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# An Overview of Kashmir Shaivism & Swami Lakshman Joo's Contribution to It

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## **Abstract**

This article examines one of the very famous and ancient Hindu traditions, Kashmir Shaivism, its historical development, a brief introduction of ancient sages who shaped its academia, and more specifically, highlights the contributions of Lakshman Joo to this tradition, including his unique interpretations. His ability to draw the attention of foreign disciples in the 20th century, who not only learned this tradition and spent decades with Lakshman Joo but also devoted the rest of their lives to disseminate this tradition in the Western sphere. Additionally, the influence of ancient sages and Buddhist thought is also included in the paper, and it examines the significance of key figures such as Vasugupta and Abhinavagupta, whose writings and teachings have significantly shaped the foundational aspects of Kashmir Shaivism.

**Keywords:** Kashmir Shaivism, Lakshman Joo, Vasugupta, Abhinavagupta, Maya-Shakti, Svatantriya-Shakti, Peeths

## **Introduction to Kashmir Shaivism**

Scholars of the Kashmir Shaiva tradition have presented various definitions, but the underlying understanding and conclusion are the same. Lakshman Joo (1907-1991) defined the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism as the Pure Trika System. The term "Trika" refers to the threefold science of Shiva (the Divine), Shakti (the divine energy), and Nara (the individual). According to the Trika concept, there are three energies: Para (supreme), Apra (lowest), and Para-apara (a combination of the lowest and the highest).<sup>1</sup> These three primary energies represent the threefold activities of the world. Trika philosophy acknowledges that the universe and all its spiritual, physical, or worldly actions exist within these three energies.<sup>2</sup> The term Trika is often used to describe the Shiva thought of Kashmir.<sup>3</sup>

## **Four Systems of Kashmir Shaivism**

Kashmir Shaivism comprises four sub-systems:

1. The Pratyabhijna system was founded by Somananda in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD and later followed by Lakshmanagupta, who taught it to Abhinavagupta in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD.
2. The Kula system, established by Shrimachandanath in the 5<sup>th</sup> century or by the Somanath in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD, was later propagated by Shambunath through the teachings of Abhinavagupta in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries.
3. The Krama system, founded by the Shivanandanath in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, is also considered a Shakti concept of Kashmir Shaivism.
4. Vasugupta established the Spanda system in the 8<sup>th</sup> century through his Shiva Sutras. These four systems, which form the unified thought of Kashmir Shaivism, all accept and are based on the same scriptures, known as the Shiva Agamas or Shiva Tantras.<sup>4</sup>

The origins of Shaivism in Kashmir remain a subject of scholarly debate. However, it is undeniable that Shiva, one of the principal deities of Shaivism, was immensely popular and widely worshipped in the valley since ancient times. The cult of Shiva, with its rich mythology and iconography, was an integral part of Kashmir's religious and cultural landscape. The popularity of Shiva in Kashmir was not limited to the valley alone but extended to other parts of India, where the cult of Shiva found many adherents.<sup>5</sup>

The Shaiva system of Kashmir assumed a new character based on non-dualistic principles. The new system was named Trika Shaivism. The founder of this new doctrine was Vasugupta, who probably lived in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century AD.<sup>6</sup>

The Agamas/Tantras are a collection of Sanskrit texts that have played a crucial role in shaping various branches of Shaivism, and their teachings have profoundly influenced the development of Shiva traditions. According to Shaivism, the Agamas are said to have originated from Shiva himself, who revealed their teachings to different Sages of different ages. Therefore, these texts hold a sacred place in the hearts and minds of Shaivites worldwide. The Shiv-Agamas gained widespread popularity and spread to other parts of India, including the Kashmir Valley.<sup>7</sup>

### **Historical Development of Kashmir Shaivism**

The development of Kashmir Shaivism has a rich and complex history. It is believed to have originated in the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE in the Kashmir region. It gained popularity over the centuries and became a prominent spiritual tradition in the area. Its teachings were primarily transmitted through oral tradition, with many texts and treatises written in Sanskrit. One of the most important figures in the development of Kashmir Shaivism was

Abhinavagupta, a philosopher and mystic who lived in the 10th and 11th centuries CE. He is considered one of the greatest exponents of the tradition and is credited with writing numerous important texts that helped establish the philosophy and practices of Kashmir Shaivism. Over the centuries, Kashmir Shaivism has had a significant impact on Indian culture and spirituality. Its teachings have influenced a wide range of spiritual and philosophical traditions and continue to inspire seekers and scholars today.<sup>8</sup>

### **Ancient Sages of Kashmir and their Descendants**

In recognition of the immense contributions of the ancient sages of Kashmir to the cultural and spiritual legacy of Kashmir, they and their descendants are acknowledged with reverence and respect. These sages were followed by the scholars who have left marks on the region, shaping its history, traditions, and values. Their teachings and insights have been passed down through generations, influencing the beliefs and practices of many individuals.<sup>9</sup>

In Shaivism, it is believed that the most ancient sages were not born through the usual physical sexual union of man and woman. Instead, they were "mind-born," meaning they were believed to have been created solely through the power of thought. These sages were considered spiritual beings, known as Siddhas, who possessed extraordinary powers and were free from the limitations of the physical world.<sup>10</sup> Physical limitations did not bind them, so they were believed to have transcended the cycle of birth and death. Instead of dying, they were said to have disappeared into the ether, leaving behind a legacy of wisdom and spiritual teachings that have endured to this day. As highly evolved spiritual beings, the Siddhas were said to have received divine instruction and guidance directly from Shiva. They used this knowledge to develop a religious practice and teaching system that is believed to have emphasized the cultivation of inner peace, wisdom, and enlightenment. This concept of the mind-born sages in Shaivism represents an essential aspect of Hindu mythology and spiritual tradition and continues to inspire and inform spiritual seekers worldwide.<sup>11</sup>

Below is a brief sketch of some of these sages, along with their role in developing this tradition across ancient India, particularly in Kashmir, which Shiva traditions collectively regard as a lot and relate to their tradition's originality and initiation.

### **Sage Durvasa and Trymbakaditya**

The origin of Shaivism in the Kashmir valley is somewhat unclear. However, according to tradition, the lineage of Shaivism was passed down to the sage Durvasa through his three mind-born sons. One of Durvasa's sons, Trayambakaditya, is said to have founded the monistic Shaivism through Bhairava Tantras. This branch of Shaivism was introduced to the

Kashmir Valley by Sangmaditya, a descendant of Trayambakaditya and the 16th teacher in this lineage. These accounts are primarily based on the works of Somananda, who claims to be the 20th descendant in the line of Trayambakaditya. While the exact details of how Shaivism arrived in the Kashmir Valley may be uncertain, these traditions and accounts offer some insight into the development of Shaivism in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Sangmaditya, the 16th descendant in the line of Tryambaka, is credited with settling the school in Kashmir in the 8th century. Under his leadership, the school flourished, attracting many scholars to Kashmir to study and teach philosophy. The school's influence extended beyond Kashmir, profoundly impacting Indian philosophy and spirituality. The monistic Shiva philosophy of the Tryambaka school has left an indelible mark on Indian culture and continues to inspire scholars and spiritual seekers.<sup>13</sup>

### **Sage Sangmaditya**

During the 8th century AD, Sangmaditya, a descendant of Trayambakaditya, introduced the monistic system to the Kashmir valley. Sangmaditya migrated to the Kashmir region and was struck by the region's natural beauty and the people's intellectual prowess. The people of Kashmir were already renowned for their advanced knowledge and expertise in various academic fields, including philosophy, literature, and linguistics.<sup>14</sup>

Sangmaditya was particularly interested in the monistic Shaivism school of thought. He was impressed by the people of Kashmir's embrace of this school of thought and their contributions to its academic development. Under Sangmaditya's influence, it is believed that the people of Kashmir began to explore the Agamas of monistic Shaivism, which provided a more comprehensive understanding of the monistic Shiva philosophy. These Agamas are considered to have offered various techniques, such as meditation and contemplation, to realise the divine consciousness within oneself, which is also firmly believed among the people of this tradition<sup>15</sup>.

### **Sage Vasugupta**

Vasugupta, active between 800 and 850 AD, who established the Shiva Sutra in Kashmir towards the end of the 8th century, is credited with presenting the earliest non-dualistic Shiva philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

The first person to establish the written teachings of Kashmir Shaivism was Vasugupta, who lived in Kashmir towards the end of the 8th century. His Shiva Sutras are the earliest presentation of non-dualistic Shiva philosophy. According to the orthodox view, Vasugupta did not personally author or compose the Shiva sutras; instead, they were revealed to him by Shiva. Therefore, orthodox Pandits consider the Shiva Sutras to be an Agama, that is, a divine revelation from Shiva.<sup>17</sup>

It is said that Vasugupta had a dream in which Shiva revealed the location of a rock with a series of teachings inscribed on it. These teachings, known as the Shiva Sutras, form the foundation of Kashmir Shaivism. The Shiva Sutras comprise a collection of aphorisms.<sup>18</sup>

Vasugupta taught these sutras to his pupil, Bhatta Kallata, who publicized them through the Spanda Karika, a commentary on the Shiva Sutras and considered the foundational text for Kashmir Shaivism. Jaideva Sing (1893-1986), a Kashmiri Shaivite scholar and a companion of Lakshman Joo, translated it into English. Another version suggests that Shiva himself appeared in a dream to Vasugupta and revealed the Shiva Sutras to him. Vasugupta is believed to be the first exponent of this system of monistic philosophy, based on the Shiva Sutras, which is a perfect example of the Shiva Agamas. Additionally, Vasugupta is regarded as the founder of one of the four sub-schools of Kashmir Shaivism, known as the Spanda school.<sup>19</sup>

### **Sage Somananda**

Somananda, active from 875 to 925 AD, was renowned as one of the primary disciples of Vasugupta. He was considered a gifted scholar, known for his seminal work, Shivadrishti, the first philosophical treatise on monistic Shaivism<sup>20</sup>. As a contemporary of Bhaṭṭa Kallata, a 9th-century Kashmiri Shaivite writer and disciple of Vasugupta, the founder of the Spand Karika school of Kashmir Shaivism, scholars categorize him as having played an essential role in shaping the region's philosophical landscape. Somananda lived in Srinagar, where he taught the tenets of Kashmir Shaivism to a generation of scholars and philosophers.<sup>21</sup>

Somananda is best remembered as the first preceptor of the Pratyabhijna school, one of four sub-schools of Kashmir Shaivism. He is said to have expounded on the principles of monistic Shaivism, which posits that there is only one ultimate reality and that all existence is an expression of this reality<sup>22</sup>. Somananda's contributions to the field of Kashmir Shaivism are considered immeasurable by scholars and followers alike. Also, his work, Shivadrishti, is believed to have remained, from time to time, a cornerstone of the monistic Shiva school of philosophy.<sup>23</sup>

### **Abhinavagupta, Bhatta Kallata, and Utpaladeva**

Before Abhinavagupta (924-1020), there were also two scholars and teachers of Kashmir Shiva's philosophy, Bhatta Kallata and Utpaladeva (900-950), the 9th-century scholars whose contributions are recognized as prominent roles in explaining Vasugupta's Shiva Sutras and firming the bases of the Spanda school of Kashmir Shaivism, one of its four sub-schools. These scholars are highly esteemed throughout the historical development of Kashmir Shaivism. Abhinavagupta, a philosopher, mystic, and

theologian, was a prominent scholar of the Shiva Agamas in the 10th-11th centuries.<sup>24</sup>

He continued to write prolifically until the first quarter of the eleventh century. One of his most significant and comprehensive works on Tantra and Shaivism is the *Tantraloka*, which compiles all four sections of Kashmir Shaivism. This work details the principles, practices, and philosophy of these traditions. Abhinavagupta's definition of error as incomplete knowledge distinguishes between purely intellectual understanding and one gained from experiential learning. He has clearly stated that his purpose in composing the work was to fulfill his religious duty to awaken his disciples to the knowledge he possessed.<sup>25</sup>

In the Pratyabhijna system, he was the disciple of Lakshmanagupta, one of that time's Shaivite scholars, while in the Kula system, he was the disciple of Shambhunatha.<sup>26</sup>

### **Buddhist Influence in the Development of Kashmir Shaivism**

Before the emergence of Buddhism, the Kashmir area was renowned for its non-monistic Shaiva religious practices. The Buddhist arrival is thought to have brought about a notable transformation in the spiritual and cultural landscape of the Kashmir Valley, significantly impacting the region between the beginning of the Christian era and the 7th century AD. When monistic Shaivism emerged in Kashmir, it faced tough competition from Buddhism.<sup>27</sup>

Buddhist teachers had widely propagated their teachings and beliefs, leading to a decline in the popularity of non-monistic Shaivism. Consequently, these Buddhist ideologies became the dominant force in Kashmir, moulding the evolution of its religious customs and traditions. Although the non-monistic Shaivism had an ancient heritage of its own, the impact of Buddhism on its development cannot be overstated, as the culture and history of this region bear witness to its profound influence.<sup>28</sup>

Vasugupta and his descendants, particularly Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, reinterpreted these ideas and strengthened their monistic Shaivite philosophy in this region, which Buddhist teachings had influenced since the 5th century AD.<sup>29</sup>

### **Initiation of Kashmir Shiva Practice in the 8th Century**

In the 7th century, the Karkota dynasty, which existed from 625 to 855 CE, was founded by Durlabhavardhana in 625 CE. Its rulers are said to have generously supported religious harmony and diversity in Kashmir during their ruling period. The well-known Lalitaditya Muktapida (D.760 CE) was among them.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, the reign is considered to have marked a significant era in Kashmir's history, during which the cultural and religious practices of Buddhism and Shaivism emerged.<sup>31</sup>

Monistic Shaivism reached its pinnacle of development in the early 11th century. Despite its remarkable evolution, Monistic Shaivism remained confined mainly to the Kashmir Valley, a region renowned for its rich cultural and intellectual heritage<sup>32</sup>. The valley's prestigious Sharada Peeth, a centre of learning and scholarship, is being considered. It was a magnet for scholars from far and wide, drawn to its vibrant intellectual atmosphere and the opportunity to engage with the profound philosophical ideas of Monistic Shaivism.<sup>33</sup>

According to historical accounts, Shankaracharya (788-820 AD) was an Indian philosopher and theologian who is said to have explained the basic ideas of the Upanishads and promoted the concept of the unification of the individual soul with the supreme soul. He is also best known for popularizing Advaita Vedanta. He visited Kashmir during his travels through India. His philosophy of Advaita (monism), which emphasizes the unity of all things and the non-dual nature of existence, is believed to have significantly impacted the philosophy of Kashmir Shiva.<sup>34</sup>

Starting from the 8th century, Shaivism was revived in Kashmir, and Shaivite doctrines were given a more profound philosophical foundation during this revival, drawing from both the Vedic and non-Vedic traditions. This transformation is partly attributed to the influence of Shankara, who spent some time in Kashmir and engaged with local scholars and thinkers. His teachings on Advaita provided a philosophical framework for Shaivism, emphasizing the unity of all things and the ultimate reality of the divine. This helped to elevate Shaivism from a primarily devotional practice to a more sophisticated philosophical system. As a result, the revival of Shaivism in Kashmir during this period is regarded as one of the most significant intellectual and cultural movements in Indian history.<sup>35</sup>

The Trika form of Shaivism, a sub-tradition of Shaivism, is believed to have originated in the Kashmir region in the 8th or 9th century AD. This form of Shaivism emphasizes the non-dualistic nature of reality and the importance of spiritual practices such as meditation and yoga. It is worth noting that Shiva Agama, another sub-tradition of Shaivism, has an older origin than Trika Shaivism and has been in existence for a considerable time. Shiva Agama emphasizes the worship of Shiva through rituals and ceremonies. Kashmir Shaivism, which developed in the 8th century AD, is a form of Trika Shaivism that draws from both Trika and Shiva Agama traditions. It flourished until about the 13th century AD, leaving behind a legacy of philosophical and spiritual literature.<sup>36</sup>

### **Introduction to Swami Lakshman Joo**

Lakshman Joo (1907-1991), the last saint and master of the Kashmir Shiva tradition, was born on May 9, 1907, in the beautiful city of Srinagar, Kashmir. He was a part of a large family, with one elder brother and four

sisters. Lakshman Joo's parents, Pandit Narayan Dass Raina (d. 1948) and Arnimal (d.1947), are said to have been deeply religious and instilled these values in their child. From a young age, Lakshman Joo was drawn to the philosophy and practices of Kashmir Shaivism. He was a devoted student of this tradition and spent his entire life studying and practising its teachings.<sup>37</sup>

According to his biographical studies, he demonstrated great enthusiasm for meditation and actively practiced it from a young age. Despite this, Lakshman Joo's spiritual urge grew, impressing the people around him. His father built a small house on the factory premises where he could meditate undisturbed. From 1926 to 1933, Lakshman Joo devoted himself to studying Sanskrit grammar, Indian philosophy, and Kashmir Shaiva literature under the guidance of his teachers. This period of intense study helped Lakshman Joo to develop a deep understanding of the ancient texts and teachings. He faced several personal losses throughout his life, including the passing of his mother, Arnimal, in June 1947 and his father, Narayan Dass Raina, in January 1948.<sup>38</sup>

### **Academic Lineage of Lakshman Joo**

Lakshman Joo was a disciple of Swami Mahtab Kak (1880-1947) and a grand disciple of Swami Ramji (1854-1915). Lakshman Joo's mastery and deep understanding of Kashmiri Shaiva teachings were the result of his extensive education, which included the study of Sanskrit grammar and other related disciplines.<sup>39</sup>

Somanandanatha (875-925), a revered spiritual teacher, was the guru of Utpaladeva (900-950), who later became a prominent teacher of the Kashmir Shiva tradition. Utpaladeva taught Lakshmanagupta (lived in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD), who went on to become a renowned instructor of Abhinavagupta, one of the most celebrated scholars of Kashmir Shaivism. Abhinavagupta's lineage can be traced back to Atrigupta (lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD), who was a scholar with an impressive knowledge of the subject. Varahagupta, born into the house of Atrigupta, was the father of Narashimhagupta, who, in turn, was the father of Abhinavagupta. Abhinavagupta had many male and female students, but his chief disciple was Keshamaraja (980-1050 AD), who made significant contributions to the Kashmir Shiva tradition and emerged as a prominent teacher. Swami Ramji (1854-1915) was born in the Kashmir Valley many centuries later. He was a spiritual teacher, and his chief disciple was Swami Mahatab Kak (1880-1947). Mahatab Kak, in turn, had a disciple named Lakshman Joo (1907-1991).<sup>40</sup>

### **Lakshman Joo's Western Disciples**

Beginning in 1948, a multitude of scholars from both India and the Western world approached Lakshman Joo to learn about the scriptures and philosophical aspects of Kashmir Shaivism. Some notable Western scholars

who studied Kashmir Shaivism with Lakshman Joo include Lilian Silburn (1908-1993), Andre Padoux (1920-2017), Alex Sanderson (B.1948), Mark S.G. Dyczkowski (1951-2025), Prof. Harvey P. Alper (1945-87), George Venden Barselaar (a living scholar of Kashmir Shaivism, serving as a researcher at Lakshman Joo's residence in Srinagar), Bettina Baumer (B.1940), GERAL J. Larson (1938-2019), Alice Christensen (1935-2019), and John Hughes and his wife Denise who are presently living in USA and serving with Lakshmanjooacademy.<sup>41</sup>

In 1972, Alexis Sanderson, a Sanskrit scholar from Oxford University (b. 1948), visited Kashmir to study the Shiva philosophy of Kashmir, and Lakshman Joo taught him for six years. He studied Kashmir Shiva texts. Similarly, in 1975, another Oxford Scholar, Mark S.G. Dyczkowski (1951-2025), spent considerable time under the guidance of Lakshman Joo and worked on Kashmir Shaivism.<sup>42</sup>

### **Lakshman Joo's Textual Interpretations**

These interpretations have been recorded and preserved in both audio and written form, primarily by John Hughes and his family during their stay in Kashmir from 1969 to 1987, when Lakshman Joo presented his lectures at his residence in Srinagar. Most of these interpretations are still published by the Lakshmanjoo Academy in Los Angeles, under the supervision of Mr. John and his team, in the form of books called the "Revealed Teachings of Lakshman Joo". These books include Kashmir Shaivism: A Secret Supreme, The Manual for Self-Realization, Shiva Sutras: The Supreme Awakening, and Bhagavad Gita in Light of Kashmir Shaivism, among others.

### **Shiva and Shakti**

Lakshman Joo used the metaphor of fire to explain the relationship between Shiva and Shakti. According to his philosophy, the energy in fire represents the unification of Shiva and Shakti. He believed that fire is always burning and never separated, and all the energies in it are unified. He went on to explain that the energy of lightning in fire is not separate from the heating energy or any other energy present in the fire. His metaphor of fire represents the oneness of energy and the energy holder. He believed that the energy in fire and the energy holder are the same. In other words, Shakti and Shiva are not separate entities, but are unified in a single divine energy. This unified energy is the source of all creation and has the power to create and destroy the universe.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Power of Creation is an Experience of Every Individual**

Lakshman Joo presents a metaphorical explanation of creation in the context of dreaming. According to him, when a person dreams, he creates the entire universe within his dream. He envisions a motor car, which he

drives on the road; he is the creator of the road and everything that exists alongside it. He is also the one who occupies the driver's seat. Essentially, everything in the dream is an extension of his self. If he encounters any obstacle, even another person who stops his car, that person is also a manifestation of himself. Therefore, every individual experiences the power of creation within himself.<sup>44</sup>

### **Brahmin and Brahmacharya**

The philosophy of Lakshman Joo states that Krishna, or God, has instituted four classes of qualities that determine one's social status, rather than one's birth. He presented an example of a person born in England who, if he possesses the qualities of a Brahmin, is considered a Brahmin despite not being born into a Brahmin family. This means that a person's actions and qualifications are more important than their birth and that the caste system in India should not be based on birth alone.<sup>45</sup>

Lakshman Joo's philosophy is a critique of Brahmin scholars who promoted the idea that God created four castes or categories of human ethnicity, with each caste being appointed specific duties based on their racial factor or dominance. Lakshman Joo explained the concept of brahmacharya as a state where a person's wishes are immediately fulfilled. When a person reaches this state, his every desire is said to manifest into reality. For instance, if someone wishes for rain, it will come even if the sky is clear. Suddenly, clouds will begin to gather, and rain will start pouring down. This is believed to be the result of the person's pure intentions and their harmonious alignment with the universe.<sup>46</sup>

### **Kauravas and Pandavas**

A general concept regarding these groups is that they were the descendants of the Kuru Dynasty (1200-345 BCE). They were cousins and were raised in the royal palace, but they followed different life paths. The Pandavas followed the righteous path, while the Kauravas strayed far from it, which ultimately led to the battle between the two groups. During this battle, the Pandavas are considered to have been guided by divine instructions.<sup>47</sup>

Lakshman Joo expounded on the metaphorical interpretation of the Kauravas and Pandavas mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita. He elaborated that the characters should not be taken as physical entities but as symbols of good and evil thoughts. The Kauravas represented harmful and destructive thoughts, while the Pandavas represented positive and constructive thoughts. According to him, the Bhagavad Gita employs these two groups to teach the morality of distinguishing right from wrong.<sup>48</sup>

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## **Two Ignorances**

Lakshman Joo made a distinction between two types of ignorance: intellectual and spiritual. Intellectual ignorance is the result of our will, intellect, thinking, perception, and understanding. It refers to the lack of knowledge or experience of a particular subject matter, which can be overcome by acquiring intellectual knowledge. Intellectual knowledge is the knowledge that is acquired by reading books, attending lectures, and engaging in discussions. On the other hand, spiritual ignorance arises from our lack of understanding of our true nature. This type of ignorance is not specific to any subject matter and cannot be overcome solely by acquiring intellectual knowledge. Spiritual ignorance can only be overcome by acquiring spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge refers to the knowledge of our essential nature, which is pure consciousness or awareness. This knowledge is not something that can be acquired through reading books or attending lectures. It can only be acquired through spiritual practice, such as meditation or contemplation. According to Lakshman Joo, attaining God-consciousness requires both intellectual and spiritual knowledge. Intellectual knowledge enables us to comprehend the nature of God and the path we must follow to reach God-consciousness. Spiritual knowledge, on the other hand, helps us to understand our nature and the obstacles that prevent us from attaining God-consciousness. Therefore, to overcome intellectual ignorance, intellectual knowledge is necessary, and to overcome spiritual ignorance, spiritual knowledge is necessary. Both types of knowledge are essential for spiritual growth and development.<sup>49</sup>

## **Mind**

In the Kashmir Shaivite philosophy, Lakshman Joo expounded on the five different states of the mind, of which three are associated with the world and two with Yoga. In response to inquiries about Yogis who live and function in regular society, he explained that a Yogi's purpose is not to live in isolation, but rather to work with humanity and integrate into society to help others discover the spiritual aspect within themselves. According to Lakshman Joo, spirituality is a universal attribute, not confined to one individual. Those who are on the spiritual path have a responsibility to assist others in following it as well. This is the reality of spiritual life, which emphasizes the importance of altruism and service to others.<sup>50</sup>

## **Peeths**

Lakshman Joo's teachings explained that Peeth is a sacred place where saints live and meditate. These places are considered the abode of Lord Shiva, who has appeared in human form to bestow his grace upon the devotees. The presence of Shiva in these places creates a divine energy that

is stronger and more vibrant than in other areas. The vibrations in these locations are said to uplift the consciousness of the seekers and lead them towards spiritual growth and enlightenment. It is believed that the saints who reside in these places possess a higher level of consciousness and are deeply connected to the divine. The Peeths are, therefore, considered to be holy pilgrimage sites and are visited by countless devotees seeking spiritual upliftment.<sup>51</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Kashmir Shaivism is believed to stand as one of the most profound and influential philosophies within the broader spectrum of Hindu thought. Its rich historical journey, marked by the contributions of seminal figures such as Vasugupta and Abhinavagupta, exemplifies a dynamic interplay between spiritual insight and intellectual rigor.

Swami Lakshman Joo's contributions to it during the 20th century are said to have played a pivotal role in revitalizing interest in this ancient tradition both in India and abroad. His unique interpretations and teachings attracted a global audience, fostering a renewed appreciation for the philosophies inherent in the tradition. As such, he not only acted as a custodian of Kashmir Shaivism but also expanded its reach, ensuring that its wisdom resonates with contemporary seekers.

Moreover, the integration of Buddhist thought within Kashmir Shaivism indicates a cultural syncretism that enriched its teachings, further demonstrating the tradition's adaptability and relevance. The interrelation of key concepts such as Maya-Shakti and Svatantriya-Shakti reflects a sophisticated understanding of the cosmos that continues to invite exploration and dialogue among practitioners and scholars alike. Kashmir Shaivism is not merely an ancient tradition but a living philosophy that continues to inspire and enlighten. As we examine its historical roots and the enduring legacy of its practitioners, the tradition asserts its place as a vital part of the spiritual heritage of humanity.

As Kashmir Shaivism navigates the complexities of modernity, its core principles are believed to remind the timeless quest for self-realization and the acknowledgment of the Divine within oneself. The ongoing study and dissemination of this tradition, facilitated by modern scholars and practitioners, ensure that its insights will continue to inspire spiritual seekers around the world. Future research may delve deeper into the integrative aspects of Kashmir Shaivism with other spiritual traditions and its potential to contribute to contemporary dialogues on spirituality and philosophy.

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