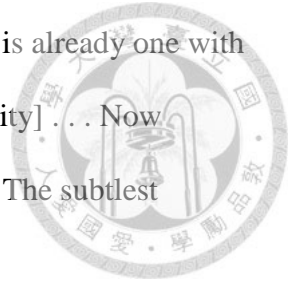
*Sādhana* [meditation] is the effort to merge the unit mind [existential mind]

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<sup>16</sup> *Viśeṣa* Yoga is an advanced system of Tantric meditation taught to advanced adepts in AM.



into unit consciousness [ipseity], and unit consciousness is already one with Universal Consciousness or Cosmic Consciousness [Aseity] . . . Now consciousness is so subtle that it cannot be separated . . . The subtlest existence is completely indivisible. (128)



Kumar says Tantric advances this egoless actualization via a withdrawal of the mind from “external objects” and merging mind into “unit consciousness [ipseity].” When this happens it is reabsorbed “into the point from which it has emerged” and “becomes one with Cosmic Consciousness [Aseity] because unit consciousness [ipseity] cannot be separated from Cosmic Consciousness [Aseity].” The meditator becomes a “realized soul,” and, “if they so desire,” may “leave their body at any moment, anywhere, according to their will (128).

Apropos of *mukti* versus *mokṣa*, Kumar explains “mind still exists” in *mukti* but in *mokṣa* the meditator has “merged their unit consciousness into [Metaseity]” endowing them with “the authority or the capacity to stay or to go.” What follows from this is that liberated beings are unable to “live in this body, or on this earth, unless they will it, and to remain embodied they will into existence a karmic determination such as, ‘I will stay on for two years so that I can do this work.’ Otherwise they will leave the body and go away.” Consequently, the liberated take “a vow, a sort of promise or resolve, but this cannot be done by someone who has achieved *mukti*.” The key difference being that the practitioner who has achieved *mukti* “can sit in [*savikalpa*] *samādhi*, they can be one with the Cosmic Mind [Aseity], they can tell you many things, they can perform many miracles, but they do not have [the] capacity which the realized soul has” to merge with Metaseity (128-129).

To resolve what Basham rightly calls the “controversy” regarding “whether the absolute and ultimate entity is ‘without characteristics,’” (in other words “*Nirguṇa*”) or “‘with characteristics,’” ‘*saguṇa*,’ is possible only when we understand what is meant by the ultimate entity (53). Chakrabarti correctly states “Brahmam [Metaseity] is devoid of all

characters (*nirguṇa*) and modifications (*nirvikara*) (165). This work has consistently tried to resolve the terminological confusion springing from different transcendental traditions. Thus, Buddhist terms like “*nirodha*,” which, according to Sarbacker, is the Buddhist term for “cessation,” and Tantric “*nirguṇa*” which share the Sanskrit prefix *nir* ‘not’ joined to the root *guṇa*, are contextualized by of the total abnegation of ipseity in Metaseity. If we consider Kumar’s experience, Sarkar’s teachings, and the Sanskrit definition of *Nirguṇa*, ‘without attributes,’ Metaseity unequivocally transcends all qualifications, attributes, and mental or material descriptions. Philosophically (and practically) the meditator will not realize this “entity” unless Aseity enters *nirvikalpa samādhī* and transcends Cosmic Mind.

## 7.5 Conclusion

Chapters Six and Seven detailed Cartesian duality and material accounts of mind versus Tantric description of singularity expressed as both immanent ipseity and transcendent Aseity. I reviewed how the scientific incorporation of Cartesian duality limited the *cogito* to a neurobiological condition arising from phenomenal stimulus. It was shown that cognitive research correlates mental activity to effects on the brain’s neural circuitry. Thus, neuroscientists map stimulus to brain anatomy in an attempt to taxonomize the effects of cognition and establish a physical base for consciousness. However, the stimulus-response model is substantially destabilized by the presence of ipseity without phenomenal duality.

While researchers can evaluate neural responses to thought, they are unable to empirically ascertain the qualia of meditative experiences or even what it feels like to be conscious without considering the subjective, emic experience. Given neuroscience consistently fails to measure the qualitative experience of mind, it is unlikely that neurobiological and behavioral ontological models of consciousness will succeed if materialists ignore the causal relationship between ipseity and mind proposed by Sarkar.

Although materialists fend off theories of transcendental consciousness, claiming subjective experiences are not objectively scientific, Sarkar, acknowledges that the brain supports mind's physical expression, but, as we have seen, his model proposes consciousness precedes the mind and the brain. Evidence drawn from the long history of meditative traditions suggests transpersonal consciousness is not fantasy but attained through proper training.

The pivotal idea of both Chapter Six and Chapter Seven is that ipseity is a pure witnessing causal state giving mind its existence, although this is obscured by the strong attachment mind has to survival predicated on phenomenal duality. To overcome this, Sarkar provides objects of meditation and a clear objective to inspire the mind's awakening envisaged by Thoreau's John Farmer who thinks to "practice some new austerity" in order to "migrate" from his present condition (104).

It was also shown that the dogma of a material-dependent consciousness is assumptive and ignores the insights meditators cultivate in "absorption in" their "own essence" (Bansat-Boudon et al. 275). Enstasis, absorption in the self, or standing within, facilitates realizing Aseity — the conceptual equivalent of the universal self or God consciousness — otherwise known as *Saguña Brahma* or Qualified Supreme Consciousness. Moreover, this chapter's exploration of *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi* indicates, as Glenn Friesen notes, that the correct understanding of enstasis in Aseity, which is typically misinterpreted when reading Eliade's *Yoga*, is "more similar to *sahaja samādhi*" or "the experience of one who is liberated but still engaged in life" (Friesen 4). Hence, *savikalpa samādhi* and *sahaja samādhi* are correctly understood as *mukti* — not the *nirvikalpa samādhi* of Metaseity.

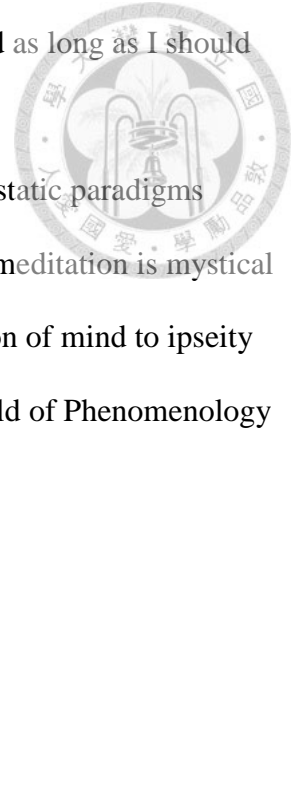
To sum up the hypotheses presented in Chapter Seven, it can be stated that (1) experiencing Aseity in *savikalpa samādhi* grants the meditator a spiritual bliss known as *Ānanda* which requires the existence of both ipseity and Aseity. If Aseity (Cosmic Mind) is

transcended, the permanent liberation of *nirvikalpa samādhi* is attained in the ineffable, inexpressible, and absolutely quiescent Cosmic Consciousness, Metaseity. (2) While most of India's transcendental traditions share the soteriology of liberation, the correct object of meditation requires the meditator systematically withdraw their mind from mundane phenomena and merge objectivated, actional, and existential mind into a numinous OM infused with spiritual force. (3) Arthur Avalon states in *Tantra of the Great Liberation* "there is but one thing that all seek — happiness" (cx1). Permanent bliss arises in *mokṣa* when the practitioner merges with their object of meditation to become "one with the Deva worshiped." The "real *moksha* . . . is unconditioned and permanent" when the "modification of the energy of consciousness is extinct, and when it is established in its own real nature" as the "state of *jivanmukti*" (cxlv).

Finally, the emic Tantric perspective states Aseity is the cause of mind's never ending desires which are satisfied once infinity is realized after ipseity and Aseity merge with Metaseity. Shyam Sundar Goswami states in *Layayoga* that "the mind operating at the sensory level is the root cause of all the worldly knowledge. If the mind is dissolved there will be no more worldly knowledge. Therefore, keep the consciousness fixed on the Supreme Being in deepest concentration." Tantra says *Samādhi* is "that state in which consciousness is only in the nature of the object concentrated on, and is still like the flame of a lamp in a windless place, and from which gradually the feeling of the action of concentration and I-ness has disappeared" moreover, "The form of consciousness developed in super concentration, is not void or nothing, though it is object-less and I-nessless, but there is that bliss which is beyond any worldly pleasure, and is full of power . . . [that] is *samādhi*" (63). It was the great Tibetan Tantric-Buddhist Guru, Milarepa who used the Sadguru as his object of meditation to reach liberation: "Accustomed long to meditating on my *Guru* as enhaloed o'er my head, I have forgot all those who ruled by power and by prestige" (loc. 5122), and, further, "as for

my *Guru*, “I could always meditate on him above the crown of my head as long as I should live” (Evans-Wentz loc. 3572).

Presently, modern Western philosophy lacks the enstatic and ecstatic paradigms contained in Tantra and Buddhism. Although the language of Sarkar’s meditation is mystical and the practices esoteric, the next chapter argues that Sarkar’s reduction of mind to ipseity radically transforms Husserl’s Transcendental Reduction — and the field of Phenomenology now dominating Western philosophy.



## Chapter Eight

### Husserl's *Epoché* and Sarkar's *Pratyáhára*:

#### Transcendence, Ipseity, and Praxis<sup>17</sup>



*This Chapter proposes an evolution of Edmund Husserl's transcendental epoché (reduction) by integrating P. R. Sarkar's Tantra sádhaná (meditation), which engages ipseity as both the subject and the object of consciousness. First, I explore some of the recent philosophical and scientific obstacles that confound the transcendental reduction. Following this a Tantric trajectory for Husserl's first science of consciousness is examined by combining Sarkar's 3 shuddhis (reductive concentrations) in pratyáhára (mental withdrawal), effecting an experience of noumenal consciousness. Integrating Husserl's phenomenology with Sarkar's spiritual praxis reinvigorates the transcendental epoché and emphasizes practice in a field both undermined by logical positivism and dominated by the scholasticism of Husserl's protégés. The efficacy of a meditative approach is supported by Husserl's admiration of Buddhism.*

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### 8.1 Introduction

Edmund Husserl's transcendental reduction attempts to analyze noumenal consciousness by bracketing the "natural attitude" and mind's experience of objectified phenomena via the discipline of *epoché*. Following Descartes, he believed restraining the mind from naïve sensory objectification would make phenomenological meditation the first philosophy, finally articulating "the relationship between being and consciousness," and freeing philosophy from the fetters of psychologism and human subjectivity (Gable 3). In 1931, near the end of his career, Husserl states in "Phenomenology and Anthropology" that

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<sup>17</sup> This chapter was published in a slightly modified form in *The Journal of Comparative and Continental Philosophy* and is reprinted here with the permission of Maney Publishing.

“philosophy as a genuine science” can lead to the “pure *a priori*” enabling individual philosophers to attain a “radical self-responsibility” and an “autonomous philosophy” (*Phenomenology and Anthropology* 2). Furthermore, he declared: “Every genuine beginning of philosophy springs from meditation, from the experience of solitary self-reflection” (*Phenomenology and Anthropology* 4). Regarding Husserl’s position, David Smith rightly argues the phenomenological reduction is a crucial practice that remains, in Husserl’s words, “poorly understood” despite being the foundation of Husserl’s philosophy (181). Therefore, this chapter contends contemporary “phenomenology,” which, in Husserl’s words, is the meditative “study of consciousness from the first person point of view,” will continue to be misunderstood and linger in hermeneutical readings unless meditative praxis is elevated to the status Husserl intended (189).

The scarcity of contemplative praxis amongst academics is unsurprising given contemporary philosophy’s focus on scholasticism and the philosopher’s hesitancy to intrude into science. Nevertheless, both science and philosophy battle to comprehend the nature and ontology of ipseity. Husserl used *ipse* as early as 1929 in his Paris lectures (*Pariser Vorträge*) under the title “Introduction to Transcendental Phenomenology”<sup>28</sup> (*The Paris Lectures* lxxvii). This chapter utilizes ipseity as the preferred term for the transcendental Ego or the pure, un-objectified “I,” now adulterated by ego and spatiotemporal considerations arising from Heidegger and Sartre’s existential phenomenology. Typically, scientists consider ipseity a byproduct of the brain’s neurochemical activity and, as such, consciousness is the sole purvey of neurocognitive science. In contrast to this perspective, important distinctions between ipseity and mind are raised in this chapter, and, furthermore, I suggest future interdisciplinary debates about cognition and consciousness will be facilitated by adopting the term *ipseity* in general use.<sup>29</sup>

The natural sciences avoid exploring non-duality, criticizing phenomenological studies that eschew empirical paradigms and warning against subjective idealism. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find scientific criticism dogging any philosophy claiming that a transcendental method is the true foundation of empirical thought. Moreover, phenomenologists confronting postmodern perspectives are urged to resist accounts of human subjectivity that deviate from historical and social imprint — the postmodern subject is a centerless subjectivity, a mass of conflicting drives and desires mediated through neurobiological and social systems that shape its Being. These critiques notwithstanding, Husserl reasoned ontological enquiry should begin with the subject's consciousness stripped of psychological and cultural content. Both Husserl and Sarkar make ipseity the pole of human subjectivity *qua* the first ontic witness of the mind and its substructures, explored vis-à-vis the transcendental reduction.

Peter Koestenbaum's insightful introduction to his translation of Husserl's *Paris Lectures* calls "the 'center' of transcendental consciousness" an "'I-pole,' a core from which all intentional streams of experience radiate." It is the "perennial observer of anything within transcendental consciousness or the transcendental realm." Husserl calls it the "transcendental Ego or the transcendental subject" and claims it is "not only passive." Koestenbaum suggests Husserl's emphasis of this witnessing faculty does not adumbrate human consciousness with causal existence in which "I experience myself as an agent or creator." Ipseity witnesses the mind's engagement with objects encountered when ipseity's field of awareness perceives objects, making it a detached "spontaneous initiator" of objective relations (*The Paris Lectures* L). Similarly, Sarkar's perspective on ipseity's non-attributional witnessing closely parallels Husserl's as we saw in his causal theory of mind. To reiterate, Sarkar explains in the second volume of his *Discourses on Tantra* that ipseity has 3 divisions whose "collective name . . . is mind or *antahkarania* or introversal psychic force"



(*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 7). Sensory and mental vibrations (*tanmātras*) as perceived by existential mind and acted upon by actional mind are formed in a portion of the mind called objectivated mind. “In order to “see anything” there must be an “I” that “exists”—our existential feeling or “*mahattattva/buddhittattava*” [existential mind] capable of perceiving an action by being present (Ānandamūrti *ĀNanda MāRga Elementary Philosophy* 6).

Nevertheless, ipseity is very much in the “background” of everyday consciousness; it is the silent witness to the ceaseless assimilation of vibrations by mind. The activity of assimilation predominating quotidian consciousness leads to the development of mental systems such as memory, imagination, and language that transpose consciousness of duality on ipseity.

To escape duality, Husserl’s reduction, practiced in its simplest form, attempts to isolate ipseity from external sensory stimulus by focusing only on mental content.

Koestenbaum states: “Only through distancing, bracketing, and reflecting” is an “object” seen “as it is in itself” and “divorce[d]” from the “projections of practical reason and the interpretations of our synthesizing consciousness” (Husserl *The Paris Lectures* xxi).

Unfortunately, Husserl’s frequently quoted maxim, “we must go back to the things themselves,” routinely segues into the simple reduction of mental objects and infinite categorizations while disregarding ipseity as *the thing itself* to be studied (Husserl *Logical Investigations* xxiii). In his introduction to *Cartesian Meditations*, Husserl, echoes Descartes: “the meditator keeps only himself, qua pure ego [ipseity] of his *cogitations*, as having an absolutely indubitable existence . . . something that would exist even though this world were non-existent”(Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology 3). According to Burt Hopkins this statement has been incorrectly modified to assume that Husserl’s “Cartesian starting point” equates “being’ with “being known” in the absolute sense (1). The error, I argue is then to skip the transcendental reduction of ipseity in favor of the phenomenological reduction of objects. Husserl argues that although “transcendental

phenomenology” might be called “neo-Cartesianism,” it is “obliged . . . to reject nearly all the well-known doctrinal content of the Cartesian philosophy” (*Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* 1). The doctrinal content under question is whether Descartes’s *cogito* contextualized by modern phenomenology is equivalent to Husserl and Sarkar’s conception of ipseity.

Arguably, the transcendental reduction is poorly understood because meditating on transcendental consciousness is fraught with “overtones of objective or absolute idealism, mysticism” and necessitates the type of mental discipline found in the spiritual praxes of Tantra Yoga and Buddhist meditation (Husserl *The Paris Lectures* LV). The deepest insights of meditation are rarely attained after months or years, but only after decades of consistent daily practice. Moreover, even these sincere attempts may not produce consistent results if the methodology and theoretical basis of the meditation are illogical or dependent on incompetent instructors. Research into these areas of logic and competence is also complicated by the restrictions India’s spiritual traditions place on disseminating meditation without guidance from qualified teachers: academic interest is not a qualification for initiation into Tantric or Buddhist practices, severely curtailing comparative research. Nevertheless, the comparisons between Husserl’s transcendental reduction and Tantra’s *pratyáhára* are distinctly evident to those with practical knowledge of both. Koestenbaum posits that “Vedanta and Sankhya” offer “analyses of the transcendental Ego that share a profound similarity but are “more “trenchant and sophisticated than those of Husserl.” He thinks it “doubtful that Oriental philosophy influenced Husserl directly,” nor does Husserl “acknowledge . . . the profound similarity between his view of the transcendental Ego and such famous Sanskrit formulas as ‘*tat twam asi*’ (that art thou), ‘the *Atman* is the *Brahman*,’ as well as the relations between the *Atman* and the *jiva* . . .” (Husserl *The Paris Lectures*

xlvi). However, Koestenbaum finds “interesting connections between Husserl’s “theory of reductions and certain meditation exercises in Yoga” (lxxiii).

These connections will be explored in the final section of this chapter with the argument that Sarkar’s Tantra actualizes the reduction of mind through *pratyāhāra* and the three *shuddhis* by exposing human consciousness to its noumenal source. In this regard, Sarkar contends ipseity is a qualified aspect of an infinite field of consciousness called *atmán* or Aseity which generates all “mundane objects, crude, subtle or causal” and underlies their “substantiation and recognition” by their reflection within ipseity’s mental field (Anandamurti 2). While the juxtaposition of Husserl’s ontological science to Sarkar’s spiritual praxis may at the outset appear disconnected rather than contiguous, a metaphysical orientation to phenomenology will be shown in this chapter to have precedent. Husserl respected and admired Buddhist philosophy, itself, fundamentally influenced by Tantra.

## 8.2 Obstacles to Transcendental Phenomenology

A major stumbling block in the transcendental reduction of ipseity is the temporal awareness that Husserl’s most important protégés, Heidegger and Sartre, employ to qualify its existence. The prolix complexity of their work encourages hermeneutical studies rather than praxis, propelling contemporary research into spatiotemporal theories of mind. In short, the transcendental reduction of ipseity has been waylaid by intentionality or awareness of the objective world encapsulated by Heidegger’s conception of *Dasein* prior to the 1940s.

Husserl’s transcendental reduction is particularly limited by Heidegger’s early focus on *Dasein* or Being (ipseity) in its essential consciousness of the world. For Heidegger ipseity exists in an objectified, ready-given world. According to Hubert Dreyfus, Heidegger tried to “break out of the philosophical tradition”; he wanted to “get beyond the subject/object distinction” and argued for the existence of “a more basic kind of experience” (2). However,

duality is not overcome as Heidegger's "basic experience" is contextualized by temporal flux. To a degree, Husserl, himself, acknowledges temporality in quotidian consciousness, but this is likely predicated on an incomplete analysis of ipseity detailed later in this paper. To continue, Heidegger's dyadic relationship is of ipseity grounded in the phenomenon of time. Further inculcating duality into the reduction, Heidegger opposes Husserl's claim "that a person's relation to the world and the things in it must always be mediated by intentional content, so that one can perform a reduction that separates the mind [and ipseity] from the world" because Heidegger's perspective is that temporality is ineliminable from ipseity (Dreyfus 2; Ānandamūrti *Ānanda MāRga Elementary Philosophy*). Therefore, Heidegger's use of "being" never refers to a "transcendent Being" (Heidegger and Stambaugh xiv): time becomes the only "possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being" (xix). In this manner, Heidegger veers from solid subject-object distinctions to an abstract subject-time dyad. His explanation of understanding Dasein in *Being and Time* follows:

The task of an existential analysis of Dasein [ipseity] is prescribed with regard to its possibility and necessity in the ontic constitution of Dasein. But since existence defines Dasein, the ontological analysis of this being always requires a previous glimpse of existentiality. Thus fundamental ontology, from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the existential analysis of Dasein.

(Heidegger, 11)

Dasein's existence is qualified by its consciousness of time. Heidegger's "fundamental ontology" is the valence of "all other ontologies," and depends on the "existential analysis of Dasein" derived, primarily, from a "previous glimpse" of existence. If by a "previous glimpse," Dasein (ipseity) is cognizant of a mind in flux which validates its present independence by relation to what was, temporality and Being are infrangible. Therefore, it

follows Heidegger could not accept a transcendental reduction dividing ipseity from temporality and its consciousness of “worldly subjectivity”(Luft 142).

My criticism of Heidegger’s temporal Dasein must, in all fairness, be contrasted to Heidegger’s later development of *Gelassenheit* described by Bret W. Davis as “‘releasement’” and “‘twisting free’” from the “entire domain of the will and the leap into the region of non-willing letting-be that is otherwise than both will-ful activity and will-less passivity” (168-69). Davis holds *Gelassenheit* refers to, in Heidegger’s later thought, a “state of mind attained by way of profound existential or religious experience of letting go, being let, and letting be” (169). In Heidegger’s “turn,” he posits the Western history of human beings and the “Absolute” should be “understood as Will.” *Gelassenheit* is then a condition that seeks out a new relation between Dasein and being, between human and world, that shifts “Dasein’s temporal projections of the meaning of that being” towards “the event of the truth of being . . . as determined through its historical ‘sendings’” (175). Interestingly, when contrasted against the zetetic detachment of ipseity discussed later in this paper, “Willing . . . involves a dynamic movement of going out beyond oneself and conquering”; Heidegger calls it “‘being-master-out-beyond-oneseif.’” Davis suggests this movement outwards is for an “expansion of the subject, an increase in its territory, its power” (173). A relationship between *Gelassenheit* and ipseity might be tentatively contextualized by Heidegger’s suggestion that the core “essence” of human being “radically precedes and exceeds the will” because *Gelassenheit* is “a non-willing fundamental attunement to and correspondence with being” akin to ipseity’s emergence from Aseity (175). Yet, despite Heidegger’s turn from temporal will, we are still not free of duality: *Gelassenheit* includes “taking care of things by sparing and ‘properly using’ them” implying some consideration of spatial objectification (179).

Jacques Taminiaux in *Metamorphoses of Phenomenological Reduction* explains that Husserl's reduction "combines two moves . . . suspending what blocks the way to the phenomena" and "a return — a *reduction* — to the specific mode of appearing of the phenomena" (9). Taminiaux, quoting Husserl, says the first is a "deliberate disregard of 'the entire world, nature, physical and psychological, as well as putting "one's own human ego . . . in question . . . their being, their validity are suspended" (21). The annihilation of space and ego ensures the study begins with the "primal self-given cognition"; this Cartesian self is where the phenomenologist begins the "return to immanence" (22). This movement is problematic because ipseity's Cartesian stance appears philosophically sound to modern phenomenologists who, biased by the Cartesian definition of the self, skip over its further reductions and focus on objectified phenomenology and epistemological concerns.

Taminiaux argues Heidegger calls it a movement "back to the transcendental life of consciousness and its noetic-noematic experiences, in which objects are constituted as correlates of consciousness" (33). Thus, *Dasien* is resurrected by the categorical world.

Although Husserl's phenomenology strives to transcend worldly categorizations, practical explanations of how the ego and the world are bracketed from the primal self are scanty, and, furthermore, phenomenology lacks a comprehensive description of ipseity. The problem, in the simplest terms, is that Husserl's *epoché* has insufficient guidelines for an assessment of its efficacy; the lack of guidelines suggests the experience of ipseity occurs more readily in theory than in practice.

To reiterate, Heidegger's influence on contemporary phenomenology sidetracks any attempts at an atemporal analysis of ipseity, leaving the idea of a transcendental singularity a chimera. Consequently, much of contemporary phenomenology investigates subject-object dyads mediated via temporality. Clearly, what is missing from phenomenology is a transcendental reduction capable of eliminating temporal consciousness, and the subjective

analysis of Being from within. For Husserl self-illumination requires controlling consciousness or intentionality. David Smith explains Husserl's contention that "objects . . . are transcendently relative, that is, their being in the world is defined in a formal relation to acts of consciousness bearing meanings that represent them" (166). Husserl emphasized "every physical object is 'relative' to consciousness insofar as it is available for intentional relations to that object" (177). Nevertheless, this relational emphasis should not detract from the primary problem Husserl saw confronting philosophy: "scientific enquiry" into "the problem of cognition or of consciousness." The problem, however, is not only epistemological, extending beyond the "how" of knowing to the ontology of consciousness. Husserl wants modern philosophy to "penetrate" this field and to "arrive at the right concepts, the right ways of asking questions, and the right methods" (Husserl *Phenomenology and Anthropology* 4). Yet, contrary to ontological understanding, modern phenomenology leans to relational analysis hobbled by Cartesian mind-body duality and Sartrean existentialism. Husserl was not blind to this trend:

But even the so-called "phenomenological movement" has got caught up in this new trend, which alleges that the true foundation of philosophy lies in human being alone, and more specifically in a doctrine of the essence. All of this constitutes a complete reversal of phenomenology's fundamental standpoint. Original phenomenology . . . opposes all related attempts at foundation-laying as being anthropologism or psychologism. (Husserl *Phenomenology and Anthropology* 1)

Husserl's dismissal of a "foundation" for "philosophy" predicated on "a doctrine of the essence" should not be misconstrued as a critique of transcendental ontology; it is the erroneous concern with ego subjectivity he discredits: Through the "phenomenological reduction" one uncovers "the fundamental distinction" between "the transcendental Ego (or the transcendental sphere)" and the "human being's ego" of which "Descartes and his

successors were oblivious” (Husserl *Phenomenology and Anthropology* 6). Furthermore, supporting the transcendental reduction (and atemporality) he states:

Philosophy, as genuine science, strives for absolute and definitive truths that surpass all forms of relativity. Philosophy as genuine science attains those qualities (even if only on the level of approximation) by having recourse to the *eidōs*, the pure *a priori* that is accessible to everyone in apodictic insight. (Husserl *Phenomenology and Anthropology* 2)

Finally, in the same paragraph, Husserl gives a strong caveat for phenomenologists to not mistake “the meaning of the reduction” which is, in fact, an “entranceway to this new realm” and warns “the temptation to misunderstandings here is simply overwhelming.”

Misunderstanding the transcendental reduction justifies conflating the “concrete human being” with the “pure Ego,” whereby the former originates in Heidegger’s “pre-given world,” and reinstates “the naive natural attitude” rather than moving “within the sphere of the *epoché*” (7). In other words, the pre-giveness of the mind’s objectified world must be excised from ipseity if the transcendental reduction has any hope of proceeding.

A final hindrance to the transcendental reduction is the quantitative empiricism of the natural sciences which consider transcendental phenomenology and its subjective insights to be “almost without ‘objectively valid results’”— an expression that, according to Husserl, “signifies nothing but results that have been refined by mutual criticism and that now withstand every criticism”(Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology 5).

Paradoxically, in cognitive science, the idea of “objective results” is more ideal than reality.

In general, cognitive theories tend to mechanistic and quantitative accounts versus the experiential and qualitative approaches adopted by meditators. Therefore, scientific materialism essentially disregards the subjective experiences of meditators regardless of the objective discipline employed to achieve them. I consider most ontological studies of



consciousness hamstrung by their immediate dismissal of all spiritual praxes despite their objective elements: belief is not a critical method in Sarkar's *pratyāhara* or certain Buddhist meditations. In conclusion to this section on the obstacles to the transcendental reduction, John Searle notes it is unknown how far the "whole subject of consciousness is . . . beyond the reach of science," but said reach will be extended when researchers incorporate the decades of disciplined exploration and experience of meditator's whose purvey is nothing other than ipseity and its noumenal cause (Searle 1936).

### 8.3 Evolution of Husserl's Reduction

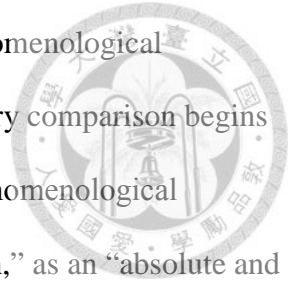
Husserl's initial phenomenological reduction attempted to construct a coherent basis for epistemology, proceeding without reference to "purely logical conditions . . . grounded in the 'content' of knowledge"; instead, it attended to "noetic conditions," or the ontological "a priori" of things themselves (Husserl et al. 75). The first goal was to create "a theory of theory, with a science of the sciences" (76). This effort foreshadowed Husserl's later postulation of the transcendental reduction applied to consciousness itself.

In this regard, many Tantric and Buddhist schools devote hours a day to the various forms of *pratyāhara*. This withdrawal of ipseity from mental and sensory association is part of a "mental aesthetic itinerary" that results in "emancipation of sensory activity from the domination of exterior objects" (Eliade 48). During meditation consciousness becomes the meditator's "laboratory," and the meditations of different traditions reveal interesting correlations. It would be inappropriate to suggest this is new: "empirical research on meditation started in the 1950's, and as much as 1000 publications already exist"; however, "one still needs to admit that little is known about the neurophysiological processes involved in meditation and about its possible long-term impact on the brain" (Lutz Antoine 500). Understanding these processes and developing a rigorous comparative paradigm will

encourage the acceptance of subjective experiences in meditation, and, hopefully, dismantle scientific philosophy certainty not supported by experience. With this in mind, Husserl argues “the [scientific] critical attitude is, indeed, akin to the phenomenological one,” and, although this is commonly related to objects in the ego’s world (benches, tables, feelings), Husserl wants to include all instances where “the presumed being stands in question” and is “not” to be “take[n] . . . for real or true” (Husserl, Farin and Hart 43).

Sarkar also considers it presumptuous to assume the egological mind is ontologically prior to consciousness; this invokes the naive understanding that all expressions of consciousness are mental productions. Instead, he questions the notion that the encounter of consciousness vis-à-vis the mind’s spatiotemporal awareness proves ontological duality — rather, arguing that objectified perceptions are symptomatic of a singular consciousness manifest in qualified forms. The widespread acceptance of the former proposition limits existential reductions to categorizing egological phenomena (supporting the Cartesian model), and ignores Husserl’s injunction to “disconnect or bracket this holding-it-for-real” of presumed being that should not “count for . . . actual being [Aseity]” (Husserl, Farin and Hart 43). Exploring the second proposition segues into the transcendental reduction and the solitary self-reflection found in meditation.

Buddhism’s importance to the transcendental reduction can be extended to include Sarkar’s Tantra because Husserl includes the “Indian spiritual discipline” to overcome the jaundiced view of Europe’s “decadent culture” (Hanna 366). Regardless of the extent of Husserl’s knowledge of Buddhism and its various schools of meditation, the influence of Tantric models of consciousness on Buddhism and Sarkar’s development of *pratyāhāra* would have surely intrigued Husserl. Despite the complexity of comparative analysis, the melding of Indian thought and Phenomenology was something Husserl clearly desired.



S.K. Maharana is one of the few recent authors who sees “phenomenological elements” in the “Advaita Vedānta of Śāṃkara” (1). His interdisciplinary comparison begins with the understanding that the “confrontation of Vedānta with the phenomenological movement is of recent origin.” Husserl’s search for the “originary given,” as an “absolute and adequate givenness,” is compared with the “cardinal doctrines of the Śāṃkhya and the Vedānta that consciousness alone is self-given (*svapprakāśa*), that it alone in fact is the very principle of givenness, whereas all transcendence is given in and through relatedness (real or apparent) to consciousness” (2). If consciousness alone is “adequate”—a notion trenchant in Tantra—the “principal task of phenomenology is to understand the nature of consciousness” through *epoché* (2). We have seen Husserl argue for the revitalization of Western philosophy via Buddhism. Yet Buddhism’s denial of *ātman* brings Sarkar’s Tantra—which makes unqualified *ātman* [ipseity] *qua* atemporal consciousness the outcome of *pratāyāhāra* — closer to Husserl’s perspective on the transcendental Ego. Because *pratāyāhāra*’s three *shuddhis* bracket ipseity from objectified consciousness they provide a realizable reduction of mind to “a region of . . . consciousness . . . not annihilated by the *epoche*”—Tantra’s ipseity/Aseity (Gregorius 114).

As mentioned in the introduction, Koestenbaum admits reserve regarding Husserl’s knowledge of Yoga and Vedānta. Nevertheless, Husserl was well aware of Buddhism and believed its praxis the apex of his Transcendental Phenomenology. F.J. Hanna’s translation of Husserl’s 1925 essay honoring “Karl Neumann’s translation of parts of the Buddhist Canon” shows Husserl, while acknowledging the importance of the “highest forms of the philosophical and religious” in “European culture,” declares Buddhism actualizes what Phenomenology attempts:

Indeed, the purest essence of Indian religiosity—springing unsullied in both appearance and actuality is, I would say, not so much “transcendent” as

“transcendental”—enters the horizon of our religio-ethical and philosophical consciousness for the first time, no doubt to be accurately quoted hereafter.

Complete linguistic analysis of the Buddhist canonical writings provides us with a perfect opportunity of becoming acquainted with this means of seeing the world which is completely opposite of our European manner of observation, of setting ourselves in its perspective, and of making its dynamic results truly comprehensible through experience and understanding. For us, for anyone, who lives in this time of the collapse of our own exploited, decadent culture and has had a look around to see where spiritual purity and truth, where joyous mastery of the world manifests itself, this manner of seeing means a great adventure. Buddhism is comparable only with the highest form of the philosophical and religious spirit of our European culture. It is now our task to utilize this (to us) completely new Indian spiritual discipline which has been revitalized and strengthened by this contrast. (Hanna 367)

Hanna gives a tantalizing glimpse into Phenomenology's alignment with Buddhism. Husserl describes “Buddhism as transcendental,” a “tacit acknowledgement that Buddhism avoided the error of falling into the natural attitude,” thereby “placing it in the same league as his own philosophy (368). According to Hanna, Eugene Fink, who was Husserl's “most trusted interpreter,” as well as his “chief assistant,” told Dorian Cairns “that the various phases of Buddhistic self-discipline were essentially phases of phenomenological reduction” (366). Surprisingly, despite the importance “many philosophers” give to phenomenology, “no one followed Husserl into the transcendental aspect of his philosophy.” History suggests phenomenologists have been unwilling to ascribe a “mystical” element to the intuition of the “presuppositionless way of knowing” attained in “pure consciousness” (366). This contradicts Husserl's directive for developing intuitional understanding that “hark[s] back to the speech of the mystics when they describe the intellectual seeing which is supposed not to

be a discursive knowledge.” Evidently, the transcendental remains forever beyond the grasp of analysis, and it is why an experience of “pure consciousness” encountered in the “reduction is a difficult phase of [Husserl’s] method,” remaining “a mystery even to many dedicated phenomenologists” (366).

Considering Husserl’s brief essay on Buddhism and Maharana’s speculations, forging links between contemplative traditions and Phenomenology will be productive if all reductive praxes are corroborated by meditators’ subjective accounts that parallel the various disciplines without succumbing to affective content. With this in mind, Sarkar’s *pratyāhāra* has a strict methodology that should defend it against a critique of speculative idealism. Its repeated practice develops intuitive experiences of consciousness as both subject and object extending beyond empirical thought. Thus, *pratyāhāra*, as a method, demands a single pointed, or pinnacled consciousness divorced from psychological, theological, cultural, and historical concerns. Likewise, Husserl’s *epoché* proceeds from an unbiased awareness of *a priori* consciousness to defuse the above criticisms. What Husserl calls the “pure, the formal objective categories” require a “phenomenological origin or — if we prefer to rule out unsuitable talk of origins, only bred in confusion — we are concerned with insight into the essence of the concepts involved” (Husserl et al. 79). Husserl believes understanding this is “only by intuitive representation of the essence in adequate Ideation” and “as long as concepts are not distinguished and made clear to ideational intuition, by going back to their essence, further effort is hopeless.” He warns that “in no field of knowledge is equivocation more fatal, in none have confused concepts so hindered the progress of knowledge, or so impeded insight into its true aims, as in the field of pure logic” (79). Although this warning comes as a prelude to linguistic understanding, and Husserl’s analogy of an astronomer attempting to “see distinctly” without having “learnt to adjust the focal distance of his optical instruments,” it is equally valid for a “mind not previously versed in the meaning and right

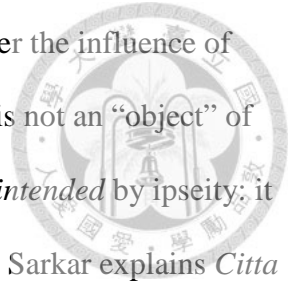
use of the various kinds of words” that attempts to understand “methods of philosophizing” that transcend theory and language to explore Aseity (Husserl et al. 81).

Sarkar’s understanding of ipseity grounds a meditation that spontaneously transcends the natural attitude through diligent *pratyáhára* quite independent of belief in *átman*. Wallis explains in *Tantra Illuminated* that Tantric practice has not successfully been defined as a “religious movement” by “Western scholars”; although, it has “spiritual freedom” or “*moksa*” as it’s “‘higher’ goal” (27-29). One reason for this failure is that most Tantric schools, unlike traditional religions, include the “‘lower’ goal” of “worldly enjoyment” with the higher purpose of liberated consciousness (29). While the two goals are not mutually exclusive, Sarkar’s Tantra strives to transcend the attraction of physical objects because the natural condition of the mind to seek out worldly enjoyment interferes with mental purification. In Husserl’s terms, Sarkar’s *pratyáhára* recovers ipseity freed from the “things” of the mind. Whether the philosopher is concerned with *mokṣa* or phenomenological insight, both trajectories commence with the reduction of ipseity.

Before we turn to Sarkar’s *shuddhis* a further understanding of his cosmology and its relationship to the cognitive faculty is necessary. In 1959 the discourse “Cognitive Force and Psychic Practice” outlined his metaphysical explanation of cognition:

- 1 All perception and assimilation is done with the help of *shakti* (force).
2. The Witnessing Entity of this entire creation is nothing but *Citta Shakti* (Sanskrit for the Cognitive Faculty/cosmic consciousness/Aseity).
3. *Citta Shakti* has five qualities: *shuddhá* (absolutely pure), *anantá* (infinite), *aparíhámii* (unchangeable), *apratisamkramá* (non-extroversive), and *darshita viśayá* (witness of the reflected object). (S. P. R. Sarkar n. pag.)

The five qualities of *Citta Shakti* (Aseity) drive human *dharma sádhaná* (spiritual meditation) and transform duality into singularity. Because meditation negates ipseity’s perception of



duality — produced by the morphing of *Citta Shakti* (mental force) under the influence of vibrational stimulus — singularity (Aseity) can be experienced. Aseity is not an “object” of everyday consciousness — nor in Husserl’s terminology can Aseity be *intended* by ipseity; it is both immanent and transcends objectified mind. In point three above, Sarkar explains *Citta Shakti* is absolutely pure, infinite, unchangeable, non-extroversive and “witness of the reflected object.” Therefore, Aseity is not the object of ipseity; rather, the reverse is true: ipseity is a partial reflection of Aseity that appears to have an independent existence. Sarkar says, “This feeling of ‘I’ is, therefore, not *átman* or unit consciousness” but an “objective idea of unit consciousness, the knowledge of which comes about by the qualifying influence of *Prakrti* [the sentient qualification of Aseity]” (*Ánandamúrti ÁNanda MáRga Elementary Philosophy* 27). As *prakrti* comes to predominate, energy (*shakti*) is created that catalyzes objectified entities capable of autonomous consciousness. In summary, Metaseity is an infinite singularity whose “dormant” subjectivity awakens when its active principle (*prakrti*) imbues Aseity with existential being. Why something in an absolutely stable condition becomes destabilized is a cosmogonic discussion concerning the “coming into existence or origin of the universe” for some future work, as this Chapter is primarily ontological (Baofu 4).<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, at the very least, this gloss of Sarkar’s metaphysics indicates he does not leave the question of “nothingness” hanging in the manner of Heidegger and Sartre, nor does he invoke the erroneous nihilism attributed to Buddhism.

#### 8.4 Sarkar’s *Pratyáhára*

Having come this far, Sarkar’s *pratyáhára* and its three *shuddhis* will be contextualized with Husserl’s transcendental reduction. Giving an exact description of Sarkar’s method is vexed by several factors. The first is simply the nuances of the practice that bring them to light can only be understood through the praxis. This is where the

philosopher lays down the pen and wholly engages ideas in a lived experience. Mastery of meditation, as with tai chi, tennis, chess, musical instruments, or the phenomenological reduction, requires consistent practice over decades. The reality is that successful meditation is probably the most difficult task a philosopher can set because the abstraction of non-duality is entirely alien to day-to-day living. The second problem facing an understanding of the *shuddhis* is the vow each initiate takes prohibiting unauthorized dissemination of the meditation methodology, which is solely the purview of a guru, or *Ācārya* (authorized representative). Therefore, the following explanation limits certain details while trying to convey a sense of the method. A final problem for academics seeking textual verification is that Sarkar's meditation, following most contemplative traditions in India, is taught in person—written instructions on *pratyāhāra* are not available to the public. Ananda Marga has a handwritten document, the *Ācārya Standard Notebook Part 1*, explicating the six lessons of Sarkar's meditation for *ācāryas* who have successfully completed their training. Fortunately, for the development of the present explanation it can be understood that while some few specific elements are personalized, the overall procedure of *pratyāhāra* praxis is identical for all initiates.<sup>31</sup>

Sarkar's *pratyāhāra* is rigorous in its exacting detail. As mentioned earlier, it unfolds through three stages that begin with natural presence of the external world. In a brief explanation of *sādhāraṇa prāñāyāma* in *Carya Carya: Part Three*, Sarkar applies Sanskrit names to the three *shuddhis*: "Closing the eyes, sit in either *siddhāsana*, *padmāsana* or *bhojanāsana*. Do *bhūtaśuddhi*. After doing *āsana śuddhi*, concentrate your mind on the point that the *ācārya* will fix. Then, after doing *cittashuddhi* . . . ." (S. P. R. Sarkar n. pag.). Starting with *bhūtaśuddhi* the practitioner sits with their eyes closed in a straight, relaxed posture: cross-legged, full lotus, or in a chair. Concentration is aided by keeping the spine erect and the muscles relaxed, facilitating long sitting with minimal physical effort. It is



understood that anything impinging on the mind, particularly postural discomfort, will interfere with withdrawal and concentration, which is easily verified in practice. Following good posture, practitioners take up a highly specialized eidetic visualization as prescribed by the *ácárya*. This ideation creates an image that with sufficient practice completely engages intentionality so that the meditator gradually becomes oblivious to other external affective and sensory vibrations. This carefully prescribed visualization is ideally sustained until the practitioner establishes a state of withdrawal from all external distractions. Typically in a one-hour session this may take the first thirty to forty minutes because it is difficult to disengage the mind from sensory extroversion; auditory phenomena are a particular challenge so that perfecting *bhúdashuddhi*'s desensitization to outside interference requires years of daily practice. To illustrate the difficulty of sustaining simple eidetic visualizations, one might try to visualize an object such as a white elephant.

First, attempt to see the elephant's two-dimensional form from the side, usually after a few seconds other thoughts and feelings will intrude. The slightest awareness of thinking about "thinking" about the image is a distraction — as is perception of posture and other "coloring" content such as boredom, excitement, interest and so forth. After this, try increasing the elephant's size while maintaining its form until a mental "limit" is reached. This simple exercise highlights the limits of quotidian concentration, and daily practice will show how meditation enhances intentional consciousness. With extensive practice, meditators can maintain enstatic ideation for hours. Finally, *bhúdashuddhi* ends by relinquishing the eidetic visualization thereby removing the external world from the meditator's awareness.

In a philosophical discourse, "The Devotee and the Lord," Sarkar briefly mentions the second reduction, *ásana shuddhi* and its connection with transcendence:

Thus in *ásana shuddhi*, *Bhaeravii Shakti* [qualified energy] is concentrated at a nuclear point, and subsequently transformed into *Kaośikii Shakti* [unqualified energy]. When that transformation occurs, the unit mind [ipseity] gradually dissolves into the Cosmic Mind[Aseity]. The three principles of *Prakrti* remain perfectly balanced in *Kaośikii Shakti*, and thus lie unexpressed.

(7)

The second reduction, or *asana shuddhi*, negates bodily awareness, itself, a formidable obstacle to concentration which is still present after *bhútashuddhi*. Practitioners still perceive their body and its physical position due to changing proprioceptive and interoceptive stimuli. These perceptions constitute a bodily abstraction closely associated with the mind. Muscles interacting with the nervous system feed information to the brain which, in turn, is interpreted by the mind as a locus for its existence. The changing perceptions of hunger, pain, pleasure, temperature et cetera, impact mind with temporal sensations and create a convincing sensory amalgam erroneously identified as ipseity. It cannot be overstated that the elimination of bodily perception is a demanding exercise. A flawed example of bodily transcendence is a person engrossed in watching a film who is as unaware of their physicality as their greater surroundings. This is not the same as meditation because the flow of action causes conscious awareness to fluctuate—a state completely contrary to the requisite single-pointed concentration of meditation. *Asana shuddhi* effectively disassociates consciousness from the body by gradually transcending bodily perception, leaving ipseity in an apparent void and successfully brackets consciousness from all forms of duality.

Has contemporary phenomenology ever envisaged the singular form of ipseity possible through Sarkar's reductions? While hesitant to offer a blanket denial, I suggest the Cartesian *cogito* obscures ipseity's true form and prompts the "easier" return to the phenomenological method directed at the world of the Other. Indeed, Husserl's ontological

explorations of ipseity do explore the “Other.” In the fifth meditation of the *Cartesian Meditations* he says the “Transcendental reduction restricts me to the stream of my pure conscious processes and the unities constituted by their actualities and potentialities. And indeed it seems obvious that such unities are inseparable from my ego and therefore belong to his concreteness itself” (*Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* 89).

Husserl suggests the transcendental reduction of ipseity includes processing its potential objects experienced within its conscious flux. Furthermore, he questions how the “immanency of the ego” can transcend itself and reach and validate the existence of “other egos” if the world is self-constituted (90). Therefore, it is unsurprising Husserl’s methodological query is sidetracked by polemical debates on the ontic *a priori* (Descartes’ God) or existential solipsism.

The above mentioned debates are, in my opinion, not relevant to realizing the transcendental reduction: Husserl, quite reasonably, argues that to proceed “correctly” one should employ “*a peculiar kind of epoché*” within the transcendental sphere to a “*peculiar oneness* or to my transcendental concrete I-myself” that “(the meditators ego)” exists as a “monad” which, in our terms, may or may not encounter other entities (*Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* 94-95). Sarkar’s Tantra and Buddhism pointedly disengage from intentional encounters with Others during the transcendental reduction. Revealing de-objectified mind to itself begins the true transcendental reduction of ipseity.

At this point the reader might ask what it feels like to be pure ipseity? An approximation of this condition is possible by stripping away identifying ego characteristics such as name, sex, age, race, education, family, language, nationality, desires, needs, and so on. Does this scouring eliminate existence or consciousness? Logically the witnessing faculty to the removal of these prior associations of mind is ipseity, and it survives the dissolution of

the mind. My proposal establishes ipseity's unqualified state as the singular "I" awareness that creates human subjectivity — an existential Being. Both Tantra and Buddhism view the stabilization of this singularity crucial before the final phase of the transcendental reduction can proceed.

Interestingly, Sartre seems to recognize ipseity's absolute freedom from mental constraints: Benoit states, though Sartre's "philosophy is Cartesian"— there is "a transcendent subjectivity (consciousness)" that experiences objects, but Sartre does not follow Husserl's "'mistake'" by imbuing "consciousness" with "substance, or "'contents'" (2). Mistake notwithstanding, Sartre has little interest in exploring, or admitting to, noumenal metaphysics; "I" is his ontic starting point and, tracking Heidegger, it is contingent to the world. Sartre see "nothing" within ipseity, postulating that "consciousness" is a temporal "motivation" dividing moments of phenomena from other instances via the "cleavage" of the "immediate psychic past and the present" that is mediated by "nothingness" (Sartre 27). This philosophy disregards the constancy of ipseity we explored and conflates the arising and falling away of phenomena (hence temporality) with absolute Being. Remember, time mediates subject-object relations but ipseity's existence is not dependent on phenomenal synthesis. To get a sense of this atemporality, we could ask if our "I" awareness changes from moment to moment. The affirmative response is natural to the mind's association with affectivity, morals, aesthetics, knowledge, and other mental activity, yet the preceding exercise and Sarkar's cognitive theory suggests ipseity is not forced to follow the natural path of association. This ontological autonomy is crucial to the transcendental reduction when juxtaposed against the confusion introduced by prematurely latching on to the expanding, zetetic quality of ipseity which reopens Pandora's box. Gregorios calls this the "life-world of consciousness" which has an "'infinity of actual and possible transcendent experience" and; furthermore, "one must plan to enter cautiously, so as not to lose one's way, misdirected by

habits and prejudices acquired in the process of dealing with the external world” (144). To proceed into the final phase of the reduction Sarkar employs *Citta Shuddhi*.

*Citta shuddhi* is mental purification; it completes *pratyáhára* and prepares insight into Aseity. It attempts what contemporary phenomenology has proved incapable of doing: guiding intentionality towards a metaphysical realm. As Gregorios argues “No map of this life-world in consciousness has been charted by previous philosophy” (144). Phenomenology today considers intentionality a motivator and substantiator of objectified cognition, encouraging the standard view of consciousness always directed at objects. This perspective while natural is also misleading: objectified conscious should not be granted the status of Aseity merely because ipseity is capable of encountering seemingly independent objects via zetetic activity.


*Citta Shuddhi* reverses the normal extroversion occurring the moment ipseity becomes conscious of the physical sensory system, and the subsequent activation of existential, actional, and objectivated mind. Essentially, ipseity’s pseudo “crudification” generates the “doer I, done I” dyad leading to *samskara* (action and reaction) in Tantric philosophy. The “devolution” of consciousness closely parallels Husserl’s “first ordering in the ‘subjective world’ of consciousness . . . *ego*, *cogitatio*, and *cogitatum*: the experience, the experiencing and the experienced” (144). Arguably, the “first order’s” primacy obscures the possibility of unqualified witnessing behind the mind’s objectified intentionality. Sarkar explains the Tantric view of crudification:

In the absolute sense what is the unit mind [existential mind]? The Cosmic Mind [Aseity] reaches a state of maximum crudification through *saincara* [the phase of extroversial movement], and thereafter starts returning to its original abode through *pratisaincara* [the phase of introversial movement]. The small “I” feeling that gradually develops within crude matter is called the unit mind. Therefore the unit

mind can be called a primary sub-centre in a physical structure within the Macrocosmic Mind [Aseity]. Unit minds have to act within the periphery of time, place, and person, as created by the Macrocosm, and their different styles of action are called *mata* [opinions]. Just as the unit mind is dependent on time, place and person for its creation, maintenance and annihilation, each of its expressions also depends on a particular time, place and person. (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2 3*)

What occurs when ipseity's zetetic extroversion is stopped, and is this psychic introversion feasible? Sarkar contends ipseity's ceaseless zetetic activity is reflective of its basis in Aseity, which, being infinite, transposes an infinite desire for unqualified consciousness in the human mind. In this regard, Gregorios interprets Husserl's transcendental aims succinctly: "The function of the transcendent is then to unite the two — consciousness and world, subject and object"; "Husserl seems to believe, we transcend the irreducible subject-object duality to come up on the unity of the reality of universal self-and-world-consciousness" (144). If Husserl recognized this in Buddhist praxis his *epoché* is still hamstrung, as I have emphasized, by spatiotemporal considerations, and I agree with Gregorios's position "that the Phenomenological method is intrinsically incapable of apprehending the radically transcendent" (148). Gregorios goes on to say that this "third reduction," in the "Indian tradition," has the "highest emphasis"— unlike Phenomenology which "brackets the external world, only later to come back to it with better tools with which to handle it. And when one has also reduced individual particularities of the ego, one is already in the realm of the Absolute — the inter-subjective community of consciousness" (149).

"In the Indian tradition the real transcendence occurs," Gregorios states, "only at the point where consciousness as consciousness-of is itself transcended, to become consciousness-in-itself, where all dualities of consciousness and its objects are finally overcome in the unifying vision," in other words, Aseity (Gregorios, 149). Accordingly,

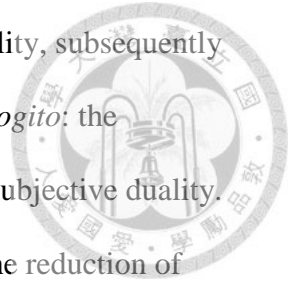


Sarkar's *citta shuddhi*, as the culminating practice of *pratyāhāra*, transcends spatiotemporal mind via pinnacled ideation. The meditator merges all of ipseity's subjectivity in a psychic point called *ista cakra*, prescribed by an *ācārya*. One pointed concentration is not objectified awareness: there is no division between consciousness and consciousness-of — initially it may appear so, but, with practice, ipseity experiences itself as a part within an infinite consciousness. Nevertheless, this elevated state of ipseity's consciousness is still qualified by its specific vibrational frequency which sustains its sense of existential separation from Aseity. In *citta shuddhi* this remaining qualification of consciousness is resolved by the incantation of a two syllable Sanskrit mantra provided by an *ācārya*. The repetition of mantra detaches ipseity's association with limitation through the mantra's ideatory and vibrational flow, gradually eliminating even this final residual sense of independent witnessing through a "straightening" of its wavelength until the ultimate transcendence occurs and ipseity merges into Aseity.

## 8.5 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that through a Transcendental Reduction Husserl hoped to discover the invariable essence pre-existing the mind, a hope now stalled in the artificial division of philosophy and science. However, Searle argues both disciplines "in principle" lack a "distinction of subject matter" because they are "universal in subject matter" (Searle 1936). Arguably, Husserl's reductions are unique not for the categorization of essences found in contemporary phenomenology's emic engagement with subject-object analysis but for attempting to combine science and eidetic intuition — or practice and research — in meditation.

It was shown that Phenomenological studies tend to ignore the transcendental reduction and the practical methodology of the *epoché*, focusing, instead, on theory.



However, Husserl wanted to open a practical route out of Cartesian duality, subsequently closed by his students who re-invoke the naive attitude of Descartes's *cogito*: the unquestioning acceptance of consciousness as *prima facie* evidence of subjective duality. Unfortunately, this subject-object distinction of ipseity is un-suited to the reduction of Husserl's Transcendental Ego. Mistaking Husserl's earlier idea that the self is "in a certain sense directed at objects" with the outcome of the transcendental reduction clearly conflates ipseity's expansion with ontological duality (Husserl, Farin and Hart 25). Moreover, elevating objective intentionality as the primary discipline of Phenomenology ignores the transcendental reduction of the mind. These problems can be overcome with Sarkar's Tantric meditations which makes the realization of ipseity and Aseity its penultimate goal. I argue *pratyāhāra*'s de-objectified methodology helps propel Husserl's *epoché* over many of the obstacles introduced by Phenomenologists discussed in this chapter. In short, I suggest Husserl's transcendental phenomenology finds its apotheosis in Sarkar's mind-ipseity-Aseity triad. Moreover, as interdisciplinary theories of consciousness and perception develop, cross pollinating, empirical science and Western philosophy with contemplative traditions will inspire a renewed respect for India's spiritual traditions.

Finally, I propose merging Husserl's *epoché* with Sarkar's *pratyāhāra* reinstates in the West a verifiable emic methodology mostly eschewed since the New England Transcendentalists embraced Parmenides, Socrates and Indian thought. Furthermore, this chapter has practically demonstrated how ipseity and Aseity become the objective of Tantric meditation. While Reality ultimately defies noetic mind, the experience of meditators from different contemplative traditions illuminate similarities suggesting atemporal consciousness is not fantasy but the Reality available to a trained mind. The next chapter will discuss how the ancient Greeks seemingly borrowed from Tantra-Yoga to devise a method of devotion that guides the mind towards Aseity and Metaseity.



## Chapter Nine

### Parmenides' Monism: Diotima's Transcendental *Eros* and Tantric *Bhakti*



*This chapter situates Parmenidean monism and Socratic eros within Tantra-Yoga's devotional tradition. Drawing on Plato's Symposium, it unpacks Diotima's instructions to Socrates regarding the appropriate object and objective of human desire and hypothesizes this idea derives from Parmenides' monism borrowing of Tantric ideas. First, it is proposed that Diotima's teachings on eros contain secret elements of Tantric meditation directing the Socratic lover towards Aseity/Metaseity. Next, traditional Symposium commentaries that reject Indian influences on Greek philosophy are contrasted with modern studies that demonstrate Indo-Greek connections. After this, the relationship between pre-Socratic intuition and classical logic introduces Parmenidean monism. It is shown that resolving the uncertain status of Parmenides' poem as a practitioner's meditative device, or vehicle for Western logic, demands insights of practitioner-researchers versed in comparative analysis. Finally, the devotional function of Diotima's eros establishes this chapter's thesis that the correct object and objective of meditation, inherited from India, is Aseity/Metaseity realized by completely immersing the mind in transcendental ideation.*

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As per the code of the *bhaktas*[devotees], *yoga* means *Samyogo yoga ityukto jīvātma-Paramātmānoh* - "The unification of *jīvātmā*, that is, unit consciousness, with *Paramātmā*, the Supreme, that is, *Puruṣa*, is *yoga*." The unit becomes one with the Cosmic.

#### 9.1 Introduction

In Plato's *Symposium* the priestess from Mantinea, Diotima, teaches Socrates the importance of *eros*, or love, guaranteeing its practitioner godlike status and permanent happiness. Everybody "desires to be happy, and hence to possess good things, everyone is a lover," yet just as Tantric philosophy avers that the love of objects never brings abiding happiness; in the same spirit Diotima proclaims all desire must be metaphysical (Nichols 197). I contend Diotima's hierarchical praxis of *eros* trains the mind to detach from dualism and inspires the devotion known in Tantra as *bhakti*. This establishes an eidetic concentration

reminding the devotee/lover to see Aseity in all phenomena. Diotima's teachings help the practitioner channelize all their dualistic propensities towards an unqualified condition, "unsullied by the flesh, or by color." Thus, *Eros* is Diotima's transcendental praxis that establishes a reality "single in substance and divine" (Plato, Howatson and Sheffield 212a).

Sarkar cites Lord Shiva when he says even an entity with a "corporeal structure" will "attain salvation if one changes the idea of microcosm [ipseity] into macrocosm [Aseity]"; "*Brahmaevāhamiti jñātvā mukto bhavati dehabhrī*" ("Salvation and Corporeal Beings" par. 1). Salvation is effectively realized when the devotee "withdraw[s]" their "propensities" from the "objective world [reality]" and directs all desires "towards the [true] subjectivity" to become "one with that *Parusha* [Aseity]"; this devotional praxis contains "the secret of *sādhana*" (par. 6). Samuel clarifies the significance of intense identification between the subject and object "in many forms of Tantric ritual" so the practitioner "identifies with the deity" completely (162). Perfection in Tantra-Yoga is "acquired in steps" because "the perfection of omniscience" entails a "direct realization, which depends on thoroughly precise discrimination" (Chapple, Casey and Haribhadrāsūri 104). Sarkar says "intuitional knowledge" can only be learned from a "proper preceptor" and not "through empirical knowledge." Intuition arises once the "latent" tendency to "devotion is awakened" (91).

Tantrics understand walking the path of devotion is aided by a "guru mantra" used "before every action, whether big or small" to "increase guru *bhakti*" or the "feeling that 'my guru is always with me.'" Perfect concentration via guru mantra causes one to "behave properly and reasonably with every entity of this world" so that there is neither "anger nor jealousy, neither attraction nor aversion" (135). When, through correct ideation, mind associate itself with Aseity no new reactions are generated: "absorbing oneself in the color of the Great [Aseity]," known as *pratyāhāra* yoga, the "seeds of reflections of crude objects still remaining in the mind after the application of guru mantra will be obliterated" (138). Sarkar

teaches “*pratyāhāra* begins with vigorous action and culminates in selfless devotion.” Even the “greatest protagonist” of the path of “*jinana*” or knowledge, “Shankaracharya,” was driven to admit “of all the ways to attain salvation the way of *bhakti* or devotion is the greatest” (142). I contend that Plato’s Diotima in the *Symposium* describes the Greek path of devotion in concepts of the One, the Beautiful and the Good, but the concept of devotion to the One derives from Indian and Tantric sources.

The intellection that Socratic *eros* is a real praxis that brings abiding happiness has little support in the Academy. Most academic exposition leans towards ethical, aesthetic, and sexual analysis. Diotima’s *eros* as a transcendental praxis has not been reconnoitered outside brief mention of its hierarchical structure nor have commentators noted the similarity of *eros* to Tantric *bhakti*. The want of research exploring the connection between Diotima’s teachings and *bhakti* is arguably attributable to a paucity of studies which consider Diotima’s statements divorced from those of the preceding speakers in the *Symposium*. For this reason, this chapter does not analyze the speakers’ arguments preceding that of Socrates, except for the following brief summary: In the *Symposium*, Socrates is invited to a drinking party with six guests; each of them delivers a speech on the importance of Eros or love. (1) Phaedrus claims love is the oldest of gods and inspires the lover to earn the admiration of his beloved on the battlefield. (2) Pausanias distinguishes between heavenly and earthly love, claiming the latter honors a partner’s intelligence and wisdom only found in men. (3) Eryximachus considers love to exist as the universal principle of association. (4) Aristophanes, the eminent comic playwright, details a creation myth of heterosexual and homosexual love. (5) Agathon claims love is a young God, an enemy of old age, and creates justice, moderation, courage and wisdom. (6) Alcibiades, the last of the six speakers, gives a speech in praise of Socrates.

Finally, and rather oddly, given Plato’s penchant for detail, Diotima testifies that the apotheosis of human existence is to continually witness an object that unites perception in a

vision of unity, but Diotima neither explains the process in terms that are accessible nor goes much beyond piquing the reader's interest through a rhetorical question: "'Do you think,'" she asks, 'that a person who directs his gaze to that object and contemplates it with that faculty by which it has to be viewed, and stays close to it, has a poor life?'" (212b).

Moreover, Diotima tells us that when this special perception is accomplished the practitioner enters a new realm of realization:

It is there alone, when he sees the beautiful with that by which it has to be viewed, that he will give birth to true virtue . . . it is not an image that he is grasping but the truth. When he has given birth to and nurtured true virtue it is possible for him to be loved by the gods and to become, if any human can, immortal himself " (212c).

Diotima coyly points at the route to immortality via a form of concentration which is only referenced as a question without any indication of its actual application. Nevertheless, given Indo-Greek connections it can be demonstrated that Diotima's praxis of *eros* is characteristic of a specialized type of Tantric meditation that Sarkar says will instill *bhakti* in the meditator. *Bhakti*, or devotion to the guru and the goal, is endemic to Shiva Tantra. Vivekananda states in *Bhakti-Yoga* that "*bhakti*" is the "constant theme" of Indian "sages" as the "genuine search after the Lord [Aseity] beginning in "one single moment of the madness of extreme love to God" to bring "eternal freedom" (3). The concept of devotion '*bhakti*,' single-minded theophanic attachment to a "personal God," came to symbolize the indescribable oneness of *Brahma* in the contemplative traditions (Radhkrishnan 99).

The incorporation of Tantric *bhakti* into an analysis of Diotima's questions will unpack the mystery previously ignored by *Symposium* interlocutors, of how detachment from "images" prepares the practitioner to grasp the ineffable "truth," by "honour[ing] the study of love and practice[ing] it to an exceptional degree" (212c). I propose Diotima's *eros*

constitutes a deliberately veiled transcendental praxis in Plato's *Symposium* contiguous with the Parmenidean way of life and its likely appropriation of meditative techniques inherited from Tantra. Plato's deliberate reticence regarding the nature of Diotima's praxis, and the suggestion that the ancient Greeks hid their teachings is not new: "According to Aristotle (*Phys.* 209b11-17) the unwritten doctrines were different from (or additional ) to the written teachings " (McEvilley 158). This chapter demonstrates that Hellenic and Indian mysticism share devotional and meditative praxes that are not coincidental when Diotima's question is broken into four parts:

1. What type of "gaze" is being referred to?
2. What is the correct "object" of gaze if truth is "unsullied by flesh or color"?
3. What "faculty" is suitable to apprehend this truth?
4. How does one "stay close to" truth?

Furthermore, considering the paucity of interdisciplinary work on Socratic *eros* that includes Indo-Greek research, this chapter details Diotima's meditation contextualized by Indo-Greek research, and advocates that her "object" of contemplation is nothing other than Aseity which leads to Parmenidean monism (Metaseity). This argument's milieu is supported by the Parmenidean *Iatromantis* tradition introduced by Peter Kingsley's transcendental and emic reading of Parmenides' poem in his work *Reality*.

## 9.2 Symposium Commentary

Master translator, Benjamin Jowett, warns against "the imagined" in a work that offers "more" than any "commentator has dreamed of." Jowett concedes the *Symposium* blends "vestiges of old philosophy" with "germs of future knowledge" while noting that "agreement amongst interpreters is not to be expected." In contrast to the transcendental praxis ascribed to in this chapter, Jowett states the "mystical contemplation" of the

*Symposium* cannot be attributed to the “foreign element[s] of Egypt or of Asia,” nor is Asia to be found in Plato’s other works (*The Dialogues of Plato* 516). Jowett’s denial of Eastern influences amply alludes to the nineteenth century familiarity with the “imagined” East in Plato because Platonism and pre-Socratic philosophy have affinities with Tantra-Yoga that has been acknowledged for two centuries; “others have traced Indian influences upon Plato and Neo-Platonism.” Jowett’s now precarious rationalization that Plato was uninfluenced by Indian thought is perhaps forgivable as Plato, himself, seems unaware of pre-Socratic Indo-Greek contact.

Protestations of eisegesis are likely unavoidable when interpretations of mystical statements lean on seemingly isolated traditions, which “coincidentally stumbled” on to identical concepts and words, (even going so far as to be etymologically related, hundreds or thousands of years apart). While addressing Jowett’s turn of the century criticism of reading Indian influences on Plato appears *démodé*, the reality is that Jowett’s denials are endemic in Classicist *procès-verbaux*. Flood’s article on “The Saiva Traditions,” notes that “recent scholarship has problematized the idea of ‘tradition’ in the West” as “the past is constructed to suit the identity needs of each generation” (*The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* 201).

Arguably, Jowett’s most egregious misunderstanding of the Indo-Greek infusion of transcendental thought into the Hellenic world is his pronouncement that “the so-called mysticism of the East was not strange to the Greek of the fifth century before Christ” because the Greeks developed it entirely independent from Eastern influences (532). He grants that the “comprehension of knowledge and the burning intensity of love is a contradiction in nature” which might have occurred to “a far-off primeval age in the mind of some Hebrew prophet or other Eastern sage, but has now become an imagination only” (533). Jowett’s misapprehension of the profundity of Eastern influences could be excused as a product of his time. The mid-nineteenth century dearth of comparative Asian works made it impossible for

Jowett to fathom the rich wisdom of the East. This notwithstanding, “the first translation of classical Asian texts” began “at the end of the eighteenth Century” and these works were available in Oxford where the venerable Jowett presided for decades (E. Thompson loc. 83).

J.E. Boodin was unconvinced by the Neoplatonists vision of “something occult” in the “philosophic poem of the *Symposium*” ascribed to Plato’s “fateful metaphor” comparing “the idea of the good to the sun” (601). Boodin argues that “Plato believes that we enter most fully into reality when we are most fully awake, not when we go into a trance. We are most sane when we see things from the point of view of the whole” — which Plato means “from the point of view of the good, or what is best” (602). However, Boodin does not consider Diotima’s statements or emically compare Indian praxes that teach the devotee to penetrate duality via unbroken repetition of mantra to instill a veridical sense of Aseity even in the midst of creation. Howatson observes that Socrates’s “reported dialogue with a priestess called Diotima” extends from the “previous speeches” which, themselves, “play a significant role” in providing “a sense of the agreements and disagreements” on the subject of love by “clarifying the sorts of puzzles that a clear and explanatory account . . . that Socrates professes to deliver must resolve” (x). But nothing is clarified by Diotima’s question; she does not present the means to actualizing the puzzle nor does she articulate how the lover should practice.

The contradiction between knowledge and love was an important component of the *Bhagavad-Gita* that predates the *Symposium*. The *Gita* is “later than the great movement represented by the early *Upanisads*” with its dating “assigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC” (Radhakrishnan 14). We have seen in Part One the *Gita*, while yet unwritten, was more likely a fifteenth century BCE phenomena. The work unites “currents of philosophical and religious thought diffused among many and devious courses” (15). Further unsettling Jowett’s argument that Eastern wisdom was some long lost eidolon, Radhakrishnan sets forward the

trenchant view that the *Gita* derives from an Indian “tradition” emerging “from the religious life of mankind . . . articulated by a profound seer who sees truth in its many-sidedness and believes in its saving power.” The *Gita* is a far earlier Indian devotional text than the *Symposium*; it is “both metaphysics and ethics, *brahmavidya* and *yogasastra*, the science of reality and the art of union with reality” which recognizes that “the truths of spirit can be apprehended only by those who prepare themselves for their reception by rigorous discipline” and meditation (12).

### 9.3 Indo-Greek Connections

The Indo-Greek comparisons made here would have been read with skepticism by important Classicists like Jowett and Boodin and labeled fringe-worthy, but McEvilly’s opus, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, makes comparative speculation more concrete and valid than it has been in the past two centuries. Indo-Greek connections were actually hypothesized long before McEvilly. In 1971 M.L. West’s *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* raised the argument for Greek and Oriental connections “out of the disrepute into which it [had] fallen” by employing, in West’s words, a suitable “philological and historical approach” (preface). Over seven chapters, three of which deal entirely with Greek sources, he discusses Pherecydes, Anixamander and Anaximenes, Heraclitus and Persian religion, closing with an overview of Hesiod and Homer, Alcman, Thales, the period of Iranians influence, Pythagoras, Parmenides, the Pythagoreans, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, the Eleatics, and the atomists. West acknowledges an inability to read the Oriental languages referenced in his philological research — a minor detraction from an otherwise insightful Indo-Greek analysis.

West spends some time on Pherecydes who purportedly “wrote the first work of Greek literature . . . in prose” in “the sixth century B.C.” (1). Pherecydes seems to have belonged to a mystical, intuitive tradition and was “said to have had no teacher”; he received



knowledge from “the revelation of Ham or the secret books of the Phoenicians” (3). Although no direct evidence for this exists, there are “abundant Eastern influences in Pherecydes” and West points out that the etymology of his “father’s name, Babys” is “certainly of Asiatic origin, being most frequent in Phrygia, Pisidia, and Galatia,” the present Turkish areas surrounding the Sakarya River, Antalya, and Anatolia respectively (3). The “written books” of the ancient Greeks were, like those of Tantra and Vedic ideas, “a record of the spoken or sung word and subordinate to it” (5).

For the average Hellenic, “feats of supernatural knowledge” were the powers of “clever men, experts, pundits . . . of the sixth and fifth centuries” (2). The awe these men inspired occasionally became “fear and hatred” as religiopolitical forces acted against their influence, as seen in the case of “Athens under the stresses of the Peloponnesian War” (Part one documented the same reaction towards Tantrics in India). Indeed, there are numerous correlations between Greek and Indian ideas in Pherecydes, but a major convergence happens in Greek philosophy with the sudden appearance of “Chronos, the God of time who always existed,” as a force “without precedent”. Nevertheless, in India the concept of “the God Time as a cosmic progenitor” was well established “by the fourth century BC,” and there is no credible support for its import into India from Greece, yet the reverse is distinctly possible (28). According to West, “Kala” is the time principle in the “*Atharvaveda*,” the Vedic work Sarkar associates with Tantra which was likely extant millennia before Pherecydes wrote about Chronos.

Interestingly, the Pythagoreans possess “significant echoes” of Pherecydes’ “conceptions,” even though “Plato never mentions” Pherecydes, despite the “similarity” of the “platonic myths and the kind of eschatology expounded by Pherecydes.” Plato may have unknowingly inherited his “teaching” style from the “Pythagorean tradition” (West 7). John Bussanich supports McEvilly’s position that “Greek theories of reincarnation . . . more

closely resemble ancient Indian ones” rather than the “ideas found in Thracian shamanism, in Mesopotamian cultures, or in Iranian Zoroastrianism.” Regarding the transmigration of the soul, Bussanich avers “besides Pythagoras and Empedocles, reincarnation is poorly attested in other thinkers before Plato ” (3).

Radhakrishnan proclaims that “the Indian philosophical tradition is man’s oldest” and “longest continuous development of speculation about the nature of reality” beginning with “the ancient Vedas, which are probably the earliest documents of the human mind that have come down to us” (xxx). There is an increasing body of research highlighting potential Indian origins to Greek transcendental philosophy. Historians like McEvilly argue there was a “massive” spread “of ideas or methods of thinking” in the “pre-Socratic period” from “India into Greece.” Indian influences on Greek thought likely included “monistic solutions to the Problem of the One and the Many” as well as aspects of the “transformation of the elements,” reincarnation, and the “doctrine of the cosmic cycle.” Although it is widely acknowledged that ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Parmenidean and Aristotelian, catalyzed the transformation from mystical to logical reason, strong indications that one of the “major strains” of Greek thought for “a thousand years” was “Indian-influenced” is rarely addressed (642). Moreover, given the strong evidence in Part One for the vastly earlier presence of Tantric and Vedic ideas in India, previous Indo-Greek research utilizing the accepted 1500 BCE *terminus a quo* for the *RV* should not be taken too literally.

Radhakrishnan also argues the *RV* is “the oldest Indo-European literary and philosophical monument,” and “Indo-European languages derive from a common source,” illustrating a “relationship of the mind.” The Vedas signify “wisdom” and although the “composition and completion” of the hymns occurred over a long period, they were “current 15 centuries before Christ, somewhat in the arrangement in which we have them at the present time” (3). A.N. Marlow says the “Hindu pantheon . . . shows great affinities with that

of the early Greeks, since both are derived from a common source,” positing that “the Vedas contain the earliest expression of that worship of the heavenly bodies which persists right down to the time of the Stoics” (36). The pre-Socratic cosmology of Pherecydes, “remembered as the first [Greek] author who declared that the human soul was immortal,” offered a composite of Vedic reincarnation in which the soul “passed from body to body.” In the “Platonic myth,” the souls “adventures were placed in a complex topographical setting” which Plato accepted and developed (West 25).

Lakshmi Kasturi’s comparative dissertation, *Transcendentalism: India’s Contribution to East and West Spiritual Emerson and Vedic Literature*, outlined the impact of Vedic thought and Sanskrit on the Greeks and Romans, noting that the conflicting views regarding Indic influences on the Hellenic world can be ascribed to the “lack of definite dates and chronology of political and cultural events” in the ancient history of India (45). Rajaram and Frawley impute much of this conflict to “cultural ‘reductivity’ that reflects a Euro-centric cultural bias,” deriving “Asian civilization from the Europeans” (38). Schlegel studied the Vedas intensively, and “the details of his lecture” support “India’s primacy and the antiquity of its wisdom to all other cultures of the world” (39). Sir William Jones and others show “the influence of Indian thought on Greek philosophy;” unfortunately, to academia’s detriment, “few scholars of English literature co-ordinate their [literary and historical] research” with “spiritual literature” (51).<sup>32</sup>

Kasturi cites Garbe’s insistence that the Hindu “doctrine of ‘All-One’ from the *Upanishads*” was the predecessor to the “philosophy of Eleatics” (44); Garbe notes how records show that Hellenic travelers “visited Oriental countries for purposes of studying philosophy” (52). In this regard, Ashoka, the Buddhist Indian emperor, “refers to five Hellenistic rulers whose courts were visited by his missionaries,” which gave Buddhism “a footing in the Hellenistic monarchies of Asia, Africa, and the Europe” (53). Flood also

advances “suggestions of *Siva* worship on the coins of Greek, Saka, and Parthian kings who ruled north India during the period of 200 BC to 100 AD” (“The Śaiva Traditions” 205).

Many of the American transcendentalists shared the view that Greek philosophy was indebted to its ancient Indo-Greek contacts.<sup>33</sup> Kasturi states that “Emerson” treated “India and Greece as a single source” of knowledge, arguing he possessed “comprehensive knowledge about the Vedic influence on Greeks,” noting their “direct contact with India (*from [the] sixth century BC onwards*)” (59, italics mine). Robert D. Richardson describes how Emerson saw Beauty as “*kosmos*,” and “the world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty.” Moreover, Emerson believed “beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is our expression of the universe,” and “. . . the soul seeks beauty” (178).

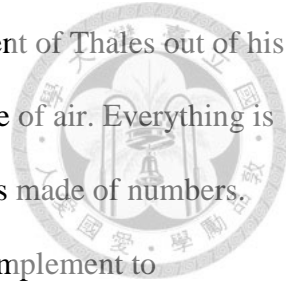
As pointed out earlier, Indo-Greek research was bolstered by the most significant comparative work in the past 40 years on the genesis of ancient philosophy McEvilly’s, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies*. Published in 2002, it constitutes 30 years of Indo-Greek study and has inspired new archaeological, linguistic, and anthropological research, while adroitly — although sometimes erroneously — navigating the East-West landscape that informed pre-Socratic world views.

Despite the work’s impact, or perhaps because of it, it has been criticized, and George Thompson questions McEvilly’s claim that Greek transcendentalism incorporated Indian ideas via a “massive” diffusion between “Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley civilization.” Thompson says this grossly overstates what was “at best” a “minuscule” influence — noting that these beliefs existed in India before any contact with Mesopotamia. To be sure, McEvilly’s position on Mesopotamian transferences to India is derived from “some badly outdated sources” such as Arthur Keith’s, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* whose claims for “Babylonian influences on the Vedic tradition” have long since been abandoned by Indologists (51).

The Mesopotamian issue aside, Thompson applauds McEvilly's criticism of the "guardians of the Classics and Indologists" who have defended "two Eurocentric myths: the myth of the Greek invention of reason, and the myth of the Aryan invasion into India" (47).<sup>34</sup> Thompson also notes McEvilly's argument that scholars like Frawley, Rajaram and Talageri, are, as a source, "too hysterical to be treated as credible" sources as they are apparently "emotionally engaged in a war" to liberate Indian academia from colonial influences (47-48). Nevertheless, the same accusation of emotional engagement can be levied at the entrenched perspectives of credible academics who find their own perspectives increasingly under question from comparative work, such as the paleo-geographical studies showing the *RV*'s millennia earlier composition discussed in Chapter Three. Thompson justifiably discredits as "pure fantasy" McEvilly's position that the "*R̥g Veda* shows the heavy influence of Mesopotamian mythology (49) and claims Indo-Iranian Vedic beliefs created the philosophy that influenced Greek transcendental thought and mythology.

#### 9.4 Ancient Intuition and Classical Logic

Classical commentary on Greek philosophy invariably lauds the development of logical reasoning while holding up Thales, Parmenides, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as avatars of the West's journey from superstition to empiricism. It is discomfiting to understand that academic focus on Greek empiricism has ignored the mystical episteme of the pre-Socratic's. Following Kingsley and others, I argue the modern conception of practical reason is a byproduct of later commentary that parsed the mystical and intuitional teachings of Parmenides and Socrates. Mysticism and reason were part of the same ancient view existing in a nested hierarchy: mysticism helped inspire reason, yet later exegeses of mystical statements like Thale's proclamation that "everything is made of water" were deconstructed to suit the empirical mindset that came to dominate philosophy.



I pointed out in 6.2.1 that Kolak admitted to leaving one statement of Thales out of his ontological summary: “Everything is made of water. Everything is made of air. Everything is made of the infinite boundless. Everything is made of fire. Everything is made of numbers. Everything is made of atoms. Everything is made of quarks.” Thales complement to “everything is made of water” was “everything is full of Gods” (20-21). What precisely Thales means by this statement is also up for debate, but it disabuses Aristotle’s materialist interpretation mentioned in 6.2.1, particularly when water in the Vedas was associated with Aseity — the composite of all ipseities. Perhaps Thales associated Reality with the presence of individual aspects of consciousness — otherwise known as Gods. Both statements have “everything” as the common denominator with “water” and “Gods” the ontology of everything. Taking this further, it could be said *water is full of Gods* or consciousness is full of Gods. Admittedly, this is speculation, but I suspect once the similarities between Indo-Greek ideas are fleshed out, pre-Socratic philosophy will ultimately be contextualized by Indian philosophy.

Some scholars argue the teachings of the pre-Socratics such as Thales and Parmenides are riddles designed to challenge the mind to pursue deeper truths. Kingsley notes the formal language used to describe an “initiate” is “the man who knows”; moreover, for the “ancient Greeks the language of initiation was, above all, the language of riddles.” Initiation, “mysteries,” and “riddles went hand in hand” because the “formal process of initiation” leaned on riddles “deliberately used for testing people,” to ward off “those . . . easily discouraged,” and to confuse those who were “happy to be misled” (Kingsley 59-60).

The path of contemplation and wisdom was couched in riddles to plunge the people that Socrates and his predecessors spoke to into “*aporia* or ‘pathlessness’” — a “state of utter helplessness” (249). The logic behind stilling the mind with riddles is consistent with the Zen application of *kōans* during meditation. A *kōan* is “a problem which cannot be solved through

logical thinking; an unsolvable riddle” inducing “absolute stillness” and the quiescence of mind (Enomiya-Lassalle 20). Meditators know that terminating discursive thought helps eliminate duality and presents an infinite ocean of consciousness to infinity. Seemingly, what Thales likely meant by “everything is full of gods” shares the Tantric conception of Aseity’s coexistence in every particle of this universe.

The teachers of Tantra, Buddhism, and Taoism prioritized the intuitions of meditation over analytic reason to experience Reality as it is rather than as it appears. Hence, Kingsley suggests Parmenides’ poem is allied with ancient meditative praxes long forgotten in the West and his unorthodox interpretation resonates with other Indo-Greek studies to highlight the polemical contention that Parmenides, Zeno, and Epimenides were first mystics then logicians. However, as with the polemical history of Tantra, interlocutors inevitably question why contemporary accounts focus on the Greek development of logic and empiricism and not the pre-Socratics’ intuitional praxes?

I suggest once small divergences occur succeeding commentary exponentially distort the oral teachings, and esoteric verity is gradually colored by analytical and deconstructive fancies which are, in turn, used to refute transcendental interpretations as fantasy themselves. These lamentable distortions cannot be solely imputed to latter commentary because the pre-Socratics utilized poetic devices to intentionally discombobulate their readers.

## 9.5 Parmenides

Parmenides was born in the city of “Velia” but may also have lived in “Elea” in “the last quarter of the sixth century B.C.” (Davidson 1). Although his writings survive in fragments, and, according to Kingsley, his modern translations “bear little relation to the meaning of his original Greek,” Parmenides is universally acknowledged as the “inventor of logic,” for his three-part poem (Kingsley 23). Apropos of this status, the second part of the

poem attended by most scholars seems to discuss logic while the first and third sections are mostly ignored as overly mystical and out of sync with the logic arguments extrapolated from part two. Misinterpretation of Parmenides' poem has dogged Western reason for the past 2500 years: the poem has been transformed into a reductive exercise for noetic mind or, as Kingsley avers "learning to reason" by "mastering the ability to focus on a fraction of the whole and overlook everything else" (24).

Thus, most critics hold to the opinion that Parmenides' "public lectures and discussions" utilized the "*Dialectic* method of reasoning" even though nothing of his "prose writings" survive and the poem "entitled *On Nature*" has come down to us only in "fragments" through the works of "Plato, Sextus Empeircus, Proklos, and Simplicius" (Davidson 3). The ancients held the poem in great esteem, but "much that is put into the mouth of Parmenides in the Platonic dialogue" must be attributed to "Plato himself, or to whoever was the author." Davidson, quoting Hegel, claims Plato's *Parmenides* included "the sublimest dialectic that ever was" (3). Mary McKenzie argues Parmenides "was neither a nihilist nor a skeptic" but "a working philosopher challenging our rational apparatus with the hardest antithesis of all — the paradoxical relation of reason and perception" (9). Regardless of much of the commentary on Parmenides, reason and perception are not the primary theses of his poem, rather it operates as an ontological metaphysics that many erroneously consider pertains to "motion," which Parmenides "rejected" because motion is a "form of process or change" that infringes on the "inviolable status of Being and the consequent impossibility of Genesis" (Kirk 1). The differences in scholarly opinion highlight the tremendous difficulty confronting our understanding of Parmenides' poem without access to the Parmenidean mysticism revealed by Kingsley.

Parmenides' intention has been disputed for almost two and a half millennia, yet his poem's status as the seminal Western philosophical text is undisputed. Christopher Kurfes's



2012 doctoral dissertation, *Restoring Parmenides Poem: Essays toward a New Arrangement of the Fragments Based on a Reassessment of the Original Sources*, asserts that while “attitudes about Parmenides’ verse and estimations of his thought have differed markedly,” the fragment is “widely regarded” as a “landmark” in the “history of Western thought.” Since its composition “in the early fifth century B.C.E.,” the poem has received “momentous acclaim (and blame) from many quarters”; commentators have deemed Parmenides “the father of idealism, rationalism, materialism, metaphysics, ontology, logic, and philosophical method” (1).

Kurfess questions the standard order of the fragments given by Dielz-Kranz in the 1900 *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* which is the commonly used version of Parmenides poem, because “the standard treatment mishandled the source material in several important respects (3). Both the lack of certainty regarding the position of important fragments and the “intellectual climate of the early fifth century B.C.E.” determined “immediate reactions” to the poem that involved “much guesswork” and said guesswork’s massive impact on Parmenides successors: “Anaxagoras of Clazomenea, Empedocles of Aeragas, and the atomist Leucippus” (5). Some “early readers ridiculed the poem” inspiring Parmenides’ pupil, Zeno, to mount a “counter-attack in the form of a series of paradoxes still famous today.”

Kurfess points out that the vast “array of impressions” made on thinkers with access to the full poem at the time indicate these earliest interlocutors had “only a partial understanding of what it was they had experienced.” After two and a half millennia, the dearth of agreement on the poem’s intent, coupled with “modern scholarly” work that protested “difficulty reading the poem,” because of “Parmenides attempt to present an entirely novel, austere logical philosophy in the constraints of traditional hexameter poetry,” has produced an enormous corpus of disparate commentary (6). Kurfess, following

in Kingsley's footsteps, professes the "condescending attitude towards Parmenides' poetic ability" skewers "our own shortcomings as readers" and "presupposes" our ability to "judge what it was he was trying to express." Whereas, as we have seen with Indian esoteric texts, Parmenides intended that "his audience" should "struggle over the poem" and work through "the difficulties of expression" to "come to grips" with his meaning. Confusion, struggle, and disappointment were an effect of the poem which was "intended" as a "riddle." Readers who adapted the poem to suit their "own preset categories" would miss "something important" (7).

McEvilley shows the link between Parmenides' monism and his interlocutor Plato because Plato "refers to Parmenides as his 'father' (*Soph.* 241d), further stating Socrates respected Parmenides more than anyone else (*Theat.* i83e)" (159). Thomas Davidson believes Socrates "conversed with Parmenides" in about 454 BCE when the latter was about "15 years old" while Plato claims "Zeno was twenty-five years younger than Parmenides" (2). Parmenides' role as a mystic has been veiled because traditional academic interpretations consider the poem a purely logical device, certainly not a guide to meditation. Jowett champions Plato's *Parmenides* as the most "copiously illustrated," both in ancient and modern times, with none of Plato's other works fathering "interpreters" that have "been more at variance with one another," given the text is "more fragmentary and isolated than any other dialogue and the design of the writer is not expressly stated." Jowett says of Plato's *Parmenides*, "the date is uncertain; the relation to the other writings of Plato is also uncertain," and the "connection between the two parts" is "extremely obscure." The reader is never sure if "Plato is speaking his own sentiments "through Parmenides and "overthrowing him out of his own mouth" or whether Plato is "propounding consequences which would have been admitted by Zeno and Parmenides themselves" (Plato and Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato: Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions Vol IV* 3). This confusion has

been registered by some as illustrative of “transcendental mysteries” and by others as “mere illustration, of a new method taken at random.



### 9.5.1 Monism

Plato’s interlocutor, Socrates, explains how Parmenides and Zeno approached the question of singularity and duality from two different sides while sharing the insight that Reality is monistic and indescribable:

For you, in your poems, say The All is one, and of this you adduce excellent proofs; and he on the other hand says There is no many; and on behalf of this he offers overwhelming evidence. You affirm unity, he denies plurality. And so you deceive the world into believing that you are saying different things when really you are saying much the same. This is a strain of art beyond the reach of most of us. (147)

Plato’s Parmenides deduces monism via elenchus that takes Aristitoteles from the definition of “One-ness” (singularity) without parts and guides him to accepting that duality is a quality possible in singularity because the state of singularity, paradoxically, implies the potential lack of singularity. Parmenides, in a remarkable synthesis, says “if one is not, there is no conception of any of the others except as one or many; for you cannot conceive the many without the one.” Moreover, “if one is not, the others neither are, nor can be conceived to be either one or many?”; “Nor as the same or different, nor in contact or separation, nor in any of those states which we enumerated as appearing to be; — the others neither are nor appear to be any of these, if one is not?” He sums up the hypothesis with the question, “If one is not, then nothing is?” and finally affirms “what seems to be the truth, that, whether one is or is not, one and the others in relation to themselves and one another, all of them, in every way,

are and are not, and appeared to be and appear not to be” (Plato and Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato: Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions Vol IV* 105-06).

Thus, Plato’s *Parmenides* parallels Sarkar’s conception of Aseity as a relational state not “under the bondage of the *guñas*” nor “created by the *guñas*” but in a “witnessing relationship with the universe.” With Aseity, the potential for One and many Beings arises; however, Metaseity, itself, is transcendent of one or many because in “*Nirguṇa Brahma*, there is no witnesship and, therefore, no association with the *guñas* [qualifications]” (“Some Questions and Answers on Ananda Marga Philosophy — section B” Q. 17)

### 9.5.2 Madness

Parmenides’ poem has mystical elements demonstrating fundamental relationships between meditation and the foundation of Socratic praxis. Kingsley challenges Western ideas of logical reasoning and its practice by Greek philosophers. Logic’s present form with its “endless learned debates,” he argues, has nothing to do with logic as it “once was” practiced in Greece (20). Despite the plethora of Parmenidean analyses, there is little to substantially undermine Kingsley’s ecstatic reading of Parmenides. His effort is critiqued not for its unsound premises, but, as Raymond Tallis remonstrates, because Kingsley’s mystical interpretation “should be rejected as a way forward for philosophy,” if not “rejected as an interpretation of Parmenides” (187). Tallis considers spiritual madness “as a voluntary and intermittent state achieved by certain privileged individuals” to be “deeply insincere and at odds with itself.” Be that as it may, experiencing Reality has nothing to do with safety or mental survival. Life is struggle; death lurks in every cell, and uninformed bias against a spiritual ecstasy “incompatible with a “life tolerable for adults and safe for children” ostensibly makes meditation and *samādhi* the purvey of lunatics, or people unfit for society.

Ironically, religious ecstasy is a fundamental part of contemporary mainstream religious meetings which frequently segue into babbling in tongues, people fainting, and constitutional judges running around in disarray under the intoxication of holy forces. Many societies support belief in miracles, absolution, spirits, mediums, and magical entities and readily press children into service of these beliefs without fear of psychological harm. Various fundamentalist groups have convinced otherwise rational beings to strap on explosives and offer their body parts to satiate holy beings and to be rewarded with sexual gratification in the afterlife. Still other gods require large sums of money to placate and convince them of the supplicants' worthiness to enter some heavenly abode. Children have never been immune to these perversions foisted as religion. On the other hand, none of these distorted ideas are related to Tantric meditation and *samādhi*.

By contemporary Western standards, sitting unmoving under a tree for 15 months would seem greatly at odds with what is called sanity or normality, yet the same behavior is accepted and even admired by hundreds of millions in certain places, and great masters like the Buddha were renowned for their long meditations. A few years ago fifteen-year-old Ram Bahadur Bomjon was recorded practicing meditation and inedia for weeks at a time with no discernible change to his physical or mental well-being. While living in India and visiting *Acarya Chandranath Kumar (Dadaji)* in 2002, I met a thirty-five year old Ananda Marga monk, who, in personal conversation, disclosed that he slept a maximum of thirty minutes a day because he preferred to spend the remainder of his night in meditation. I asked him how this was possible. He replied that following a strict vegetarian diet which excluded stimulants kept his body pliable and mind concentrated. Devotion and mantric praxis sustained his object of meditation so that he required little of the usual physical comforts. When I questioned *Dadaji* about the ability to go without sleep, he noted that although it seemed antithetical to normal living, incremental training and devotion were conducive to the

actualization of seemingly superhuman feats. Fear, misunderstanding, and incorrect guidance prevent practitioners — and normal people — from attaining the subsidiary supra-normal abilities arising from Tantric praxis.

No doubt, Tallis's apprehension of harm stemming from spiritual ecstasy is not unreasonable in an untrained individual, yet Parmenides created protective measures that guaranteed the non-initiated would never understand the poem's hidden meaning without initiation or exceptional mental acumen and discipline. Parmenides was a mystic, an *iatromantis*, a Greek yogi, and a philosopher nonpareil, who, in his milieu, crafted a poem so carefully worded that it could be construed as fantasy by the uninitiated, an analytic tool by dualists, a parable by others, or, in the right hands, the poem would inspire an initiate to enter a meditation on the nature of Reality to experience Aseity. Thus, the intuitions of the Greek *iatromantis* who were devoted to gleaning truth while journeying to Asia and within are the origins of Parmenides' poem and Western philosophy.

Kurfess discloses that while "the portrait of Parmenides as a mystic proposed by Kingsley" might be "starkly at odds with the 'mainstream' interpretation of Parmenides as the father of logic," Kingsley was not the first to offer an alternative view. Stanley Lombardo's translation of Parmenides and Empedocles did not receive much "attention from specialists" but three decades ago he seriously considered "the parallels sometimes noted, but often neglected by earlier generations of scholars between Parmenides poem and reports of shamanic spiritual journeys." Even more importantly, Lombardo saw the "substance" of the Goddess's teachings directed the reader's attention to "the universe" and "minds" forming "a mutually committed whole." For this reason, the poem describes "a unique inner experience, the encounter of one's mind with Being and the realization that they are one and the same." It teaches a "spiritual path rather than a logical route or an analytical method (78).

The poem is often interpreted as a merely “rhetorical device” or a simple “allegory,” explaining how philosophers find clarity in the darkness (29). Kingsley’s opposition to this view is supported by discoveries lending credence to his profound reading of the poem as a reverse of logic and an intuitive journey into “the ultimate night that no human being could possibly survive without divine protection”; a journey into “the world of the dead,” via the meditative practice the Greeks called *Nomos* ‘incubation’ (30).

There was a secret “technical language associated” with incubation as ambiguous as the Tantric texts (31). This was not coincidental; incubation had earlier associations with the Greek philosopher, Epimenides, of Crete. The Cretans were the ancestors of the Phocaeans, and Parmenides was their spiritual successor. Epimenides was not only a healer and prophet but also the most important lawgiver; these laws “came to him through prophecy” and were formulated “to heal cities as well as people.” He was a healer-prophet, an “*Iatromantis*” which he became after spending “years in a cave,” motionless, practicing the art of incubation (33). Incubation required practice “in a dark place” and “lying down in complete stillness,” while remaining “motionless for hours or days.” During the first stages of incubation, the body would “go silent,” then “the mind” would become still, giving access “to a totally different state of awareness.” The *Iatromantis* invoked similar techniques to “the shamans in Siberia, or Central Asia”; historians have tried to divide these sages linguistically and culturally, but they were part of “the same phenomenon.” They came from “the far eastern fringes of the Greek world.” There are accounts of their “journeys into Central Asia,” and some of them “even came from [Asia] themselves.” These peripatetic ascetics introduced the Greeks to “traditions and legends shared by people living in the regions not just of Central Asia but of Mongolia, India [and] Tibet.”

Pieter Craffert notes that shamanism “is a globally distributed and very ancient pattern of practices” utilized to experience “alternate states of consciousness” (151). The term was

first recognized “among specific Siberian hunting tribes” as derivative of the “Tungus-Mongol,” meaning either “one who is excited, moved, raised” or “to know” (152). There is much to suggest Tantrics, Yogis, and shamanists interacted and these evolving traditions were carried from India to the west. Thus I think it highly plausible that aspects of Tantric praxis and devotional meditations were imported into Greece by the *Iatromantis*. Plato, speaking through Diotima, likely learned aspects of this at the knees of his master, Socrates.

The connection between Parmenides as the first logician and his status as a mystic and meditator was unknown until discovery of three marble inscriptions in his hometown, Velia, which linked him to Epimenides and the *Iatromantis* tradition.<sup>35</sup> This tradition and the inscriptions discovered at Velia were not entirely new to Greek scholars, some words about Parmenides’ teacher were uncovered in an ancient Greek text; “he was not much, either: pure, obscure, without any apparent influence.” Although the authenticity of the details in the text are frequently emphasized, its main point is ignored because Epimenides’ pedagogy was nothing other than *hêsychia* ‘stillness.’ Kingsley argues the suggestion that “the father of Western rationalism, the founder of logic,” was taught to still his mind through silent meditation should be “shocking,” to modern philosophers because the basis of Western logic rests on Parmenides’ transcendental intuitions and not discursive logic as it is now understood (44).

Intriguingly, the “divine model” for the *Iatromantis*, “who were known for covering huge distances on foot,” and “for travelling into other worlds while their body stayed completely still,” was Apollo (35). He was the God of the far north and the distant north-east, known for “inspiring strange hypnotic words” seemingly “like poetry” in his prophets, elicited through altered states of consciousness. After all it was the Delphi Oracle, the voice of Apollo, which Socrates knew to be fond of riddles. Something of the hypnotic quality of Apollo’s words reflects the auto hypnotic power of Tantric mantra.





### 9.5.3 Parmenides Poem, *On Nature*: Mantra and Repetition

In the *Symposium*, Plato offers through Diotima an opportunity to grasp the whole by directing the lover's (devotee's) consciousness towards truth. For Diotima ultimate truth is experienced by consciousness, not mind, but it is mind that longs for truth and makes the first step towards the unity of Aseity. The first line of Parmenides' poem accentuates this longing for truth; the Greek word "*thumos*" or the "energy of life," refers to mental "passion, appetite, yearning" and "longing" (27). Parmenides' poem in full is reproduced below:

The mares that carry me as far as longing can reach rode on, once they had come and fetched to me onto the legendary road of the divinity that carries the man who knows through the vast and dark unknown. And on I was carried as the mares, aware just where to go, kept carrying me straining at the chariot; and young women lead the way. And the axle in the hubs let out the sound of a pipe blazing from the pressure of the two well-rounded wheels at either side, as they rapidly led on: Young women, girls, daughters of the Sun who had left the Mansions of the Night for the light and pushed back the veils from their faces with their hands.

There are the gates on the pathways of Night and Day, held fast in place between the lintel above in the threshold of stone. They reached right up into the heavens, filled with gigantic doors. And the keys — that now open, and now lock — are held fast by Justice: she who always demands exact returns. And with soft seductive words the girls cunningly persuaded her to push back immediately, and just for them, the bar that bolts the gates. And as the doors flew open, making the bronze axles with their pegs and nails spin — now one, now the other — in their pipes, they created a gaping chasm. Straight through and on the girls held fast their course for the chariot and horses, straight down the road.

And the goddess welcomed me kindly, and took my right hand in hers and spoke these words as she addressed me: “Welcome young man, partnered by immortal charioteers, reaching our home with the mares that carry you. For it was no hard fate that sent you travelling this road — so far away from the beaten track of humans — but Rightness, and Justice. And what is needed is for you to learn all things: both the unshaken heart of persuasive Truth and the opinions of mortals in which there is nothing that can truthfully be trusted at all. But even so, this too you will learn — how beliefs based on appearance ought to be believable as they travel through all there is. (27)

Crucial to the analysis of Parmenides poem is the use of repetition in the original Greek, typical of the “systematic repetition” found in Greek poetry closely correlating with the repetition of a mantra in numinous Tantric meditation. Kurfess agrees “heartily” with Kingsley’s certainty that the “employment of repetition is neither amateurish nor inartistic,” repetition and incantation induces “in the audience an altered state of consciousness, priming them for the exceptional teaching to come,” and the continual repetition of the Greek word “carry” facilitates entry into “a sort of trance” (38). Kurfess points out the “first four lines feature fourfold repetition of φέρω” ‘bring/ bear/carry’ (38).

Tantric Mantra, like the poem, is a “technique” to evoke “other states of consciousness.” The poetry did not just “describe the ecstatic journeys” into altered states of consciousness — they were the means of “invoking them” (35). Patton E. Burchett gives the accepted Sanskrit definition of mantra: “*mantra* can be understood as ‘an instrument of thought (or the mind),’” integral to traditions in India “from Vedic times to the present” (813). Mantra is the sound encapsulating the OM which merges “the practitioner’s consciousness [ipseity]” and the “pure consciousness [Aseity]” of reality through an “intensely concentrated” state (815). This concentration is driven by the intense devotional

flow of the practitioner's mind so that *bhakti* spontaneously develops as the meditator begins to experience Aseity in everything and transforms mundane into spiritual love.

Sarkar says mantra training helps mind to sustain its unbroken awareness and concentrated "gaze" that strives to pierce the veil of phenomena. Is it a coincidence that meditation dissolves discursive mind, like Greek incubation, so that meditation becomes a practice of dying even while alive: mind is unable to enter Aseity intact, but the journey into the temporary darkness of mental dissolution arrives at the effulgent light of Aseity. Thus, I propose, when the mind is terminated the lover starts on the path of Diotima's truth "unsullied by flesh and color." Diotima says the Good is the causal entity that makes all beings pregnant with beauty. Linda Johnsen claims the "most common term that Plato and Plotinus used in referring to the Supreme Reality [All One] was 'the Good'" — which is also a "direct translation of one of the most common Sanskrit names for the Supreme Reality, 'Shiva'" (204). The continual reminder of seeking oneness through *sadhana bhakti* fulfills Diotima's injunction to remain close to truth and simultaneously answers the question as to which faculty enables this process. The Socratic lover and the Tantric devotee are not in love with the world of appearance but the essence hidden within the phenomena. Unbroken mantric praxis channels the devotee's ipseity towards perceiving Aseity everywhere to transcend all mental limitations. This actualizes Thales statement that "Everything is a full of Gods."

Greek texts recount how the practice of incubation induced altered states of consciousness, presaged by everything "spinning" and "moving in a circle." Gradually the practitioner begins to hear a "piping, hissing sound just like the hissing of a snake" (36), known as "the sound of silence . . . behind the whole of creation," a sound sacred to Apollo (37). Sarkar explains that when the meditator, "the *sādhaka*," removes the "umbrella" of "vanity" that keeps them separate from the grace of Aseity, they hear the sound of *om* or

creation known as “*oṃkāra*,” and in its “first phase” the meditator “comes in contact with a hissing sound” (“Brahma Cakra” par. 24). Intriguingly for the Tantric and the Iatromantis connection, Shiva, the Tantric deity most closely related to the All One is seen wearing a snake, or holding one, as he performs *Tandava*, the dance of creation.

## 9.6 Plato’s Parmenidean Monism and Transcendence

In Plato’s *Parmenides*, Socrates is warned by Parmenides to wrestle with the ideas of “‘forms’ and ‘participation’” after Socrates admits “he is entirely at a loss where to turn next”:

The impulse that carries you towards philosophy is assuredly noble and divine; but there is an art which is called by the vulgar idle talking, and which is often imagined to be useless; in that you must train and exercise yourself, now that you are young, or truth will elude your grasp. (Plato and Jowett *The Dialogues of Plato: Translated into English with Analyses and Introductions Vol IV* 56)

The incongruity of dialectical reason as the answer to truth is a riddle itself. It must be remembered Parmenides is talking in an era when practical concerns yet outweighed the exercise of the mind, and he implies that Socrates must willingly submit to training the mind, while young, to prepare it for the truth yet to be revealed. Given Parmenides’ monistic ontology, I argue noetic mind takes reason to its limits and aporia ensues after it discovers the infinite loop of reason. Only when the riddle overwhelms mind and plunges it into epistemic despair, can silence work its magic to reveal ipseity. Hence, Parmenides answers Socrates question as to “the nature of this exercise” by saying he should consider the consequences “which flow from a given hypothesis” along with the “consequences which flow from denying the hypothesis . . . that will be still better training for you” (56). Socrates admits to

being confused how this training could be applied to Parmenides' hypothesis of the One and the many. By way of explanation Parmenides says:

In a word, when you suppose anything to be or not to be, or to be in any way affected, you must look at the consequences in relation to the thing itself, and to any other things which you choose, — to each of them singly, to more than one, and to all; and so of other things, you must look at them in relation to themselves and to anything else which you suppose either to be or not to be, if you would train yourself perfectly and see the real truth. (57)

Parmenides is *apparently* attesting to the definitive practice of logic, and Western logicians jumped at the implicit objectivity which weighs both the value of supporting and denying a particular hypothesis. Plato's Parmenides makes a forceful argument for cause and effect or action and reaction when formulating an episteme of truth based on appearance and forms, yet manifestation is not Parmenides truth; there is something that transcends the truth of the senses.

Philosophers have long accepted Parmenides' certainty that Reality is single, exemplified by his disciple, Zeno, who supported non-duality. Parmenides practiced incubation to realize this state, but Socrates either purports not to know Parmenides praxis or is playing the role of a standard logician. Consequently, Socrates begs Parmenides to elucidate the praxis which the latter coyly hesitates at, claiming "the subject is not one that can be well spoken of "before a large audience" because "most people are not aware that this *roundabout* progress through all things is the only way in which the mind can attain truth and wisdom" (emphasis added 57). To interject, Parmenides is well aware that the mind cannot attain truth or wisdom. Clearly, his validation of singularity attests to its incommunicability, but Socrates has to start with mind to transcend the mind — one way to do this was to force the mind into silence through a riddle so profound it terminated discursive reason.

Kingsley claims the *Iatromantis* who lived during Parmenides era introduced their writings with the “mystifying riddles” which were as “confusing to anyone then as they are now.” Only the “initiate” of Apollo who was “notorious among the Greeks for his riddling oracles,” might “descend alive into the underworld.” Initiates like Parmenides, who introduces himself at the beginning of his poem as “the man who knows,” penetrated the transcendental secret of the riddle. Hence, Kingsley strongly contends “only a fool would choose to miss” that the text was written “for initiates” already trained in the roundabout process of journeying into mysticism through silence (Kingsley 59).

Earlier, the outcome of Plato’s Parmenidean hypothesis, with its inclusion of support and rebuttal, underscored how the infinite regression of the hypothesis inevitably turns into logical aporia: “if one is or is not, one and the others in relation to themselves and one another, all of them, in every way, are and are not, and appear and appeared not to be.” The *Parmenides* ends with Socrates uttering two words: “Most true”! Socrates acquiesces to Parmenides’ astounding transcendental contention that truth is unspeakable, yet most logicians have chosen to ignore the ends while reifying the means and ignore the transcendental implication of Parmenides’ statement. Unequivocally, Parmenides points out the average mind is untrained in the roundabout manner which presents a veridical understanding of logic itself. This praxis requires a keen analysis of cause and effect, the relationship between form, idea, perception, and qualia to see that logic tells the mind nothing at all. For Parmenides, the only function of dialectical reason is to debunk its capacity to understand the contradiction that the one and the many appear to be and appear not to be. Consequently, philosophers can say nothing about truth suggests my contention that the Parmenidean One, in the absolute sense, is identical to Tantric *nirguṇa* (Metaseity).

We have seen that the ultimate state is uncommunicable, incomparable, unsurpassable, and nothing philosophers say has any exclusive dominion over Metaseity’s

characteristics or absence thereof. Eliade quotes the *Upanishads* “*Neti! Neti!* ‘No, no! Thou art not this; nor are thou that!’” (10). David Izzo points out “Shankara developed a complex, ‘neither/nor’ dialectic from the Upanishads” arguing that “*Neti, neti*, not this, not that,” suggests that if “spirit [Aseity/Metaseity] is not in any particular physical or metaphysical entity, then spirit can only exist in every physical and metaphysical entity”(19). Scott Austin contends Socrates used “stultification” to answer the question of “what a thing is” by “the fact that the mind can give both Yes and No answers to the same question” which forces “focus upwards into the transcendent through an ethical life and a continued theoretical inquiry.” Thus “our whole culture, owes a debt to Parmenides” whose poem is the “first surviving specimen of transcendental argument” in the West (27).

Kingsley evinces that Plato held Parmenides in the same regard as his teacher, Socrates. He desired to be seen “as the bearer of Socrates mantle” and the “succession to Parmenides teaching.” This necessitated Plato instigating “a few minor adjustments” to Parmenides’ teachings, making Plato’s portrayals of the latter “so lifelike” that they were widely accepted (300). This obfuscation was later clarified when Socrates’ portrayal of Zeno as an immature thinker was mitigated by discoveries surrounding the life of the historical Zeno. As Parmenides’ student, Zeno was a transcendentalist: “just as with Indian logic,” he “used logic in its truest sense . . . not to fortify or justify our commonsense view of reality but to undermine it, destroy it.” Zeno proclaimed the “whole world we believe in is an illusion” of the senses and not ultimate truth (295). While Parmenides explained that “in reality there is no movement, no separation between this and that,” and “no time outside of now,” Zeno “saw no need” to “say anything about reality.” Zeno used the argument of the arrow that never reaches its mark to illustrate that common sense dictates that movement is impossible following the practical infinite regression of the “half of the half, then a half of this half, and so on” between the arrow and its target so that the target is never reached (295). In other

words, either the arrow or its objective do not exist or they are one — in which case there was neither plurality nor singularity.

The full implication of this realization engenders a type of transcendental madness which when “controlled” can “not only heal but also give access to another world” (437). However, mystical insanity creates “a tremendous power” enabling the practitioner to keep their “focus in the eye of the storm,” absent the control of the “thinking mind” which could not maintain integrity in this altered state. “Clinical insanity is simply the inability to hold the purity of such a state” so that people mistakenly identify themselves “with some dark [limited] corner of existence” (the mind) instead of realizing “a trust and sense of direction” that “comes from the soul [ipseity].” When actualized, devotion to the transcendent permits realizing “what it means not to have been born and never to have been born, to watch the stars turn to dust and attach no significance to this whatsoever” (438). The “Parmenidean way of life,” was authenticated by Zeno when he was “caught helping some people who lived between Italy and Sicily on the island of Lipara,” south of Velia, “to protect themselves against [Athenian] invaders” (296). While being horrifically tortured, Zeno “refused to give in or betray his friends,” and during this “suffering” he “‘tested Parmenides’ words in fire like gold that’s pure and true’” (79).

Zeno was the “adopted” Iatromantic “son” of Parmenides in the “priestly tradition that served Apollo Oulios” after a line of “succession . . . based on the principle of teachers adopting their disciples” on the provision that the latter displayed “total commitment” so that the “teacher became” the “father” (292). Many disregarded the story of Zeno’s bravery as fiction. However, in 1978, archaeologists “working on the island” of Lipara correlated mention of Zeno’s death in “Plato’s famous myth at the end of *Phaedo*,” which Socrates relates just “before being put to death,” with the discovery of inscriptions on the island that included the word “*Oulis*” found only in two other places in the Western Mediterranean:



“Velia” and its sister city “Massalia.” This discovery confirmed that “the story about Zeno had not just been made up” and that the “supreme importance” of living “a Parmenidean way of life” wasn’t a vague statement of Zeno’s but an actual praxis that contained tremendous “value” and “tremendous danger” for those “coming into contact with such a tradition” without “deep respect” and “real attention.” The *Iatromantis* tradition offered real “wisdom” and liberation or the danger of becoming “more foolish than ever” if the “extraordinary opportunity” was mistaken as an “exercise for intellectuals” instead of understood as a “guide” to self “transformation” (297-298).

With the above in mind, Kingsley discourages perspectives that refute Parmenides’ emphasis of stillness because they ignore the poem’s main message. Philosophical arguments supporting the second “logic” of the poem while ignoring the intuitional aspects are not only “unreasonable” but also “impossible to maintain.” Parmenides proclaims reality is stillness; it has a “complete lack of change or movement.” Moreover, Plato and the Greek philosophers who tried to “make sense of Parmenides’ teachings” summed up his philosophy with “*hêsychia*: stillness” (46). For Kingsley the poem is a riddle whose solution opens the doorway of intense devotion that culminates in quiescence: “Through the practice of stillness” the meditator comes to an “experience of reality” existing “beyond this world of the senses” and ultimate knowing (46).

### 9.6.1 Diotima’s Secret Teachings: *Bhakti and Eros*

The *Iatromantis* connection with *Symposium* is inferential but compelling, given Diotima’s role as spiritual advisor to Socrates in the text. Howatson speculates the “itinerant ‘wise woman.’” was a fictional teacher but her name was derived “from Mantinea . . . because the Greek word for seer, *mantis*, resembles the place-name. Her own name appears to mean ‘honouring (or ‘honoured by’) Zeus” (75-76). (To my knowledge the connection between

Diotima, Mantinea, and the *Iatromatis*, Parmenides, has not been made previously.) Howatson argues The *Symposium* has an “ethical” core, “regulating . . . desire” towards “the right kinds of things” and, thus, “philosophy” is crucial “to the happy human life” (ix-x). He points out that the five speeches preceding Socrate’s “praise (*encomia*)” ordinary love (x). In other words, the earlier speakers desire the satisfaction of mundane desire, not permanent happiness or ‘*eudiamonia*,’ which cannot “be had in a moment in time” — rather it “is possessed in a lasting way” (xviii). Radhakrishnan states “every system of Indian philosophical thought” provides a “practical way of reaching the supreme ideal,” and I contend Diotima implicitly alludes to devotional love as the ideal complement to liberation. Permanent happiness, in singularity, according to the principle of *eudiamonia* must transcend illusory thoughts of happiness which are temporary phenomena. This harmonizes with the Tantric perspective that, although the meditator “begin[s] with thoughts,” their “aim is to go beyond thought to the decisive experience,” realized in *aporia* (50).

Diotima’s question, presented in my introduction, to Socrates was, “[do you think] that a person who directs his gaze to that object and contemplates it with that faculty by which it has to be viewed, and stays close to it, has a poor life?” She continues, “it is there alone, when he sees the beautiful with that by which it has to be viewed, that he will give birth to true virtue . . . it is not an image that he is grasping but the truth” (212b). While Plato does not explicitly reveal the object and means to its perception, the first and the second component of Diotima’s question, I argue, parallel the OM found in Tantra. (1) What type of “gaze” is being referred to? (2); what is the appropriate “object” of this gaze, given truth is “unsullied by flesh or color”? When rephrased these questions might ask, “What reliable manner of perception transcends the phenomenal to become cognizant of Reality?” I think it is reasonable to suggest that logical reasoning predicated on objective duality will not lead to a divine merging.

Although “passion of the reason” is one of the themes of the *Symposium*, James Duerlinger states: the “*practical*, religious orientation of Plato’s ethics is not often discussed,” nor “accorded its traditional central place, in contemporary treatments of his philosophy,” despite its “considerable influence” on Western “religious traditions” and “the many *interesting parallels it has to the religious traditions of the East*” (emphasis added 312). Duerlinger relates Plato’s belief “that the dialogues by themselves” were incapable of communicating “effectively what [was] most important in his philosophy, and that central to understanding it, and even more so, to its practice, [was] the oral instruction of an accomplished practitioner and teacher of Platonism” (314).

Radhakrishnan describes how an experience of the divine “transcends expression even while it provokes it.” St Therese asks, “how it is possible that the soul can see and understand that she has been in God, since during the union she has neither sight nor understanding”? Her answer is closely related to the transcendental objective of Diotima’s praxis which is not gazed upon by the mind but completely entered by ipseity: “I replied that she does not see it then, but that she sees it clearly later, after she has returned to herself, not by any vision, but by a certitude which abides with her and which God alone can give her” (620). This perception corresponds to Sarkar’s description in 7.4.2 of the post-experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi* and the meditator’s awareness of bliss after returning from that rarefied state.

Diotima’s truth is “unsullied by the flesh or by color or by the rest of our mortal dross” (211e). The lack of color, flesh, or dross undermines materialist ideas that sensory perception or dialectical reason can penetrate Reality. An experience of something “single in substance,” denotes not the duality of normal perception but a singular enstatic orientation, whereby binary impressions resolve into immersion of the self and the Good. Thus “grasping the truth” becomes possible when, and only when, cognition of unity uncloaks the veridical origin of beauty (212a). Chapter Seven and Eight demonstrated that in the unity of

consciousness noetic mind has no existence in absolute truth. If this reading holds, the only object that satisfies of Diotima's requirement of a sustained gaze must be Aseity which is symbolically represented as the single object of meditation. With this solution, question two, posed in the introduction, regarding the correct "object" of gaze "unsullied by flesh or color," is satisfied. However, the means by which practitioners abides in this state (in other words, the praxis) has yet to be clarified.

In this regard, Jowett correctly characterizes the *Symposium* as a text not on love, as "the feeling" is usually "called," but as "the mystical contemplation of the beautiful and the good," and Jowett certainly recognizes what modern commentary glosses, that the agency of "the highest love" leads one not to the limited love of a single "person" but to the "highest and purest abstraction." From where Jowett stands, this abstraction is the "far-off heaven on which the eye of the mind is fixed in fond amazement." Jowett's abstraction corresponds with Diotima's good life inasmuch as ultimate happiness depends on completing a spiritual lack — existing for most people only as an abstraction, while mind chases sensory phenomena. Thus, spiritual lack is the innate condition of mind, but awareness of this lack waxes and wanes along with physical desires. Tantra imparts knowledge that the noumenal desire of the human mind is to be desireless, paralleling the blissful condition of ipseity when it is freed from the boundaries between the self and creation. Hence, Diotima discloses that becoming one with the object of truth allows a living being to become "immortal himself" (212c).

Unfortunately, Jowett's analysis of a "far-off heaven" that the practitioner is "fixed on in fond amazement" ignores the practical function of a devoted gaze that propels the lover away from the duality of subject-object identification to reestablish ipseity in true abode, Aseity. As McEvilly puts it, "whatever exists, in spite of apparent changes, must remain essentially what it was" (158). Jowett's "eye of the mind," however, is an ideal starting point quite akin to the process of devoting the mind on an OM (such as a mantra) so that the

meditator's cosmological imagination completely identifies mind with its object and objective. Intense devotion to the spiritual objective keeps the mind constantly engaged in meditation and harkens back to the significance of Sarkar's oft quoted motto, "as you think so you become." The Tantric philosophy that the object sustained in consciousness — whether through devotion, hate, greed, or other attachments — intrinsically shapes and determines the magnitude of mind's experiences should now be seen as the central thread of this dissertation.

In keeping with the idea that Diotima is articulating a meditative praxis, Boodin affirms Plato's vision is articulated in the *Timeus*, as well as his "theory that we see truth by the mind and not by mere details of sense nor mere halting opinion" (490). Both Jowett and Boodin grasp Plato's use of mind to "see" truth, and their argument for a mental vision of the beautiful in everything will practically train mind to keep "close" to a singular truth. Diotima tells us this culminates in a gaze no longer "slavishly content with the beauty of any one particular thing, such as the beauty of a young boy or some other person . . ." (210d) but a search for oneness. Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, while questioning *eros* in Plato's *Lysis*, contend, "we do not believe there is any case for taking it that Socrates thinks desire, being in love, and friendship or love are all the same thing" because the way "we understand those notions" has little to do with the "desire for good" as Socrates sees it (270). Diotima states the highest experience of the good is to remain close to the truth and become immortal if possible — something to be desired above all else. Socrates says in the *Lysis*:

We desire, and love, and are in love with, what we need, where what we need is what we are deprived of, i.e. what belongs to us, and what belongs to all of us is what is good for us. But now if Menexenus and Lysis are friends, they in a way naturally belong to each other, and there is no *philia*, *erōs* or desire for good between the lover and the beloved, unless the lover by nature in a way

belongs to the darling either in soul, or in ‘some characteristic, ways of form’  
of soul. (L11a-L11e 271)

Socrates proclaims that desire, love and the object of love is that thing which is “good for us” and by rights belongs to us yet of which we remain “deprived.” By no means is he talking about the friendship and love between people unless it is a transcendental experience related to the “soul.” Diotima tells Socrates that perceiving the good is a practice taking the lover in an ascending journey from physical desire for “beautiful things” to an “eternal” beauty “that is marvelous in its nature” only to be found, a Tantrik would argue, in the lover’s experience of Aseity (Plato, Howatson and Sheffield 48).

McEvilley, citing de Vogel, says Plato “made unity the universal principle of everything,” an idea “inherited” from the “Indian-influenced Mesopotamian — and Egyptian legacy.” Aristotle said it was “Plato’s attitude” that “the One alone was real, as for Parmenides” (157). In a similar vein, albeit considerably earlier, the *RV* professed a search for “absolute truth” over “personal comfort” which gave rise to “philosophical monism,” or the “doctrine of the impersonal, unknowable One” (17). In Mandala III.54 of the *Veda* the path to oneness is described:

What pathway leadeth to the gods? Who knoweth this of a truth, and who will  
now declare it?

Seen are the lowest dwelling places only, but they are in remote and secret  
regions.

All living things they part and keep asunder: though bearing up the mighty  
gods they reel not.

One All is the Lord of what is fixed and moving, that walks, that flies, this  
multiform creation. (Griffith)

Knowledge of the gods, and the means to approaching them, is debated in the first line with the indication that what can be “seen” is the lowest levels of existence, the human realm. Possibly, the “lowest dwelling places” symbolizes the immanent realm, whereas the gods dwell in “remote and secret regions.” Tantra states that which divides things and keeps them in duality, “they part and keep asunder,” are the qualifying forces of *Prakṛti* or the *guṇas* that Aseity uses to create reality. According to my earlier discussion in 5.7.2 that the principle of *Shiva-Shakti* (or consciousness and force) are aspects of Aseity itself, it follows the spiritually illuminated Aseity is unaffected by bondage; hence, it “reel[s] not.” Aseity, then, is the “One All” or “the Lord of what is fixed and moving . . . .”

Alternatively, this admittedly abstruse poem could mean that the “lowest dwelling places” of the gods exist in secret places not accessible to the uninitiated. From this it could be inferred the “mighty gods” cause the separation of living things and presumably humanity from merging with the “One All” who is “Lord” of the “multiform creation.” Interestingly, what is “seen” on the path to the One All is the “lowest dwelling places” in “remote and secret regions.” This implies that seeing the dwelling places of the gods maintains separation between practitioner and the One. The enigmatic “they reel not” appears to reference the dwelling place of the “mighty gods” who, themselves, derive their stability from the unchanging One All. Therefore, Aseity underlies the entire creation. Hence, the One All is conscious of all “fixed” and “moving” things but does not, itself, move/reel. Pursuant to this, Diotima tells Socrates, “All other beautiful things partake of it, but in such a way that when they come into being or die the beautiful itself does not become greater or less in any respect, or undergo any change” (211e). Yet, as we have seen Metaseity is the final state beyond Aseity and the supreme paradox of being and not being.

The encompassing consciousness of the “One” is reflected in ipseity, establishing the mind’s sense of separation from others. It has been shown that mind is a reflection of Aseity

and ipseity, both of which lie beyond mind's capacity to perceive. Nevertheless, because mind senses the existence of consciousness — and if mind encounters praxes that lead directly to the source of consciousness — Aseity begins to suffuse the vision of the devotee and transforms all objectivities into an effulgent oneness. The quest for this cosmic vision drives the devotee to the heights of desire and ecstasy, perfected through Tantric *bhakti* which Diotima's *eros* parallels. For Diotima's hierarchical praxis to succeed, the lover must employ a meditative gaze that views every entity superimposed on radiant Aseity. They ventures on an internal praxis and a devotional meditation to realize the external and the internal are identical within Aseity — or “beauty itself”:

Now, whenever someone starts to *ascend* from the things of this world . . . and begins to discern that beauty, he is almost in reach of the goal. And the correct way for him to go, or be led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beautiful things in this world, and using these as steps, to climb ever upwards for the sake of that other beauty, going from one to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful *practices*, and from beautiful practices to beautiful kinds of knowledge, and from beautiful kinds of knowledge finally to that particular knowledge which is knowledge *solely* of the beautiful itself, so that at last he may know what the beautiful itself really is. “That is the life, my dear Socrates”, said the visitor from Mantinea, “which most of all a human being should live, in the *contemplation* of beauty itself” (Plato, Howatson and Sheffield emphasis added 49)

Diotima's progression from contemplating the object of the world is merely the beginning of her ultimate end, the “contemplation of beauty itself.” Evidently, Diotima sees beauty as the ontology of existence comparable to the Tantric's realization that Reality is monistic. At the outset, Oneness is not an immediate reality for the practitioner, who must start with Diotima's



“correct belief.” Belief is not true “knowing” or realization — belief, like imagination, is a “middle state, between wisdom and ignorance” (202a). Diotima’s *eros* is the constant longing to witness the un-seeable, corresponding to ideating and empowering an increasing scope of imagination until mind withdraws, ipseity as self realizes itself as Aseity, the crowning jewel of devotional effort. This is what it means to meditate on beauty.

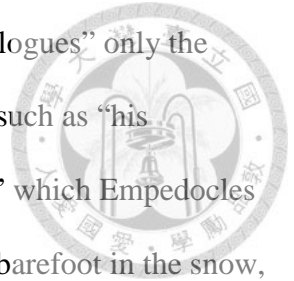
Diotima’s praxis associates the world with Aseity in every aspect. Nothing is “beautiful in one respect and ugly in another, or beautiful at one time and not at another, or beautiful by one standard and ugly by another . . . it exists on its own single in substance and everlasting” (48). This wisdom generates awareness of “beauty that is marvelous in its nature” for which, Diotima advises Socrates, “all the earlier labors were undertaken” (210d). Aseity alone possesses the characteristic of being “single in substance and everlasting”; its realization makes it “possible . . . to be loved by the gods and to become, if any human can, immortal” (212c). This meditative praxis is likely derived from Socrates’ spiritual predecessor, Parmenides.

McEvilly notes Patanjali’s *YS* contains “materials that go back to the early *Upanisads*” that predate “Socrates’ advice” on concentration: “Plato advises the aspirant to withdraw the mind from attention to the body” while “Patanjali calls for ‘withdrawal from the senses. . .’ (179). Socrates says in the *Phaedo* (64cff.) “The soul . . . can best reflect when it is free from all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind — that is, when it ignores the body and becomes as far as possible independent . . . in its search for reality.”

Plato also presents the realization of Aseity in the *Symposium* as the “culminating topic” which appears in the “*Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Meno*” (McEvilly 187). Unfortunately, “modern Western scholars think Plato” is merely distinguishing between “sense consciousness on the one hand and intelligible cogitations” on

the other. If a non-transcendental reading is true, Diotima's teachings of the truth, in which "Plato seems to be making his most elevated statements," are also the ones where he is "faking or fantasizing." (187). Nevertheless, the continual spiritual theme running through Plato's works dictates he had a legitimate reason to express them. "In the *Parmenides* he [Plato] comes closest to being precise about [the] three levels": "the level of the two originary principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad, is higher than that of the Ideas, which in turn are higher than sense data." For Plato, sensory perception is the lowest rung of wisdom, while reason "infers the existence of the Ideas" but "mystical or unitive cognition corresponds to the highest realm" (188). Plato's episteme and ontology sounds powerfully like Indian philosophy.

The *Katha Upanisad* has a "dialogue between Naciketas and Yama (the God of the world of departed spirits)" about "the immortality of the self." Naciketas chooses "knowledge above all worldly blessings; the theory of the superiority of the good (*sreyas*) over the pleasant (*preyas*); the view that the *Atman* cannot be known by the senses, by reason, or by much learning, but only by intuitive insight or direct realization." Radhakrishnan tells us "the doctrine of the body is the chariot of the self — a reminder of a similar figure used by Plato" and by Parmenides (43). Parmenides describes how the "mares" pull the "chariot." The chariot symbolizes the senses and the mares the mind's longing for truth (*Aseity*). As lower bodily desires compete with transcendent longings the mares "strain" until the practitioner is firmly on "the road to divinity." However, the road to divinity is blocked by the senses; the "doors" which, while providing information about duality, keep consciousness "locked" out of "the heavens. Thus, in the verse "Ways to Brahman," Yama says, "When cease the five (Sense-) knowledges, together with the mind, And the intellect stirs not — That, they say, is the highest course. . . . the firm holding back of the senses. Then one becomes undistracted" (Hume 65). McEvilly argues that the symposium "is filled with incidents that emphasize and



reemphasize the asceticism of the Socratic ethic.” In fact, “of all the dialogues” only the symposium details “specific acts of asceticism performed by Socrates” such as “his withdrawal on the way to the party to commune with his daimon ‘soul’” which Empedocles “used for the exiled god” [Aseity]. It is recorded that Socrates walked “barefoot in the snow, wearing the same garment he worn the summer while the warmly clad soldiers shivered”; he also stood “immobile for 24 hours in the snow” oblivious to those around him. Reports say that Socrates entered “such trances many times” (184). Socrates also refuses sexual advances from the most attractive people in the *Symposium*. I wholeheartedly support McEvilly’s contention that “Socrates presents Eros not as a deity of ‘the pleasures of this world’ but as a sponsor spiritual growth.” McEvilly even recognizes the hierarchical growth in “six stages which are similar to many Indian formulations, including the tantric model” (184).

### 9.6.2 Summary of Diotima’s Praxis

Diotima’s *eros* encapsulated within Tantric *bhakti* progresses as follows: Practitioners direct their mind towards imagining Aseity (beauty/the Good) underlying all manifestation, gradually they maintain this permanent awareness which is a constant abiding in the true presence of a beauty that eschews outward differences by uniting all ideas under the rubric of unity. When this happens, ipseity transcends multiplicity, awakens in Aseity, and disappears into Metaseity. The lover becomes immortal and beloved by lesser gods who are, themselves, unrealized minds. The “correct sequence,” per Diotima’s instructions, requires intense devotion because mind will not subside without becoming completely absorbed in its OM. By seeing beauty first in one instance, later expanded to include everything, the practitioner is absorbed in a chain of physic-psycho-spiritual associations until the multitude succumbs to oneness (Howatson 200). Devotion is the glue that fuses the object, objective, and subject so that all distinctions disappear.

## 9.7 Conclusion

In summary, critical appraisal of Indian thought on pre-Socratic philosophy has tended towards denial when the latter is considered a product of the former. Western scholarship on Plato tends to discussions of Greek transcendentalism as independent from Indian influences and exegeses favor debating the internal consistency of platonic ideas in relation to pre-Socratic social, political, or ethical philosophy. Consequently, the *Symposium's* mix of idealist, realist, and materialist concepts of *eros* encourages interlocutors to examine Socratic love in romantic, ethical, sexual or hierarchical modes. To my knowledge, researchers have not investigated Parmenides connection with Diotima's teachings vis-à-vis the *Iatromantis* mystics. Although I do not argue Hellenic thought is entirely indebted to the East, not that Plato's work informs Indian philosophy (others certainly have), I do contend Diotima's praxis shares sufficient correlations with Indian traditions to warrant further research.

This chapter also proposed that Diotima's spiritual objective is Parmenidean monism attained by the proper application of *eros*, itself, derived from Tantric *bhakti* and the control of mind's mundane desires. By "holding back" the "senses . . . one becomes undistracted" until *Brahman* (Aseity) is, finally, comprehended "not by speech, not by mind, not by sight." Aseity is "comprehended by the thought 'He is' and by [admitting] the real nature of both [his comprehensibility and his incomprehensibility]. Finally, when all "desires that lodge in one's heart" are "liberated,"— when "the knots of the heart here on Earth" are "cut"— a "mortal becomes immortal!" (Hume 359-60). Plato writes in the *Timaeus*:

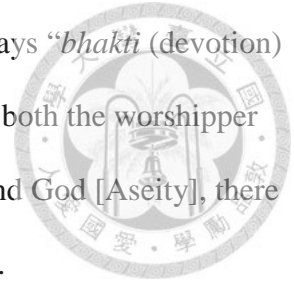
What is that which always is and has no beginning; and what is that which is always becoming and never is? That which is apprehended by intelligence and reason [intuition] is always in the same state; but that [phenomena] which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason [mind] is

always in a process of becoming and perishing and never really is . . . The work of the creator, whenever he looks to the unchangeable and fashions the form and nature of his work after an unchangeable pattern, must necessarily be made fair and perfect; but when he looks to the created only, and uses a created pattern it is not fair or perfect. (Jowett 448).

Plato's *Symposium*, when read comparatively, strongly indicates that meditation and devotion lead to perfection. Plato goes so far as to recognize that Metaseity is beyond description: "but the father and maker of all this universe is past finding out, and even if we found him, to tell of him to all men would be impossible" (449). Tellingly, the *Timaeus* even shares the Tantric conception that all action should be performed while remembering Aseity through Guru mantra: "All men, Socrates, who have any degree of right feeling, at the beginning of every enterprise, whether small or great, always call upon God" (448). From the remarkable parallels between Tantric meditation, Greek incubation and Diotima's *eros*, we must move beyond speculation into serious consideration that the intuitional basis of Parmenides' and Socratic monism is hidden in Diotima's instructions to Socrates on the correct object and objective of meditation.

Interpretations ignoring Diotima's injunction to stay close to a truth unsullied by sensory perception, deny Plato's apexed transcendental vision and ignore Parmenides critical influences on Plato. While Diotima's exposition on the practice leading to Reality has prompted accusations of anti-humanism, impracticability, and idealism —echoed two and a half millennia later in the criticism of Emerson's neo-platonic Transcendentalism, repudiating Diotima's enigmatic *eros* robs Western thinkers of Plato's spiritual method. Sans comparative Indo-Greek studies that include Tantric *bhakti*, this knowledge will remain cryptic. When the relationship between Greek *eros* and Indian *sadhana bhakti* is contextualized by an OM directed at Aseity, both Parmenides' One and Diotima's truth are

brightened by the intuition that love leads to supreme wisdom. Sarkar says “*bhakti* (devotion) means worshiping,” and its successful practice requires the presence of both the worshipper and the worshiped. If any “difference” remains “between the devotee and God [Aseity], there is the “opportunity and necessity . . . of longing for the Supreme” (186).



## Chapter Ten

### Conclusion



#### 10.1 Summary

This dissertation navigated Tantric historiography and Sarkar's ontology to comparatively explore the transcendental praxes of spiritual liberation. The meta-narrative employed transdisciplinary emic and etic methodology, fusing praxis, philosophy, and science. Sarkar's causal model of mind contextualized the object and objective of Tantric meditation. Transdisciplinary research demonstrated that attaining Aseity and Metaseity is expedited through meditation on a Sadguru's numinous object.

Chapter One introduced the importance of practitioner-researchers able to explore Tantric traditions containing esoteric teachings not openly disseminated to the public and mostly unavailable to etic researchers. It also introduced the pressing need for standardizing terminology used in transdisciplinary discussions of ontology and cosmology. The terminology used in Sarkar's causal model of mind was standardized for non-specialists, and a new term *Metaseity* represented transcendental infinity.

Chapter Two used Sarkarian theory to define Tantra as an ascetic pedagogy divorced from its incorrect hedonistic connotations by providing practitioner-researchers with clear understanding of Tantra's soteriology. Chapters two and three observed that studies on India's contemplative traditions, particularly Tantra, have typically focused on texts rather than the oral traditions. While useful, said etic studies often eschew emic understanding and almost consistently deny Tantra's hidden influence on later Indian traditions and their texts. Thus, the corpus of Tantric and Buddhist research has created a distorted historiography blinkered by outdated and deeply entrenched assumptions regarding the origins and methodology of Tantra. Moreover, the so-called "new-age" descriptions of Tantric meditation

are suspect because dilettante authors are uncritical of their sources and wholly embrace doctrine and subvert Tantric meditation without understanding the negative psych-ospiritual consequences. It was also noted that works on Tantra are rarely comparative or inclusive of Western ideas. Unfortunately, when philosophically oriented studies of meditation do appear, they are steeped in Sanskrit terminology and favor the analytical over the mystical. These works do little to encourage comparative research or undermine the monolithic structure of entrenched Indological historiographies.

One of the important proposals made in Part One was that the genuine complexity of finding initiates qualified to unpack esoteric Sanskrit texts — and transcendental praxes in general — has caused a dearth of comparative exegeses quite deleterious to inter-disciplinary studies of mind, cosmology, and meditation. There is a need to bridge the gaps Miri describes in Chapter One, not only between Eastern and Western ways of “dealing with the self philosophically” but also experientially, cosmologically, and spiritually. In other words, we are looking for ways to universalize our understanding of the self while not ignoring or overly reifying the mind’s cultural preferences.

Chapter Three demonstrated that when all the direct and indirect evidence is compared it is obvious India’s Tantric and Vedic culture were extant millennia before the untenable but still widely supported 1500 BCE *terminus a quo* for the *RV*. The familiar 900 to 1300 year time-frame championed by early Indologists, now entrenched as dogma, between the *RV*’s appearance and Patanjali’s codification of the *YS* is also woefully short of the 3500 to 5000 BCE chronology the Sarasvati and archaeological evidence of the Indus Valley civilizations.

It was shown the *YS* draws on many of the concepts appearing in the hoary Vedas, yet the former appears around 300 BCE — 200 years after the genesis of Buddhism. Logically, modern researchers and Buddhist scholars can no longer reasonably maintain Tantra-Yoga is post Buddhist, and Indologists should reappraise the *YS*’s position as the sole



source of Tantra-Yoga. When searching for a definitive historiography of Tantra, the enticement to set a neat starting date for Tantra-Yoga after the *YS* is understandable. However, this anachronistic timeframe contravenes the history of contemplative traditions inaugurated through oral dissemination three thousand years before script was invented. Simply put, Sarkar's Shivology sees the *YS* expressing concepts introduced by Shiva in 5500 BCE, millennia before it was written.

Scholars recognize the word *tantra* denoted stretching and weaving in the *RV*, but the mystical context is clouded to this day. Nevertheless, it is certain the word must be over 5000 years old, and more likely closer to 7000, when the geological and linguistic evidence of the *RV* is considered. Sarkar, himself, proposes proto-Tantra was practiced before Shiva's advent in 5500 BCE. Because Shiva Tantra was unwritten and disseminated from preceptor to disciple during Tantric initiation, Tantra's seminal meditations were adapted and appropriated over the millennia by various sects. While Sanskrit concepts introduced by Shiva were retained, their origins became vague. Kazanas argues it is a "well known fact of history that people first lose" their "religion" and then "the language." Thus, "religious elements in terms change more easily" (Kazanas 6). Sarkar seeks to reverse the decline of Tantric spirituality by reintroducing and adapting Shiva Tantra's universalistic outlook to suit the physical, psychological, and spiritual demand of the modern era for a verifiable cosmogony.

Chapter Four and Five focused on Sarkar's Shivology and his position that the spiritual praxes detailed in the *YS* were likely inspired by proto-Tantric praxes. These ancient techniques belonged to the mystical world-view of the Austrico-Negroid-Mongoloid people who lived along the environs of the Sarasvati River and in Tantra's birthplace, the area Sarkar calls Ráfh. It was argued that the chasm separating the *RV*'s composition and the latter Vedas created a discontinuity regarding the source of the Tantric praxes later attributed to the *YS*

and Vedic materials; however, Sarkar unequivocally states Shiva promulgated Tantra to promote unity and aid humanity's spiritual evolution.

Samuel notes that the “usual starting point for a history of Indic religions is the religion of the Indus Valley cultural tradition” found in present “Pakistan and North-West India.” The areas are archaeologically significant for “the extensive remains of the early urban societies at Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and elsewhere.” These urban developments “correspond to what is now known as the ‘Integration Era’ of the Indus Valley cultural tradition . . . dated to around 2600 to 1900 BCE” (3). Nevertheless, the accepted *terminus a quo* for a history of India's spiritual philosophy does not correspond with the geological, archaeological, cultural, linguistic, and transcendental philosophy of the *RV*.

“Indian civilization was born about 11,000 years ago,” when “Neolithic farming settlements were established in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East,” a period “referred to as the cradle of civilization.” Pertinent to the spread of Tantra in India and Asia, Bjornes says, “recent research into this important period of history” shows India was, in “many ways, also the cradle of human civilization, not just geographically and culturally, but also spiritually” (Bjornes 125). By 7000 BCE there were “urbanized complexes on a considerable scale,” such as Mehrgarh in “today's Pakistan” with “people” living in “cities as early as 9000 years ago” cultivating “wheat, barley and eggplant” and domesticating “sheep and cattle” (Bjornes 125).

The historical question of whether Tantra-Yoga existed pre-1500 BCE could definitively be put to rest by some geological research in “North-East India.” According to Bjornes, Sarkar states “basic forms of Tantra existed” before Shiva's era, “leaving a trail back to early shamanic cultures.” In the late 1980's, Sarkar directed some practitioners to a “cave in North-East India where they discovered depictions of the esoteric yogic chakra system painted, in graphic detail, on the cave walls.” These paintings are estimated to be

“nearly 9000 years old” (135). Once carbon dating verifies this estimate, everything historians and Indologists now assume about Tantra-Yoga’s origins will be proven incorrect.

Concluding this summary of Part One, Sarkar argues Shiva Tantra is a “practical spiritual cult” with “the guru” playing a “very important role” in guiding meditation (*Yoga Sādhana* 25). Sarkar says “sectism, or religion” encourages the “mental conceptions” of “happiness and heaven, afflictions and hell” which has no relation to the “all-knowing entity” of ipseity (43). Even though mysticism exists in religious life, most deified religions disavow the validity of competing traditions. Admittedly, schools of Tantra symbolize the infinite through a deity or the guru, but most Tantric’s recognize a few rare *Sadgurus* from various traditions. Sarkar strongly supports faith earned through meditation and commitment to an appropriate Guru’s instructions, but belief without meditation is practically valueless. He explains that unshakable confidence in the outcome of Tantric meditation expedites the practitioner’s mental surrender to Aseity (symbolized by Shiva, *Sadguru*’s, mantras etc.), making Tantric meditation particularly effective. By streamlining the practitioner’s spiritual evolution, and expanding the development of communities through a common transcendental ideology, Sarkar reinvigorates and differentiates his version of Shiva Tantra from other religious and spiritual traditions.

Part Two of this dissertation comparatively explored transcendental philosophy and praxis. Chapter Six contrasted the Indian ontology of mind to Cartesian mind. I explored Sarkar’s idea of a conscious cosmos versus blind materiality. It was shown that Metaseity is the unqualified and true infinity generating Aseity (Cosmic Mind/*Saguṇa Brahma*) which is, itself, infinite relative to this universe. Aseity uses *Shakti*, the qualifying force of perception, to limit ipseity to the experience of duality via mind and phenomenal reality. Thus, Tantric philosophy proposes singularity and duality are mediated by ipseity which, as an unchanging aspect of Aseity, witnesses the mind without, itself, being transformed. Aseity’s true infinity

was contrasted with a material universe ensconced in practical infinity, and I argued Kraus's contention of multiverses does not undermine the need for an unqualified "container" which Sarkar calls Cosmic Consciousness (Metaseity). Cosmic Mind (Aseity) is the subjective and objective expression of Metaseity, and all ontological models ignoring this singularity are interminably trapped in Cartesian dualism. In contrast, Tantric cosmology does not accept the influence of spatiotemporal motion on Aseity which, as pure consciousness, is the only legitimate cosmological constant. Put another way, the ontological noumenal is not influenced by manifestations of immanence — if it were, the universe would lack a backdrop. I propose that if Aseity was qualified by physical laws, there they would be no difference between duality and singularity and, thus, no universe.

The widely accepted idea of atomism that prevails in Western philosophy is that "each entity in the world" is "distinct from and independent of all others," is being challenged by quantum physicists, pragmatists, and phenomenologists who conceive "of individuals [as] related to each other by . . . determinative ties" (Gill 41). This gestaltian conception indicates an experience of reality whereby "the whole is more than the sum of its parts," and each part is causally linked to its source in Aseity (41).

It should be recognized that theological arguments which deny scientific evidence do themselves and ontology a grave disservice. Non-secular positions situating Aseity forever removed from human experience violate the experience of Tantriks and the contemplative traditions. Therefore, combining Sarkar's causal model of consciousness with Western cosmology — and encouraging a deeper examination of the philosophy undergirding Tantric meditation — could potentially bridge the immanent-transcendental divide and overcome the reductionist plateau of modern physics and Cartesian theology. The material and transcendental perspectives enumerated by Krauss and Sarkar are not (and do not) need to

work at odds: Sarkar argues that science serves humanity's material needs while Tantra serves its psycho-spiritual desires and aspirations.

Peter Heath's translation of Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* attempts to describe the transcendental nature of consciousness which makes "itself to be both subject and object, finite and infinite" (xiii). True infinity vexes material cosmologists who, limited by sensory perception, are unable to experience what is at best a scientific abstraction. Sensory perception, despite advanced technology, has no tool to measure the essence or scope of human consciousness. How then will science successfully measure infinity or infinite consciousness? Great strides have been made in our ability to measure the physical universe, but all too frequently empirical and religious perspectives ignore the meditative sciences' sophisticated modes of using consciousness to experience true infinity.

I argue that material models of consciousness that disavow the transcendence of duality gained via meditating on singularity are stuck in the recursive duality of finite cause and effect. Stephen Batchelor's foreword to Thompson's *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy* point out the "limitations of the scientific method in coming to terms with the felt reality of first-person experience," namely, the experience of a "self, endowed with consciousness." I laud Thompson's argument that understanding consciousness demands a "synthesis of objective scientific rigor, coupled with first-hand reports of contemplative experience" (Foreword). I suggest the nascent field of Varela's neurophenomenology and Sarkar's Tantra could combine "the careful study of experience from within [meditating on ipseity] with neuroscience" to delineate the effect of meditation on the individuals powers of perception and pre-noetic insights (Prologue).

Chapter Seven argued that liberatory transcendental traditions can be supported by Sarkar's understanding that ipseity is the basis of mind and, thus, the bridge to the transcendent. The etiology of mind is found in the transformation of Cosmic Mind (Aseity)

into ipseity. Given the existence of many individuals, Aseity exists in every particle of the universe. The aggregate of all these particles is *Brahma* (Aseity). Aseity is an infinite, noumenal entity; it cannot be measured by mind but may be simulated by mind as the object of meditation. Through single-minded and one-pointed concentration on the OM, ipseity can transcend mind and realize itself as Aseity. Existential mind depends on ipseity for its existence, but once ipseity disassociates from the spatiotemporal limits of mind, Aseity becomes manifest, and ipseity transcends duality. Thus Sarkar's discourse, "What Is the Cosmic Entity," claims "that consciousness is, therefore, absolutely independent" (Ānandamūrti *Ānanda Mārga Elementary Philosophy* par. 4).

Chapter Seven also introduced the problem of established traditions employing meditative techniques without comprehending the psycho-spiritual impact of these ideational praxes. This puts the practitioner at risk of crudifying and contracting mind rather than making it expansive and the subtle. Employing a wrong object of meditation is as undesirable as not meditating at all: it delays *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa samādhi*. In this regard, we saw that the popularity of cessative meditation amongst certain Buddhist schools has encouraged forcing the mind into a nihilistic de-objectified, vacuous state. Sarkar considers this mental stasis temporarily pleasant but not an edifying experience of ipseity. What is more, the need for a numinous object of meditation rather than temporary stasis is preferable because any attempt at "emptying" the mind of thought demonstrates a tedious, counterproductive, and uninspiring process.

As long as mind exists it will seek out objects to sustain duality and existence. Assuredly, the forced stasis of objectivated mind does not truly terminate existential mind. Tantra proposes an alternative to passive witnessing (so contrary to the function of mind) by honing concentration on a numinous OM that a *Sadguru* has spiritually infused with a vibration drawing human consciousness towards Cosmic Consciousness. As such, the sole

function of Tantra's numinous OMs is to inspire and expand mind to the point that mind dissolves in Metaseity. When existential mind totally identifies with its spiritual objective, ipseity's *savikalpa samādhī* awakens it to the ecstatic effulgence of Aseity's Cosmic Mind and freedom from existential mind is achieved. Following this penultimate state, the complete submergence of Aseity in Metaseity establishes the Tantric in the ultimate liberation of *nirvikalpa samādhī*. This is authentic liberation and is the shared goal of both Buddhism and Tantra. Sarkar compares the states of *samādhī* between Buddhism and Tantra as follows:

The *savikalpa samādhī* (trance of determinate absorption – or vacuity) of the Hindu Tantras is the *prabhāsvara śhūnyatā* (luminous vacuity) of the Buddhists. The Hindu's *nirvikalpa* (trance of objectless or indeterminate absorption – or vacuity) is the Buddhist's *vajra śhūnyatā* (complete vacuity). (167).

Sarkar states that although “there are many who try to make a distinction between Hindu Tantra and Buddhist Tantra,” they are “absolutely wrong”: “Tantra is one and only one,” and “the Buddhist and Hindu Tantras express the same thing in different words” (163). He goes on to say “it is as much a mistake to distinguish between the Hindu and Buddhist Tantras as it is to grope in vain for any differences in the inner import or final goals of the Hindu Tantras such as Shaeva Tantra, Shákta Tantra, Saora Tantra, Gánapatya Tantra, Vaeśnaviyya Tantra (Rádhá Tantra, etc.” (166).

Finally, to realize liberation, Chapter Seven argued meditators should ideally choose a numinous and mentally expanding object of meditation infused with a *Sadguru's* spiritual force because existential mind naturally associates the object created in objectivated mind. Single-pointed and unbroken concentration on an infinite entity, as symbolized by the *Sadguru's* designated objects of meditation, stabilizes ipseity's experience of Aseity and *savikalpa samādhī* ensues. The repeated realization of *savikalpa samādhī* and the meditators'

growing intuition propel them on Sarkar's path of infinite bliss or *ānanda* which is the complete antithesis to suffering in duality. This is not the end of the Tantrik's journey. The alpha and omega of Sarkar's Tantra is the Shiva Consciousness of Metaseity. No less than the ultimate stance of unqualified consciousness beyond cause and effect and mind. Thus, *Nirvikalpa samādhi* is the embodied realization of Metaseity and is the stance of absolute spiritual liberation.

Chapter Eight detailed Sarkar's meditative reductions that reveal how ipseity and Aseity contrast with Cartesian and Phenomenological Reductions. I argued that Husserl's primary contribution to Western philosophy was a methodology reifying the transcendental nature of consciousness over mental phenomena. I proposed Husserl's *epoché* can be greatly enhanced by Tantric *pratyāhāra* because the latter disentangles ipseity from duality and accelerates its synthesis with Aseity. Sarkar's *pratyāhāra* echoes Thoreau's vision of the transcendent Reality realized during ascetic training which expands mind beyond itself. For this reason, I argued the zenith of Husserl's Phenomenology is not a return to things "out there" but the self-direction of mind towards the etiology of its own awareness.

Chapter Nine compared Diotima's *eros* in Plato's *Symposium* to Tantric *bhakti* (devotion). This was contextualized by Parmenidean monism arising from the transcendental *Iatromantis* tradition. The latter's source was likely found in Tantra-Yoga. Incorporating Kingsley's reading of Parmenides, and his analysis of *Iatromantic* incubation, gave a sense of how Indo-Greek transcendentalism converged through possible contact between Tantrics, Indian mystics, and shamans on journeys to and from the Greek empire. It was suggested Plato's admiration of Parmenides' poem presaged Diotima's position that Aseity is achieved by relinquishing desire for the physical world and turning devotion towards infinity. The critical argument, in light of these Indo-Greek connections, is that Plato's seer, Diotima,



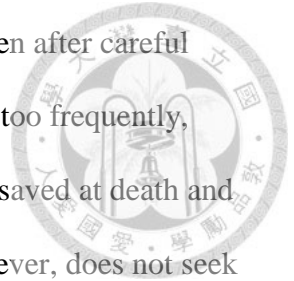
hinted at a devotional meditation identical in practice to Tantric *bhakti* which chooses Aseity as its object and objective of meditation.

This account, matching earlier Indo-Greek research, asserts that the Greeks incorporated Indian transcendentalism in their worldview and highlights Sarkar's perspective that Shiva Tantra and *bhakti* are the subterranean currents that carried transcendental philosophy through the millennia. Chapter Nine also explored the progression of Western logic, fathered by Parmenides' poem, from the intuitive *Iatromantic* praxes and a Parmenidean way of life designed to still the mind to the empirical noise of present logic. Sarkar explicitly teaches (and Diotima implies) that meditating on singularity is both the cause and effect of devotion. In closing, I argue Socratic *eros* is the offshoot of Tantric *bhakti* because it inspires the meditator to perceive singularity behind duality. This ideation, which in Tantra is typically mantric, buttresses ipseity against mundane desires and ultimately instills an unbroken awareness of bliss.

## 10.2 Synthesis

Sarkar takes us on the journey to the roots of Tantric praxis by incorporating Shiva's forgotten history to engulf the practitioner in a current of spiritual history that informs the Tantric episteme which spread from the nexus of Shiva's spiritual praxis throughout India. This work made explicit, as Eliade believed necessary, the language and philosophy of "one of India's greatest discoveries" — "that of consciousness as witness, of consciousness freed from its psychophysiological structures and their temporal conditioning" (xx). To do this I brought a practitioner-researcher's comparative voice to the study of Sarkar's Tantra.

While Sarkar's Tantra originates in India, its independence from dogmatic belief encourages Tantra's cross-cultural and transnational adoption because Sarkar's theories of consciousness can be tested during meditation by any individual irrespective of race, gender



or nationality. Ideally, adoption of a transcendental system should happen after careful analysis of the logic and efficiency of the philosophy and practices. All too frequently, accepting a religion depends on the individual's belief that they will be saved at death and preserved with their loved ones along with other believers. Tantra, however, does not seek survival of the limited egological mind and understands that suffering continues as long as potential reactions to actions exist within the individual's mind. Sarkar explains the human mind and material world are dimensionally limited so that liberation must be independent of materialism, duality, and all beliefs that do not put an end to the mind's infinite desires. Sarkar's Tantric solution provides practical, systematic meditative techniques that allow each individual to explore their own mind and consciousness. Meditation unveils Aseity in *savikalpa samādhi* and entry into the ultimate transcendence of Metaseity through *nirvikalpa samādhi*.

The aim of Sarkar's Tantra is liberation, but liberation is not gained in a vacuum. We live in a world of embodied beings who struggle to survive and thrive. Humanity is a diverse organism, yet we all share the same desire for happiness and peace. How they are achieved is entirely up to the individual, and this gives a certain freedom to make mistakes, bring suffering or joys to oneself and others, and to learn. Tantra is and always will be a fight for unity in the material, psychological, and spiritual domains. Inayatullah notes that Krishna, the 1500 BCE Tantric *Sadguru* of the *Bhagavadgita*, "reminded Arjuna of his duty to fight, to struggle" because "enlightenment" is the hard endeavor for the highest unity. According to Inayatullah, just as "Shiva is in many ways the father/mother of the family and society" who united people under Tantra, "Sarkar sees his mission, as paving the way for a revitalized Tantric "unification of humanity." Sarkar "never" directly "states this as his role," yet his intuitive teachings imply a *Sadguru* status as his knowledge of Shiva Tantra has established

“a new cosmology, a new discourse, a new way of knowing and thus being and doing”  
(Inayatullah 15-16).

From the Shiva who 7500 years ago introduced humanity to the meditative union of mind and consciousness, most modern philosophies inspire division and spatiotemporal limitations. The logic of duality (and unbridled confidence in fanatical religious outlooks) over the past two millennia has not freed humanity from the scourge of wars and a multitude of social ills. Tantra teaches a rational approach to life that elevates spirituality above materiality and advocates scientific development because physical human progress depends on technology: “the advancement of science will not be checked by criticizing it” (25). Nevertheless, material philosophies which deny transcendental epistemologies negatively impact psycho-spiritual evolution by inculcating the human psyche with destructive tendencies. Tantra acknowledges the world is finite and limited; therefore, Tantriks use their “object of meditation,” to keep their minds “continuously absorbed in the ideation of the Supreme Entity” (*Yoga Sāadhanā* 169). Devotion plays a strong role in the movement towards Metaseity — which is colored by the preference “individuals” have “for different great personalities” (170). The *Sadguru* has the spiritual force to reveal ultimate non-discrimination (Metaseity), attained after the mind is rigorously trained in maintaining perfect consciousness.

The warning to maintain vigilance over unbridled, and, often untested, confidence in religious or spiritual traditions is not unprecedented. Swami Vivekananda’s prophetic address to the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1893, may have “galvanized new interest in the Vedas,” but his counsel about the dangers of ideological intolerance mostly fell on deaf ears (Izzo 15). Vivekananda’s “much heralded talk” inspired Westerners to sit “cross-legged” and focus “their attention in meditation” received widespread recognition for popularizing Vedanta and Yoga, but his plea for religious tolerance was forgotten (Baldwin

17). Vivekananda, himself, readily accepted all religions under Vedanta's umbrella of "tolerance and universal acceptance," and in a line from the *Gita* he eulogized Yoga's realization that "all religions" were essentially "true" expressions of a universal quest: "*Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to me.*" Thus, 108 years before the destruction of the World Trade Center, and prior to a century filled with the annihilation of cities, the genocide of people, the murder of cultures, and the "godly wars" in the name of peace, Vivekananda warned of the destructive power of religious "sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism" that have "filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair." Sarkar's Tantra aims to actualize Vivekananda's final plea:

I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal. (Vivekananda)

Establishing unity is a fight against our mental propensities that drive unreasoned greed and blind fanaticism. Tantra is not pacifist nor does it idealize violence for material gain. Instead, Tantrics wage an internal war against duality by constantly directing their awareness towards Aseity as the link to Metaseity. Sarkar puts it thus:

At this point spiritual aspirants finally attain non-discriminatory knowledge. To attain this stage, worldly knowledge, social position, and skin color are of no importance whatsoever. Even the different systems of worship, sacrifice, incantation, and ostentatious devotion are insignificant (*Yoga Sādhana* 170).

For Sarkar, Shiva Tantra's esoteric essence is the unqualified unity of subject and object. The object and objective of meditation are one and the same — ever present to a meditator who truly sees.



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 ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Authors cited in this work follow various transliteration conventions used by IAST, Harvard-Kyoto, ITRANS, ALA-LC, WX, ISO 15919, and the Hunterian system. Sarkar's Sanskrit transliteration purportedly facilitates writing Sanskrit in Roman script. Sanskrit requires different pronunciations for certain Romanized consonant and vowels, and diacritical marks represent the velar, palatal, retroflex, dental, and labial pronunciation, along with various aspirated and un-aspirated stops. These diacritical marks may appear differently depending on the transliteration scheme used; however, I reproduce the preferred scheme of each author in textual citation while reverting to Sarkar's transliteration for repeated terms.

<sup>2</sup>Academics influenced by Sarkar are futurologist Sohail Inayatullah and socio-economist Ravi Batra; the latter achieved international recognition for his work, *The Great Depression of 1990*.

<sup>3</sup>As a preliminary note before this is explored in Chapter Three, "practicing philosophy and religion" were "interrelated aspects of the same inner spiritual quest" (Laumakis 23). Vedanta "dominated" Indian epistemology for "three thousand years" and was "definitely pre-Buddhistic" (Radhkrishnan 37). This lineage is not only historically relevant but practically pertinent: Buddha's *mokṣa* did not occur in a historical vacuum. The achievement figures into a continuum of liberation promulgated through the *Guru*-disciple relationship and oral traditions dating back thousands of years.

<sup>4</sup>The analogy of Tai Chi Chuan to "moving meditation" as a highly concentrated and internalized form of martial arts is particularly apt. After 23 years practicing Tai Chi in Taiwan, it is painfully apparent that blind imitation and imaginary techniques are unfulfilling. Without the inner understanding of concentrated relaxation, a dropped center of gravity, kinesthesia, and fluid equilibrium, success is impossible. This requires decades of practice under competent guidance. Generally speaking most Asian and Western practitioners

claiming expertise will be unwilling to engage in *tui shou* 'push hands' because this two-man exercise quickly separates those relying on brute strength from those capable of neutralizing hard force with soft. By the same token, meditation is a purely cognitive practice with external movement extraneous and unnecessary. Mimicry is impossible under these circumstances.

<sup>5</sup>Jayantha Bhaṭṭa was a Nyāya philosopher who wrote his *Nyāyamuñjari* “in prison to keep himself amused.” His work shows the “tension in early Medieval Kashmir between Brahmans who regarded the Vedas as revelation that should provide and govern values” with the juxtaposition of those “who were offering different ways of life and thinking, such as the Buddhists, Jains” and the “tāntrikas . . . propagating different kinds of writing as revealed knowledge” (Flood 48-49).

<sup>6</sup>There is a "manuscript written in the old Sāradā scrip" to be found in the historical Museum of Sarkar's residence in Calcutta.(S. P. R. Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* footnote "an introduction to Shiva")

<sup>7</sup>The formerly mentioned Kaushambi, Glucklich explains, was second in antiquity to “any other Gangetic city except Kashi” now located in modern Varanasi (45).

<sup>8</sup>See Bryant’s *Quests for the Origins of Vedic Culture: the Indian Aryan Migration*, pages 160-162 for a succinct overview.

<sup>9</sup>While there appears to be great discrepancy in these viewpoints there “are important overlapping agreements, and the theories do in many ways complement each other.”

According to Bjonnes the first theory dates “the Aryan invasion rather late (1900 BCE)” and ignores “the genetic research of Spencer Wells, who claims the invasion started much earlier - about 7-5000 BCE.” Feuerstein and Frawley, in support of theory two, claim “this migration started when the Rig Vedic Aryans arrived via the Russian steppes and the deserts of Iran more than 3000 years before the Indus Valley eventually was abandoned” (Bjonnes 126).

<sup>10</sup>See “The Ṛgveda Pre-Dates the Sarasvati-Sindhu culture” and Kazanas’s suggestion that the “RV knows nothing of” the “important features” of the Sarasvati-Sindhu culture indicating it’s “composition must be placed several centuries earlier” (“The Rgveda pre-dates the Sarasvati-Sindhu Culture.” 1)

<sup>11</sup>Witzel heavily critiques Talageri’s book published in 2000, *The Rig Veda: A Historical Analysis*, and Talageri’s 1993 study, “The Vedic Aryans were the Purus of traditional history.” He calls the studies “Garbage in, Garbage out” because some of Talageri’s “analysis” of the RV relies on the “late — and post — Vedic lists of RV poets” written in “The Anukramaṇīs.” Witzel also critiques Talageri on two points: (1) his reliance on “Victorian Sanskrit” translations of the RV which he claims inaccurately translates “one of the most obscure and problematic ancient texts known.” (2) Talageri’s perceived “lack of philological knowledge” regarding “old Vedic” and “disputed *Rg Vedic* words.” For more details, see “Westward Ho! The incredible Wanderlust of the Ṛg Vedic Tribes Exposed by S. Talageri” pages 2-3 (Witzel).

<sup>12</sup>The founder of Jainism, “Varddhaman Mahāvī” was born in “Vaeshali in eastern India” which was part of “Rarh” and included “Magadha,” the center of Tantric propagation (par. 5). Varddhaman Mahāvī spoke and wrote in the “prevalent Māgadhī Prākṛta language” of the time which formed one of “seven main Prākṛta languages.”

<sup>13</sup>Sarkar explains *sat* means “good” and *asat* means “bad” in “modern Sanskrit” (*Yoga Sādhana* 204).

<sup>14</sup>In contemporary society, Sarkar values interaction between practitioners to further their spiritual discipline and aid the expansion of social-spiritual consciousness through validation and reinforcement of the shared transcendental aim. The Ananda Marga code of conduct stipulates collective meditation is advantageous to all-round progress of the individual and the social community.



<sup>15</sup>Following the 5500 BCE date Sarkar attributes to Shiva's birth, it was impossible for Tantric praxes to be recorded in script; however, visual representation via cave paintings and iconography was readily available.

<sup>16</sup>The *agamas* are considered by many to be synonymous with Tantra, but this depends on the vexed definitions of Tantra and associated antinomies of religious versus spiritual practices. Sarkar's Tantra falls within the scope of the former and is not limited to particular religious observances centered on deities and ritual. David N. Lorenzen points out that the "definition" of "Tantric religion" is complicated by how one situates "cults directly associated with the Sanskrit text known as Tantras, Sāmhītās and Āgamas" with a further "wide range of 'popular' religious phenomena" classifiable as "magical." These can be contrasted with "the followers of [the] Hatha Yoga tradition" such as the "Nātha or Kānaphaṭāyogīs, or the large number of "Hindu and Buddhist religious traditions dedicated to female deities" (25). Strictly on the basis of the narrow definition and formulation, Tantric practices must coincide with Tantric texts. Their basis in the aforementioned Tantras, Sāmhītās and Āgamas, Lorenzen argues, occurred "in or near towns and cities" amongst the mostly "literate, upper caste" (25). Clearly, this strictly scriptural basis of Tantra is not supported by Sarkar's seven millennia history. In 5500 BCE Tantra would have been non-textual, practical and dependent on oral transmission. A more fruitful avenue of research is to locate practices related to Shiva's transmission in those areas geographically connected with Shiva Tantra in India, Nepal, Tibet, and China.

<sup>17</sup>See Kang for the three sub-phases of Sarkar's *dīkṣā* which are briefly: "*dīpanī*" or "showing the torchlight"; "*mantrāghāta*" or "hits of the mantra," and "*mantra caitanya*" or "consciousness power of a mantra" (Kang 150).

<sup>18</sup>It is obvious from Sarkar's explanation that the Aryans did not all arrive in a single invasion, but, as is being increasingly accepted by historians, they migrated over thousands of years, well prior to the received *RV* chronology. Therefore, Sarkar states that any argument by "Orthodox Vedics" claiming the Tantric elements found in the Vedas were "later interpolations" will be unconvincing because Tantra "infiltrated into the marrow of the so-called Aryans." Despite the modifications to the "religious outlook" of the people during the "post-Vedic Buddhist era as well as the post-Buddhist Brahmanical era," the actual meditation practices "remained Tantric" given "yoga, which is the paramount factor in spiritual practices, is itself based on Tantra." (Ānandamūrti 251, 52)

<sup>19</sup>Sarkar expresses his disdain for discrimination determined by race and *gotra* (clan or group) by suggesting that if any *gotra* should be based on race, humanity belongs to the basic ape *gotra*. Moreover, the "modern scientific mantra" that "there is no biological basis for race" still holds "true on many levels" (Dunsworth 154).

<sup>20</sup>The third wife, Gauṇḡá "had a son called Kārttikeya," but he lacked "the moral courage to practice Tantra." To ameliorate Gauṇḡá's disappointment in her son's weakness, Shiva provided her with extra affection (Ānandamūrti *Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 171)

<sup>21</sup>Sarkar argues Shiva "taught His daughter in the same way that He taught His son" to enable a balanced society in all "fields," including "social, economic, educational, medical, scientific and artistic." He further states that those who "curtail woman's natural rights" are inimical to Shiva's philosophy (*Discourses on Tantra: Volume 2* 173).

<sup>22</sup>The practice of keeping the wheel moving remains in effect amongst the Mahayana Buddhists. Personal visits to Buddhist temples in India, including Bodhgaya, Simla, and Nepal, Kathmandu show the custom of spinning the prayer wheel while repeating the Oṃ mantra continues.

<sup>23</sup>Vajrayána found a great deal of traction in East India, “particularly in Bengal.”

Furthermore, its practices led to an era of human sacrifice in order to “gain material boons from the deities.” In this regard, Sarkar says that “thousands and thousands of innocent people were sacrificed” to propitiate the Vajrayána deities of Vajrayoginii, Vajratará, etc (NSS — Shiva the focal point of everything).

<sup>24</sup>*Bodhisattva* has two meanings: (1) someone “proceeding to the state of enlightenment, *buddhatvá*, but [who] has not actually become Buddha.” (2) “An enlightened being who has voluntarily assumed a worldly form” in order to maintain a relationship with the external world (Sarkar *Namah Shivāya Shāntāya* 49).

<sup>25</sup>Jabbalpur, now known as Jabapur/Jabalipuram, is in Madhya Pradesh in India.

<sup>26</sup>For a detailed discussion of the evolution of the goddess Durgá, see Sarkar’s *Namah Shivāya Shantaya* p.88-91.

<sup>27</sup>*Káliká* should not be confused with the deity Kálii.

<sup>28</sup>The Latin *solus ipse* is found in Husserl’s *The Paris Lectures* and references the act of realising the “transcendental and pure ego” after the “phenomenological *epoché*” (*The Paris Lectures* 11).

<sup>29</sup>When Husserl’s work is translated from the German, he sometimes uses “*Ego* and *Ich* to express different senses” causing the translator to choose to translate *Ich* or “I” as “*Ego*” and “*Ego*” as “*ego*” (Husserl *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* 3). Apart from the confusion this causes, and given his introduction of the “transcendental ego” in 1 above, ipseity should suffice as a term for Husserl’s transcendental ego. Likewise, when paraphrasing Sarkar’s Sanskrit terms “*mahattattva* or *buddhitattva*” ipseity is preferred.

<sup>30</sup>See Sarkar’s *Idea and Ideology* for a complete ontological explanation of the movement from singularity to duality.

<sup>31</sup>This has been confirmed by the author during the past two decades of English-Mandarin translations for different *ácáryas* initiating practitioners in Taiwan.

<sup>32</sup>Majumdar's research confirms "the relationship of English literature and other literatures of Europe and Asia in all subjects in general and spiritual literature in particular." In 1400 BC he notes "Vedic culture made its influence in [the] region of Western Asia." He relates that Sir William Jones was the first to find "the analogies between the *Samkhya* system and the Pythagorean philosophy, and many eminent scholars have since held that the latter was derived from the former." *Samkhya* was one of the six branches of Indian philosophy. Garbe and Shroeder argued that "Pythagorean religio-philosophical and mathematical doctrines originated in India" (Kasturi 43).

<sup>33</sup>The historical basis for the Indo-Greek partnership is explained in greater detail by Kasturi from p.54-p.79.

<sup>34</sup>Thompson, points out the "close relationship" between "Old Avestan and Old Vedic." "Mary Boyce's magisterial *History of Zoroastrianism*" puts a "serious dent in McEvilley's speculations" regarding "reincarnation and shamanism," which he assumes was imported from "Egypt." However, the "extensive work" that has mapped out the "shared culture of Old Indo-Iranian," originating in the "steppes of Central Asia," have been identified "by means of a linguistic analysis of the Indo-Iranian lexicon." Thus, in the religious sphere, there is every reason to think "the god Indra" was "borrowed from some Central Asian source." Hence, "Central Asia" was a "far more significant and fundamental influence on the development of early Indo-Iranian" than "Samaritan" or "Egyptian . . . diffusion channels" (48-49).

<sup>35</sup>See Kingsley p.30-p.41

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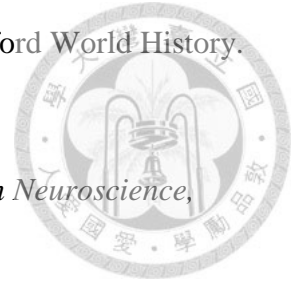
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