

[Kashmir Saivism](#)

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Kashmir Saivism, with its potent stress on man's recognition of an already existing oneness with Siva, is the most single-mindedly monistic of the six schools. It arose in the ninth century in Northern India, then a tapestry of small feudal kingdoms. Maharajas patronized the various religions. Buddhism was still strong. Tantric Shaktism flourished toward the Northeast. Saivism had experienced a renaissance since the sixth century, and the most widespread Hindu God was Siva. According to the traditions of Kashmir Saivism, Lord Siva originally set forth sixty-four systems, or philosophies, some monistic, some dualistic and some monistic theistic. Eventually these were lost, and Siva commanded Sage Durvasas to revive the knowledge. Sage Durvasas' "mind-born sons" were assigned to teach the philosophies: Tryambaka (the monistic), Amardaka (the dualistic) and Shrinatha (monistic theistic). Thus, Tryambaka at an unknown time laid a new foundation for Kashmir Saiva philosophy. Then, it is said, Lord Siva Himself felt the need to resolve conflicting interpretations of the Agamas and counter the encroachment of dualism on the ancient monistic doctrines. In the early 800s, Shri Vasugupta was living on Mahadeva Mountain near Srinagar. Tradition states that one night Lord Siva appeared to him in a dream and told him of the whereabouts of a great scripture carved in rock. Upon awakening, Vasugupta rushed to the spot and found seventy-seven terse sutras etched in stone, which he named the Siva Sutras. Vasugupta expounded the Sutras to his followers, and gradually the philosophy

spread. On this scriptural foundation arose the school known as Kashmir Saivism, Northern Saivism, Pratyabhijna Darshana ("recognition school"), or Trikashasana ("Trika system"). Trika, "three," refers to the school's three-fold treatment of the Divine: Siva, Shakti and soul, as well as to three sets of scriptures and a number of other triads. Kashmir Saivite literature is in three broad divisions: Agama Shastra, Spanda Shastra and Pratyabhijna Shastra. Agama Shastra includes works of divine origin: specifically the Saiva Agama literature, but also including Vasugupta's Siva Sutras. The Spanda Shastra, or Spanda Karikas (of which only two sutras are left), are both attributed to Vasugupta's disciple Kallata (ca 850-900). These elaborate the principles of the Siva Sutras. The Pratyabhijna Shastra's principle components are the Siva Drishti by Vasugupta's disciple, Somananda, and the Pratyabhijna Sutras by Somananda's pupil, Utpaladeva (ca 900-950). Abhinavagupta (ca 950-1000) wrote some forty works, including Tantraloka, "Light on Tantra," a comprehensive text on Agamic Saiva philosophy and ritual. It was Abhinavagupta whose brilliant and encyclopedic works established Kashmir Saivism as an important philosophical school. Kashmir Saivism provides an extremely rich and detailed understanding of the human psyche, and a clear and distinct path of kundalini-siddha yoga to the goal of Self Realization. In its history the tradition produced numerous siddhas, adepts of remarkable insight and power. It is said that Abhinavagupta, after completing his last work on the Pratyabhijna system, entered the Bhairava cave near Mangam with 1,200 disciples, and he and they were never seen again. Kashmir Saivism is intensely monistic. It does not deny the existence of a personal God or of the Gods. But much more emphasis is put upon the personal meditation and reflection of the devotee and his guidance by a guru. Creation of the soul and world is explained as God Siva's abhasa, "shining forth" of

Himself in His dynamic aspect of Shakti, the first impulse, called spanda. As the Self of all, Siva is immanent and transcendent, and performs through his Shakti the five actions of creation, preservation, destruction, revealing and concealing. The Kashmir Saivite is not so much concerned with worshiping a personal God as he is with attaining the transcendental state of Siva consciousness. An esoteric and contemplative path, Kashmir Saivism embraces both knowledge and devotion. Sadhana leads to the assimilation of the object (world) in the subject (I) until the Self (Siva) stands revealed as one with the universe. The goal-liberation-is sustained recognition (pratyabhijna) of one's true Self as nothing but Siva. There is no merger of soul in God, as they are eternally nondifferent. There are three upayas, stages of attainment of God consciousness. These are not sequential, but do depend upon the evolution of the devotee. The first stage is anavopaya, which corresponds to the usual system of worship, yogic effort and purification through breath control. The second stage is shaktopaya, maintaining a constant awareness of Siva through discrimination in one's thoughts. The third stage is shambhavopaya in which one attains instantly to God consciousness simply upon being told by the guru that the essential Self is Siva. There is a fourth stage, anupaya, "no means," which is the mature soul's recognition that there is nothing to be done, reached for or accomplished except to reside in one's own being, which is already of the nature of Siva. Realization relies upon the satguru, whose grace is the blossoming of all sadhana. Despite many renowned gurus, geographic isolation in the Kashmir Valley and later Muslim domination kept the following relatively small. Scholars have recently brought the scriptures to light again, republishing surviving texts. The original parampara was represented in recent times by Swami Lakshman Joo. Today various organizations promulgate the esoteric teachings

to some extent worldwide. While the number of Kashmir Saivite formal followers is uncertain, the school remains an important influence in India. Many Kashmir Saivites have fled the presently war-torn Valley of Kashmir to settle in Jammu, New Delhi and elsewhere in North India. This diaspora of devout Saivites may serve to spread the teachings into new areas.