CHAPTER - 1

I N T R O D U C T I O N

AN OUT LINE OF THE TANTRA PĪṬHAS OF ORISSA AND THE DEFINITION OF TANTRA

Orissa, The ancient Uddiyan had occupied a prominent place in the field of Tantras all over India. The king Indravuthi and his sister Laxmikarā, Niteidhovaṇī and Piteisauruṇī were playing the pivotal role in practising the functional Tantras in Orissa. Therefore gradually owing to the popularity of Tantras, a number of Tantric seats had made its existence in various parts of Orissa, among which, Purusottam Pīṭha, Virāja Pīṭha, Lalitagiri, Ratnagiri, Alitigiri, Udayagiri, Prachī Valley, Bhubaneswar, Western Orissa, Southern Orissa, Northern Orissa which have been widely discussed in our chapter number six in this work.

In ancient history we find Orissa has passed through a lot of religious upheavals and conflicts, between Buddhism, Jainism, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śākthism for which innumerable centres of specific religions were established in Kaliṅga, Utkal, Kaṅgoda, Tosala, Kosala which were the ancient names of Orissa. The kings of these territories extended patronage to the above religions and tried to bring a compromise between them.

Ultimately the Tantric mode of worships of all these sects brought these religions nearer together. This exhibited the followers of all these religions were have a common code of conduct or a common path, that is the Tantric path. Though they did not join their hands yet their way of life was based on similar thoughts and ideas as we find in Tantric ritualism. That's why we trace Tantrism developing in Saivism, Vaisnavism, Saktism, Buddism and Jainism etc., in due course of time.

Under these circumstances to tackle this vast project, the Tantric Pithas of Orissa it has been essential for us to deal with the following aspects like the origin and development of Tantra the Buddhist Tantrism and Jaina Tantrism. In Orissa the Tantrism found in Hindu cult as produced by the Hindu communities, Impact of Tantrism. In the worship of deities, the prominent Tantric centres, the Yogini Pithas, the Sapta Mātrikās, and their evolutions, Bhairava cult and the Haṭha Yoga seats etc., Speak volumes regarding the solid existence of Tantrism, both in theory and practice, in this state.

Before dealing with the topic "Tantra Pīṭhas of Orissa", It naturally provokes a thought in every mind that what this Tantra is. A number of scholars have given various interpretations on this aspect.

Kullukabhatta in his commentary on Manu (II. I) divided traditional knowledge into vedic and Tantric, and this division of course was not baseless. Like the Veda, Tantra was primarily the way or means to understand the mysteries of life and Universe, some what akin to the old Pythagorean concept of "Philosophy" which was no doubt a contemplation, study and knowledge of nature.

At the earlier stages of history, Tantra arose as the sum total of Man's knowledge of the objective world around him. It was a way of life that sought the significance of knowledge, not in the realisation of an illusory absolute, but in the day to day activities of men, in the simple facts of life like agriculture, cattle breeding, distillation, iron-smelting, etc. , and in experimental sciences like alchemy, medicine, embryology, physiology and so forth, with a deliberate theoretical orientation that the structures of the microcosm and the macrocosm are identical and that the key to the knowledge of nature is to be found in the body. (1)

Thus Tantra was considered to be beneficial both to the practical and spiritual ways of life. That was why it was popular in ancient India. Before we look into its derivation and a deep study gradually the interest would flow towards the various interpretations of Tantra by bonafide scholars at large, emancipation concept found in Tantra, its practical utility in life and so on. However at

this out set it is essential now to have a look on the derivation of Tantra.

1. THE DERIVATION OF TANTRA

Etymological interpretations of the word Tantra as found in the ancient texts, conclusively point out that originally Tantra had no special religious or metaphysical significance. In the Vedic texts the word Tantra occurs in the sense of a loom.(2)

The Srautasutra use the word in the sense of a process of work containing many parts and in that of an act serving the purpose of many other acts.(3)

The later interpretation in the Mīmāṃsā tradition(4) according to which Tantra is an-act-process a method of doing or making something useful. In the Mahābhāsya,(5) the word Tantra indicates a branch of knowledge, while the writer's of the sciences of polity and medicine used the word Tantrarukti to mean "Canons 'Propositions' Principles expositions" etc.(6)

Later writers too sometimes followed the traditions of Sankara and treated the word as denoting a special branch of knowledge. Bhāskara-rāya referred to the Mīmāṃsā philosophy as Jaimini-Tantra in his commentary on the Devīmahātmya.

Bhaṭṭoji had used in his Tantrādhikārinirnaya, the terms Pūrva Tantra and Uttara - Tantra to denote the Pūrvamīmāṃsā and Uttramīmāṃsā systems respectively. The word Tantra is derived from the root "tan" (meaning to spread or propagate).(7)

The word Tantra has been interpreted in several ways by different critics time to time. In this contexts a careful analysis is sufficient to throw light in dispelling the darkness on this aspect.

2. VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF TANTRA

According to Amarakoṣa Tantra means principal matter or part Siddhānta (i.e, doctrine in Śāstra) a loom or Paraphernalia. But it does not state that Tantra means a particular class of works related to any religion. But at least this much can be inferred from it that the word "Tantra" as it means today, bore a different connotation at the time of the Amarakoṣa which follows the Rigvedic tradition of explaining, the word Tantra as a loom. The ṚV(8) while discussing some of the Brahmin priests deprecates their vile speech resorted to by them while engaged in handing ploughs and looms.

Similarly the AV(9) uses the word Tantra in the same sense and so does the TB(10) in a closely similar

passage. The Pāṇinis[11] grammar Sūtra states Purification of word "Tantraka" meaning there by a cloth i.e. recently taken away from a loom. The ASS[12] uses the word "Tantra" in the sense of procedure containing many parts. But the SSS[13] applies the word Tantra to what being once done serves the purpose of many other actions. The Mahābhāsya of Pāṇini[14] and the Vārtika cite 'Sarvatantraḥ' and 'Dvitantraḥ' meaning there by one who has studied all the Tantras.

Kātyāyana and Patañjali who are undoubtedly successors of Pāṇini in the discipline of grammar have used Tantra in the sense as a system of study or a school of discipline. They meant Tantra as a siddhanta, probably following the YV[15] tradition illustrating Tantra as Vaisvadevikam (Connected with Visvadeva), so here in we find an all pervasive meaning of the word Tantra which befits the essence of present day meaning of the Tantra and which is explained as one that spreads or pervades.[16] Even the 15th Adhikaraṇa of Kautilya's Arthaśāstra bears the title Tantra Yukti meaning canons or propositions or principles of exposition of a Śāstra.

But in the BhaG the word Tantra is employed in the sense of a doctrine or Sastra. Sabara in his Bhasya on Jaimini[17] remarks that when anything or act once done becomes useful in several matters, it is called Tantra is the line of the SSS. The BhaG[18] also treats the

Pañcarātra as a Sāttvata Tantra. So these developments or the evolution of the meaning of the word 'Tantra' gradually pick up a wider connotation by a pervasive system or a discipline, the knowledge of which comprises and comprehends and also transcends the worldly knowledge i.e. Prapañca-Jnānaṃ.

According to Tantra its Therapeutic Aspect esoterically , the meaning of Tantra comes to the expansion of cultivation of latent physical and mental powers.(19) Now let us penetrate deeper into the very term Tantra and see what it represents ? The term Tantra is a combination of two words namely, "Tanoti" and "Trāyate" which stand for expansion and liberation respectively. But what is to be expanded and what is to be liberated ? Here it is an expansion of mind and liberation of energy.(20)

According to Tantras its mystic and scientific Basis, the word Tantra has been used in many senses in Sanskrit. It connotes a system and refers to some Śāstra. Saṅkarācārya use the word Vaināisika Tantra for Kṣanabhaṅgavāda of the Buddhist system.(21) The philosophical systems of Gautam and Kapila are also known as Gautam Tantra and Kapila Tantra or Sasti Tantra Vācaşpati Mishra, one of the greatest scholars of Philosophy, he has been honoured with the title Sarvatantrasvatantra (versed in all the Śāstras).

The well known Tantric commentator Bhāskararāya has termed the Mīmāṃasā school of philosophy as Jaimini Tantra.(22) Saṅkara also calls Sānkhy a Tantra as he looks upon it as an esoteric branch of spiritual knowledge, Sānkhya Kārikā itself uses the word Tantra for its own system.(23) M.M.H.P. Sastrī says : The word Tantra means shortening abbreviation, i.e. reducing into something like algebraic forms Mantras or formulae that would otherwise run to scores of syllables(24)

According to Tantra magic Tantra indicates expansion of knowledge or all comprehensible knowledge towards self realization. Tantra is not a religion. It is not even simply a mystic view of life. It is both an experience of life and a systematic method where by man can bring out his inherent spiritual power.(25)

The root - verb tan means "To expand" If a person bound by ropes manages to expand his body, the ropes will snap automatically. That which leads to liberation through tan, expansion is also Tantra-Tam 'Vistāreṇa' Tarayet Yastu Sah Tantrah Parikīrttitah.(26)

According to Discourses on Tantra Both interpretations of Tantra are equally recognized. Śhiva was the original propounder of Tantra. Tantra has two wings, Āgama and Nigama.(27)

Tantra is a spiritual tradition which originated in India prehistoric times and was first systematized by Śiva. It emphasizes the development of human vigour, both through meditation and through confrontation of difficult external situations, to over-come all fears and weaknesses. (28) Also a scripture expounding that tradition.

According to Uḍḍāmareśvara Tantra Tantra as its root meaning, or the propagating of knowledge - knowledge both spiritual and that which is conductive to the worldly happiness. It is a means to attain Chaturvarga the four objectives of life, Tantras claim equal sanctity and importance as those of the Vedas and trace their origin to those ancient rites and ceremonies of Aryans which find mention in the Atharvaveda. (29)

According to Tantra Yoga 'Tantra' implies a process of weaving and expansion. The inner and outer worlds, Microcosm and Macrocosm,are like the two sides of a fabric. (30) According to the power of Tantra, The common people are sacred at the very mention about the Tantra of the word Tantra. Their impression is that it can only kill or torture a person, according to their impression, Mohan, Vashikaraṇ, Uchātana and other such Kriyā's are Tantra, when Tantra actually means something at a much higher plane, and is capable of benefiting the entire mankind. (31)

According to A Brief History of Tantra literature among the various meanings of Tantra' found in lexicons. The following may be noted, Siddhānta (conclusion), 'Srutisakha a branch of Sruti i.e. (Vedas) Itikartavyatā (Set of duties) Prabandha (composition) Śāstra Visesa (a particular Śāstra) Kālidāsa uses the expression' Prajāḥ Tantrayitvā, (having governed the subjects) in the Abhijnanasakuntalaṃ (v.5). In the Vedas (e.g. Rigveda X. 719, Atharva Veda X. 7.42) 'Tantra' appears to be used to denote a weaving machine, a loom. The same sense of the word is found also in the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa (II. 5.5.3).

The word Tantraka occurs in the Aṣṭādyayī as a derivative of Tantra, and means a cloth taken from the loom. In the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and Taṇḍya Brāhmaṇa, Tantra denotes the chief portion or the essence of a thing. Perhaps, in that age Tantra was considered to represent the quint essence of Sastra. Tantra when denoting a kind of Sastra, stands for a set of doctrines, practices, mystic syllables metaphysical speculations, magic etc.(32)

In the various interpretation of Tantra, we found the difference way of meanings in Rigveda, Kātyana Sūkta, Manusmruti, Srīmad Vāgabata, Mahavarata, Paṅcatantra, Kirātarjjunīyam, Mudrārākṣasa Nāṭakam, Gītagovinda and Medinīkoṣa.(33)

According to Oḍia Sahityare Tantra Prabhāba Tantra means Rules and Regulations. As for instance - Rājatantra, Gaṇatantra, Svatantra, Prajātantra etc.(34) Besides Tantra in general acts with a helping hand in the way of life that ultimately leads to emancipation. Therefore this concept could make Tantra in the past a most popular one all over the country.

3. TANTRA IN THE SENSE OF EMANCIPATION

The Sanskrit root verb 'tan' means to expand, and the verb 'Trae' means to liberate, so the scientific process that paves the way for the liberation of human beings (by expansion of their minds) is called Tantra. So the word Tantra has two implications, one 'expansion' and the other "emancipation".(35) The word Tantra can be interpreted in yet another way.

Each and every entity, each and every existence has an acoustic expression of its own. For instance, 'Ta', is the acoustic root of dullness or inertness, and the process that brings liberation from this state of staticity, or 'Ta', is called Tantra. "Tam Jadyat Tārayet Yastu saḥ Tantraḥ Parikīrtitaḥ". That which redeems human beings and paves the way for their emancipation from the bondage of staticity is called Tantra.(36)

When human beings depend solely on Paramapuruṣa, they cross the turbulent ocean of Māyā *(37) through his grace. When the Tantrikas are by the Sādhanā of Dakṣināācāra over coming the Māyā they will produce emancipation. (38) It is possible to attain liberation by such entreaties or flattery ? Liberation means freedom from the bondage of slavery. (39)

Moksa is Ātmajnāna. What is Ātmajnāna ? Ātmajnāna means "Self realization" - not "Self - Knowledge" [in the ordinary sense]. (40) Self-Realization is Mokṣa. What happens there is oneness. Oneness means seeing Brahma in all objects. When the Jīva attains humanity due to its own actions, it becomes fit to attain Mokṣa. (41)

As such the Tantric concepts were deep rooted in Indian societies including the societies of Orissa. A large number of Tantric seats covering the above discussions are found in various regions of Orissa. In relevant chapters. The Tantric seats of Orissa have been discussed in order to study the development of Tantras, which would not become irrelevant in our contexts of analysis. That is why it is essential to have a look on the origin and development of Tantra in Indian Soil. The next chapter therefore would be an eye opener in this aspect.

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9. AV, X 7. 42. (Sayanas comm, - Tantremekayuvati Virupe Abhya Kramam Kayatah Sanmayukham)
10. TB, 11.5.5.3.
11. SKD, 5.2.70. Vide - Sakti Iconography in Tantric Mahāvidyā, PP. 1.

12. ASS, 1.15.1. (Udite āditye Paurnamāsyāstantram Prakramayati, Sāyaṇa's comm. Aṅgasamudāya Stantram)
13. SSS, 1.16.6. (Yet Sakrut Krutam bahunam upakaroti tat Tantram).
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33. Odissara Tantra Samskruti. PP. 19.

34. Odia Sāhityare Tantrara Prabhāva pp. 72-75.

35. Discourses on Tantra Volume II - PP. 190.

36. Ibid . PP. 120.

37. Ibid. PP. 88.

* Creative principle, Prakruti in her phase of creation. Also, the power of the creative principle to cause the illusion that finite created objects are the ultimate truth. Eds.

38. Discourses on Tantra Volume II-PP. 88.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid. PP. 75.

41. Ibid. PP. 76.