

## **CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE KULARNAVA TANTRA -PART I- A FOREWORD CORRUPTED BY REPRESSED SEXUALITY**

ANÁLISIS CRÍTICO DEL KULARNAVA TANTRA -PARTE 1- UN PRÓLOGO VICIADO DE SEXUALIDAD REPRIMIDA

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### **Abstract**

This article was written to promote academic research on the Kularnava Tantra without the bias introduced by the "forewords" and introductions of the English and Spanish versions, which led to confusion regarding the object of study known as Tantrism. The aim of this article is to formally establish Tantrism as a philosophy/epistemology and to present researchers with this vision of humanity and society. Drawing on the experience of the House of Tantra, founded in 1992 in Berazategui, Buenos Aires Province, the variation in inquiries received from Spanish-speaking countries was analysed to determine their perception of Tibetan and Hindu tantric worship. This analysis reveals that this philosophy, as a worldview practiced as an official cult in Tibet until 1959 and in India in absolute secrecy due to political persecution, entered the West under the term "tantra" and gradually mutated in the popular imagination to become synonymous with slow, non-ejaculatory sex. This shift in perception among Spanish-speaking populations stems from the foreword written by Ramiro Calle for the Spanish edition of the Kularnava Tantra. This article aims to propose an alternative perspective on the text to encourage its reading with less subjective bias.

**Resumen**

Este artículo se realizó para promover una investigación académica del Kularnava Tantra sin el sesgo de los «prólogos» e introducciones de las versiones en inglés y español, que llevaron a la confusión del objeto de estudio denominado tantrismo.

Es intención del presente artículo instalar formalmente al tantrismo como filosofía/epistemología y presentar a los investigadores esta visión del hombre y la sociedad. Recogiendo la experiencia de la Casa de Tantra fundada en 1992 en Berazategui, provincia de Buenos Aires, se analizó la variación de las consultas recibidas de interesados de países de habla hispana para determinar la percepción que tenían del culto tántrico tibetano e hindú. De ese análisis surge que esta filosofía en tanto visión del mundo que era practicada como culto oficial en el Tíbet hasta el año 1959 y en la India, en secreto absoluto por cuestiones de persecución política y que ingresa a Occidente como palabra tantra fue mutando en el imaginario popular hasta convertirse en sinónimo de sexo lento y sin eyaculación. Esta mutación en la percepción de la población hispanoparlante proviene del prólogo escrito por Ramiro Calle para la edición en español del Kularnava Tantra. Es intención de este artículo proponer otra mirada sobre el texto para estimular su lectura con menor carga subjetiva.

**Keywords:** Kularnava; tantra; tantrism; Buddhism; Jainism; tantric; tantric sex; Ramiro Calle; Arthur Avalon; tantric studies; religion; Mahavira; Panini

**Palabras Claves:** Kularnava; tantra; tantrismo; budismo; jainismo; tántrico; sexo tántrico; Ramiro Calle; Arthur Avalon; estudios tántricos; religión; Mahavira; Panini

## **Introduction**

This article seeks to establish a further step towards granting Tantrism the status of a category within the academic world. It aims to equate the elements of tantra, tantrism, and their derivatives within the social sciences.

While Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam are polythetic categories (Urban, 1999), defining the object of Tantrism is more complex, as we find antagonistic definitions. On one hand, there are academic works from the late 19th century (Wilson, 1826) (Shiva, 7th century AD) to the present, and on the other, the demonisation it faced in India (Hayes, 2011) (Basu, 2016) and in the West, the distortion caused by a commercial, popular edition of an English translation by Pandit (Pandit M, 1965), which reduces the original text from 17 chapters to just 11, claiming to summarise and adapt it for the general public. This results in cuts and additions influenced by the Brahmanic demonisation of tantric philosophy.

In the Spanish-speaking world, the distortion arises from the Spanish publication of Pandit's English translation, with an introduction by Arthur Avalon and a "foreword" by Ramiro Calle (Pandit, 1980), which he calls a "PRELIMINARY STUDY, THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY," projecting his own dualistic understanding, much like Avalon's introduction.

## Methodology

To conduct this analysis, the following were used:

1. The Sanskrit text of the *Kularnava Tantra* preserved at Rajshahi College<sup>1</sup> (Shiva, 7th century AD);
2. The English edition of the *Kularnava Tantra* with an introduction by Arthur Avalon (Pandit M, 1965);
3. The Spanish edition, a complete translation of the aforementioned English work by Govinda, plus the "foreword" by Ramiro Calle (Pandit, 1980); and
4. Text mining work using R and analysed with Ghepi by Beatriz Valdez, "*Kularnava Tantra. Path of Meaning Circulation*" (Valdez, 2016).

Interviews were conducted with individuals who, between the 1980s and the present, have dedicated themselves to spreading or teaching tantric philosophy in the Western world.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

- A) Has the age of people interested in Tantrism changed over the years?
- B) Has the interest in learning tantra changed?
- C) Has the preconceived idea about Tantrism among interested individuals changed?
- D) Has the search and expectations of what people hope to find in a tantra class changed?

## Development

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<sup>1</sup> The original, first translated from Sanskrit and published in English in 1878, contains 2058 verses on many profound topics, of which only a small fraction deals with the master-disciple relationship ["guru-shishya"] analysed in this article. This translation was completed in 1916 by Sri M.P. Pandit and Sir Arthur Avalon in northern India. The few verses selected by Pandit were edited by him for this presentation, which was finally published in 1965 and is the edition questioned in this work.

The *Kularnava Tantra* emerged in the 7th century AD (Lorenzetti, 1992), influenced by and following the style of the *Pancha Tantra* (Wilson, 1826). It is part of the collections known in Sanskrit as *nitiśāstras* (Vishnu S., 1949), texts aimed at educating not only politicians but also the general public, offering ethical and moral teachings alongside a vision of humanity different from that established by the Vedas.

The Vedas and the Code of Manu (Zimmer, 2010) establish the division of humans into social castes determined *a priori* at birth, from which individuals cannot escape. The vision expressed in tantric texts is that humans can overcome their animal nature, regardless of the caste they are born into, and rise within society. This equalises all humans at birth and allows them to ascend socially. This is reflected in societies ordered by Tantrism, as seen when Antonio de Montserrat first arrived in Tibet in 1580 (Gómez, 2016) and wrote, "*these people [who practiced a religion—Tibetan Buddhism—based on a syncretism between the vajrayāna brought by Padmasambhava (Fremantle, 1971) (XIV Dalai Lama, 1994) —tantrism of the kaula tantric schools— and the Bon religion] have no kings among themselves*" (Spanish Geographical Society, 1998).

"Man, below the gods, above the animals,  
has been given reason as a guide;  
He is not driven by irrational will  
like birds and beasts;  
He is not moved by powerful Necessity  
like the senseless movements of unconscious things.  
The furious progress of the giant and the titan  
ascends to usurp the kingdom of the gods  
or roams the demonic magnitudes of hell;

In the unthinking passion of their hearts  
they dash their lives against the eternal law  
and fall and shatter by their own violent mass;  
The middle path is made for the thinking man.  
To choose his steps by the vigilant light of reason,  
to choose his path among the many paths,  
is given to him, to each his difficult goal  
shaped from infinite possibilities."  
(Sri Aurobindo: Savitri, VI-I)

In addition to the aforementioned *Pancha Tantra*, the *Hevajra Tantra* (Snellgrove, 2011), and the analysis of the Sanskrit and Hindi texts (Vishnu S., 1952) (Vishnu S., 1910) —particularly passages referring to the notion of truth, liberation through the guru, and the absence of caste barriers— the *Kularnava Tantra* shows the influence of Mahavira's thought through Jainism (Zimmer & Campbell, 1953) and the grammarian Panini (Glaserapp, 1999).

Despite the lack of printing and the fact that a follower of the *kaula* path was not to violate even the rules of writing —to ensure the faithful transmission of teachings—, the *Kularnava*, like all *nitiśāstras*, has dissimilar versions. Therefore, we will focus on aspects where there is complete agreement.

Given that these differences lie in the anecdotes used to convey the same conceptualisation, we have chosen the version preserved at Rajshahi College.

For this work, we have not included the analysis of citations or footnotes by Aurobindo Ghose —born in Calcutta in 1872— included in the 1965 English and 1980 Spanish publications. This is not because we

do not consider him a scholar of Tantrism, as his texts enrich the understanding of Tantrism, but to focus on the critical analysis of the original 7th-century text.

From the necessary analysis for this first part of the work, we find that the text of the *Kularnava Tantra* —excluding the foreword and introduction by Calle and Avalon— is consistent in the English and Spanish versions (Pandit M, 1965) (Pandit, 1980) with the original Sanskrit (Shiva, 7th century AD) in the following aspects:

1. The text is a series of prohibitions that an initiate in the *kaula* clan had to adhere to. These prohibitions were even stricter than those imposed on members of other orders, including the general population, regardless of their caste. We find a set of laws far more rigorous than those established in the Vedas.
2. The text establishes an extreme verticality among clan members, starting with the guru, and states that only submission to the guru guarantees liberation (Valdez, 2016). The verticality imposed on clan members, followers of the *kaula* path, is towards the most versed members of the doctrine, regardless of the caste to which they belonged upon joining.
3. The acceptance of candidates from all castes, including outcasts, with variations in the time required for admission, but with the caveat that once inside the clan, if an outcast was initiated one day and a Brahmin the next, the Brahmin had to serve the outcast.
4. The performance of a worship ritual where the initiate had to break five prohibitions: eating meat, drinking wine, eating grains, eating fish, and worshipping a woman. The English and Spanish versions are consistent with the original Sanskrit in that the foods to be eaten and the woman to be worshipped were replaced by others. Thus, the

ritual did not consist of doing the "forbidden" but of performing an action as a metaphor for the prohibition.

Regarding the first aspect, the hypothesis we propose is that, to avoid direct attack from the oppressive religious and political regime ruling over the people the clan sought to liberate, they shielded themselves with even stricter prohibitions than those demanded by the system, to prevent accusations of heresy.

Regarding the second aspect, we rely on the analysis of Valdez's relationship graph around key concepts:

*"It is observed that the circuits present in Figure 2 refer to themes such as truth, supreme, supreme being, can, Shiva, Shakti, guru, liberation, knowledge, world, form, mantra, and mind, fullness, deity, body, consciousness. The remaining concepts are connected to this core."*

Valdez also states:

*"Finally, our interpretation of the text, which we acknowledge is influenced by a traditional view of sin and the relationship with the gods<sup>2</sup>, is that: the guru can shape the mind on one hand to possibly ensure liberation; using knowledge to bring forth the self and truth in the world and for man to discover his inner deity by overcoming sin in harmony with the gods... In concrete terms: the guru is the key to, through knowledge and the desire for Shakti, facilitate man's discovery of his inner deity."*

On one hand, the verticality required towards the guru may relate to the total lack of human respect and respect for others' ideas or lives prevalent in humanity during that period and almost up to the present day. On the other hand, it served as a way to ensure the transmission of teachings, as the liberation proposed by the *kaula* clan was not spiritual

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<sup>2</sup> An influence also expressed by the editor of Pandit's English translation, who stated on the book jacket of the 1965 edition: *"They are free translations—with annotations where necessary—omitting technical details but preserving the spirit and essential importance of the original..."*

liberation —*Moksha* / मोक्ष— as noted in the English and Spanish texts, but *Mukti* / मुक्ति— in the original Sanskrit text—, which is liberation from a heavy yoke or burden imposed on people, especially outcasts. Here, the guru is the guarantor of knowledge as liberator. Therefore, the only possible path. Only an enlightened (literate) person can elevate a novice in the knowledge of laws and their rights.

The third aspect is disruptive in relation to the Vedas, the law, and the rest of the *nitiśāstras*, though consistent with the thought of Mahavira, Panini, and the *Pancha Tantra*. From this characteristic established in the *Kularnava Tantra*, we see a man emancipated from the "wheel of reincarnation" and free from the designs of the deity established by the Vedas, as anyone could belong to the clan.

Only the time required for admission could show some difference, but not based on caste —or the concept of castes and reincarnation— but on wealth in terms of knowledge.

The three years it took an outcast to join, we understand, were first to learn to read, then to know the law —the Vedas— and then the new law. A warrior took two years, during which he had to learn the law and then the new law. A Brahmin took one year, as he only had to learn the new law, the law established by the tantras, also called the Fifth Veda and, in our understanding, the new gospel initiated by Mahavira or Buddha, if he existed, as no reliable historical record proves the existence of the Buddha.

Once inside the clan, social hierarchy was based on merit, not birth.

This is the only disruptive concept in relation to the established order of that period's political power. It is the only violation of the customs of the time, and it is truly a subversion of the social order, a significant inversion of values, and the only one present in the text.

And regarding the fourth aspect, where the form of deity worship through a ritual in which the candidate had to break five laws is described, we read in the three versions used for this analysis:

*"There are many types of ingredients used in the worship of the Divine Mother. In Kaulachara, they include: madya, wine; mamsa, meat; matsya, fish; mudra, grain; and maithuna, woman."*

As we mentioned earlier, these elements were not consumed but replaced as metaphors; thus, wine was replaced by coconut milk, and the woman by a flower. The three texts also agree on:

*"And the woman to be attended is none other than the internal Shakti, which remains dormant in the normal human animal and is awakened in the follower of the Kaula path. This is the Shakti to be served and assisted."*

The original 7th-century text continues: *"The authentic maithuna is to integrate the shakti within oneself. Anything else is merely copulation."*

While in the English and Spanish versions, the texts continue as follows:

*"The rush of Ananda that ensues on the meeting of this Divine Pair, the Supreme Shakti and the Supreme Self, the Lord that waits above, that is the real maithuna, the final ma. Anything other is only copulation."*

*"The authentic maithuna, the fifth 'ma', is the impetuous flow of Bliss that follows the meeting of this Divine Pair, the Supreme Shakti with the Supreme Self, the Lord who waits above. Anything else is merely copulation."*

As can be seen, here appears the addition of "clarifications of the text" tinged with theistic subjectivity, influenced by the idea of a supreme god, and biased by the idea of something above to which one must ascend, paradise, heaven, the father.

This reading is very complex to interpret because if we consider that the candidate had to break a law, perform a forbidden act, we find that none of the five elements used in the ritual were prohibited by any religion, the legal system of the time, or even their replacements. To which laws, then, does the *Kularnava* refer?

We find that the influence evident in the text itself, stripped of the translators' and editors' comments, even Aurobindo's, are the writings of Mahavira, Panini, and the *Panchatantra*.

Mahavira establishes the notion of relative truth in his doctrine *Anekāntavāda* —Sanskrit अनेकान्तवाद, multilaterality, conditional truth— and introduces into his doctrine the principle of uncertainty and disbelief in what is expressed in the Vedas, even in the idea of the soul and reincarnation. Panini mentions the term *GuruKaula* to refer to the teacher, the teacher's house. In the *Kaula* path, anyone could be a teacher. And the *Pancha Tantra* clearly assimilates the different castes into a single condition.

Therefore, we understand that the *Kaula* is a path that proposes the unification of castes and the equality of all men. In fact, as we have pointed out, the *Kularnava* establishes that anyone could join the clan with the sole condition of a certain period of prior study, but once inside, hierarchy was based on merit, not birth.

These concepts of equality at birth and meritocracy were used for the first time in known history by Genghis Khan —initiated into Tantric Buddhism— when he named his youngest son Ogodei (Gómez, 2013) as his successor, as he was the most capable to rule despite not being the firstborn.

This unification of men gathered in equal conditions at birth requires as a necessary condition not being anything *a priori* at the moment of birth.

Within this conceptualisation, as Mahavira might meditate, "*perhaps the soul does not exist.*" For if it existed, if it came from somewhere and with a purpose, it would depend on each incarnated soul the social status in which it had incarnated, thus justifying the caste difference and the idea of superiority of some over others from birth.

Here we find another disruptive conceptualisation.

The **I am** used by the *New Age* to justify itself in the compulsive repetition of the same nonsense over and over to remain in the comfort of the known, and which was previously used by theocratic models to keep the servants of God, the warriors, the outcasts, the peasants —as in Tibet until 1959— in indignity, is replaced by the **I am not**; that is, at the moment of birth, I am nothing. Thus, this text opens the door to the infinite potential that exists in man to be what he wishes to be. True liberation.

Thus, a simple Mongol nomad seeking a king to serve and help him unify the tribes encountered a Tantric monk who told him, "*we are all equal, none is king, so we can all be kings*" and he was liberated. He abandoned his god Tengri, took charge of his own deity, the crown, and proclaimed himself Khan: Genghis Khan (Gómez, 2008).

Therefore, the notion of the subject that runs through the *Kularnava* is that of a subject bound to culture, produced in it and by it.

We understand that the laws that an initiate in the clan had to break were the laws in which they had been installed during the process of entrenchment (Berger & Luckmann, 1968) and that limited them on the

path of liberation or self-realisation: *mukti* / मुक्ति in the original 7th-century text and *moksha* / मोक्ष in the English and Spanish versions.

The initiates had to break laws of their own conduct, such as genuflection in an outcast and pride in a Brahmin, in a manner similar to that proposed by military clans or by conductist schools today.

This notion of the subject constructed in culture, therefore equal among themselves, extends to the notion of the masculine and the feminine.

The masculine or feminine in this case are not metaphysical energies as understood by Jung—who sought to balance what he called anima and animus— or physical as understood by Reich (Reich, 1990), nor biological attributes, but patterns or behaviours that society reserves for one or the other gender and that a human being adopts, balancing towards one or the other group of behaviours unconsciously and always *a posteriori* of birth.

Thus, balance or freedom of choice, in terms of the realisation of each conscious act, occurs when the masculine and feminine aspects present in all beings are balanced to achieve harmony, balance, and thus be in a position to "destroy" if the situation requires it or "create" if it is opportune, to conquer by force—an attitude typically attributed to the masculine— or by love, seduction—an attitude typically attributed to the feminine— as a meditated and conscious choice and not as an impulsive act typical of an animal.

As Bhāskararāya Makhin, a member of the *Kaula* clan (Brooks, 1992), says: क्तिव और िक्ति का सौहाददपूर्दसंबंध, कौल है। "He who has within himself *Shiva and Shakti* is *Kula*."

Moreover, and now in Argentina, it is a legal fact the liberating power of Tantrism, of the idea of **not being**, which allows a human being not

even to be limited by biological condition to configure themselves as one or the other gender, for whoever was born with a female sex, for example, can legally become a man and change their identity document. That is, Tantrism liberates man even from his own name if he so wishes.

We now hope to shed new light on the interpretation of the fifth *ma*, *maithuna* or "the *maithuna*" as it has recently been renamed.

*Shakti*, on the other hand, is not a metaphysical form of Shiva's consort, nor is it the summoning of metanatural forces or energies emanating from other "planes," but the metaphorical representation of a model of woman, of a deity<sup>3</sup>. This deity is the internal femininity present in an initiate of the *Kaula* school of Tantrism.

### **Analysis of the Introduction and "Foreword"**

Both the English and Spanish editions are divided into eleven chapters and an appendix; however, Arthur Avalon, in the introduction he presents and signs in 1916, recounts seventeen chapters of the work and analyses them one by one, showing, on one hand, that he has read the original text translated into English in 1878, which has that structure, and, on the other, a complete ignorance of the work that was finally printed. Thus, he concludes his INTRODUCTION in the English version: "*At the end of the seventeenth Chapter there is a remarkable passage...*" (Pandit M, 1965) and in the Spanish version "*Chapter sixteen mentions the rites performed to achieve the different objects of desire.*" (Pandit, 1980), even though the work finally printed in 1965 only has eleven

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that countless recently written texts on Tantrism—wrongly referred to as "tantric texts"—insist that tantric practice consists of worshipping the goddess, it would be more accurate to say deity. In the culture of the tantric period, deity should be understood as what we now call idols, models to follow. Of course, summoning someone to become God or Goddess is more profitable than using the word deity.

chapters. Editorial Eyra removed Avalon's comment on the seventeenth chapter.

On page 20 of Arthur Avalon's introduction in the Editorial Eyra edition, it reads:

*"In the present edition, interesting data is added in footnotes. However, we do not claim to have clarified all the difficult passages, but the obscure parts have been reduced to make this edition a working text."*

What does a working text mean?

Here we observe the destruction of the original work for the academic world that does not understand Sanskrit, reducing the source text to a theistic vision, with aspirations of spiritual salvation and absolute truths, and to what he believes inferior people can understand.

On page 22, regarding the "obscurity" he perceives, he states:

*"Moreover, the Kaula path is full of dangers. I would say that it is also compared to the Buddhist Vajrayana with a hollow bamboo inside which a snake is placed. It must ascend even at the risk of falling. Whoever fails on this path will surely go to hell. Therefore, the inferior creature must avoid this method."*

Within the text itself, not in the introduction he writes, and in the three versions used in this work, it reads: *"anyone can join the clan,"* meaning the *Kularnava Tantra* does not separate men into superior and inferior. Moreover, the notion of hell is not present in the Sanskrit work.

On page 23 of his introduction, it reads:

*"Chapter five deals with the greatness of Kula. It contains the description of the Kaula substances. The making of wine, the various types of wine, its use as a means to purify the mind and consciousness, so that the mind can become Bramagah. Then the fundamental doctrine of this school is*

*listed: 'success is achieved with the same means that lead to perdition.' Next, animal sacrifices and the need for wine and meat in the various forms of worship are discussed. 'The Brahmin must take soma as ordered,' this statement is denied by other Tantras. However, if done in an animal manner, even superior men go to hell.'*

However, in chapter five of the English and Spanish translations, none of this is written. Chapter five of these translations deals, in agreement with the original Sanskrit, with the preliminary measures to perform worship rituals, and here the word worship refers, once again, to the worship of one's own internal qualities or an external model—deity, idol—to emulate. That is, what an adolescent does when shaping his person.

In this chapter, the following conceptualisations are read:

*"1-Worship must be performed in a place free of distractions and interruptions, free of crowds...*

*2- If there is transgression of the rules, there are no fruits...*

*3- And when the worshipper begins the ritual, he must achieve and reach the state of consciousness in which he feels divine. To truly commune with the Divinity and offer oneself to Her, one must become aware of one's own state of divinity. Such a worshipper achieves Fullness along with Liberation."*

From the first point, we understand that the tantric practices within the clan are individual and related to internal processes of each practitioner. There is no practice in pairs in the *Kularnava Tantra*.

In the second paragraph, as throughout the text, it is read that the clan member was required to fully comply with the established laws. And, in the third point, it is clearly written that liberation was achieved, according to this doctrine, when the follower of the *kaula* path becomes

aware of his own divinity and emancipates himself from the oppressive laws of the Vedas that kept him in a permanent and hereditary state of slavery and inferiority.

Therefore, Tantra, unlike Yoga, which seeks spiritual liberation, seeks liberation from the chains of slavery, ignorance, and superstition.

Thus, the British judge Sir John George Woodroffe—who hid behind the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon to write about Tantra, surely due to the demonic preconception he had of Tantra—would see this as the path to perdition..., of the empire and of the reigning god. Of his father's hell.

To survive, although they ultimately failed as they were exterminated in a short time, the *kaula* clan adepts had to submit to the established system, to the law, to the Vedas, with the intention that, within the clan, the outcasts could take refuge, enlighten themselves, educate themselves, and emancipate themselves one by one until changing the caste society.

Emancipate themselves from the religion that oppressed them, enslaved them, just as President Mao—who defined himself to his personal physician (Chhaya, 2009) and to His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama as a follower of Tantra—emancipated the Tibetan people from the terrible Buddhist theocracy that exploited the peasants of Tibet.

We understand that with what has been exposed so far about Avalon's introduction, it is enough to show the lack of critical and objective vision of the work itself in the introductory writing he makes of the English edition that was later translated into Spanish and that had the most impact in the West.

On the other hand, in the "foreword"<sup>4</sup> —called "PRELIMINARY STUDY. THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY"— of the Spanish edition (Pandit, 1980), Ramiro Calle, who signs as a Yoga Professor at the Autonomous University of Madrid —teaching yoga in free hours to students of different careers at the university— says on page 10 regarding Tantrism *"that which confers a character of goodness to the conventionally 'five bad things,' among others, sexual union."*

In none of the three analysed versions is it mentioned that Tantrism confers a character of goodness to bad things, nor are the five objects of worship mentioned as bad, nor is there any reference to the term sexual union. The word sexual union is not mentioned in any of the three versions of the *Kularnava Tantra* (Valdez, 2016), and the word copulation is mentioned only once in the Sanskrit, English, and Spanish versions in reference to the fifth *ma* when it says that *"the woman to be worshipped is none other than the internal Shakti... anything else is merely copulation."*

In the Spanish edition, sexual union is mentioned once and only once on page 10 of Ramiro Calle's "foreword" but not in the text itself of the *Kularnava*.

It continues on the same page: *"There is no obligation or prohibition, holiness or moral sin, heaven or hell for the adepts of Kula."* We wonder how it is possible that a culture that was not traversed by the ideas of mortal sin, heaven, and hell could represent them and then deny them. We understand that Ramiro Calle only read Avalon's introduction and did not understand it either, as Avalon himself does not mention any copulation rite in the introduction.

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<sup>4</sup> The word "foreword" was kept in quotation marks throughout our writing because, in the 1980 publication in question, the word "foreword" does not appear as the title of Calle's text. Although it occupies the place where the foreword should be, his text is titled "**PRELIMINARY STUDY. THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY**," leading the reader to believe they have already begun reading the text of the *Kularnava Tantra*.

The "foreword" by Calle on page 13 of the Spanish edition states:

*"The inversion of values is performed by the tantric during the rite of the 'five forbidden things,' as a practice of potentiation of his primordial energy, of transcendence, of integration with the Totality without exclusion of anything. Can a body separate from its shadow, jump out of it? The ingestion of the forbidden foods (wine, meat, fish, and toasted grains: all of them with rich symbolism that can be used as a support for cosmisation) and the practice of the sexual act called maithuna and that requires control over thoughts, breathing, and semen."*

In no part of the text itself in any of the three analysed versions is it mentioned that the practice of the sexual act must be performed, nor is it mentioned that during the act of worship, breathing or semen must be controlled. The term semen appears only once in the Spanish edition and is in the "foreword" by Ramiro Calle on page 13 of the Editorial Eyras book.

The concept of controlling breathing appears only in the three versions of the text in chapter VI and to state that: ***nothing serves the being neither control of breathing nor yoga.***

There is a footnote by the editor in that chapter that explains the yoga techniques that use breath control, but this explanation, according to Avalon, "to clarify the text," is not part of the *Kularnava Tantra*.

Yoga was used to keep the oppressed happy, so it is consistent that an initiate no longer had to practice yoga.

The foreword also states: *"that Kundalini awakens and makes possible the ascent to higher planes —and free of conditioning— of Knowledge. The force of passion is channelled and used as a springboard towards Unity."*

However, the term *kundalini* is not mentioned in the text itself.

In the Spanish and English translations of chapter IV, it reads: *"In a culminating statement of memorable importance, the Kularnava unequivocally affirms: From the Muladhara at the base ascends again and again to the Brahmarandhra at the top. Happiness arises from this meeting of the Kundalini Shakti with the Moon of Pure Consciousness."* Clearly, this is a comment on the *Kularnava* and not the *Kularnava Tantra* itself, as the phrase *"In a culminating statement of memorable importance, the Kularnava affirms..."* would be like if Don Quixote said, "as Don Quixote says." This conceptualisation is not found in the original Sanskrit. It is evident that the phrase *"culminating statement of memorable importance"* is placed to validate, to reaffirm, and so that the reader —of the "foreword"— has no doubt that Tantra is alcohol, sex, and lack of control. A conceptualisation that surely traverses Ramiro Calle's imagination and that he must necessarily sustain to sustain his Vedic self and continue being a yoga teacher.

## **Conclusion**

So far, the introductory and sufficient analysis —for this first part of the work— of this text to establish how a "foreword" and a biased "introduction" of a clear and distinct text transformed the perception that the West has of the word Tantrism.

The foreword is written by someone who is **not** the author. It can be an expert in the field, a writer of a similar book, someone who simply knows the author.

The preface helps the editor in marketing. It is the statement of an eminent and media-savvy author, which gives credibility to the book. Prefaces help the editor by stamping a seal of approval so that the book sells well.

The introduction is always written **by the author** and is always about the content of the book itself, introducing the reader to what is broadly developed in the book. Scholarly writers sometimes use the introduction to quickly place the text within a particular discipline or part of it and is part of the book itself. This latter material is also appropriate for a preface but should appear in the preface or introduction, **not both**.

When the reader enters the two versions, they find a chapter of the book titled "Introduction" and another chapter of the book titled "PRELIMINARY STUDY. THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY," and for the average reader, these are just that: chapters of the book.

Nowhere in the book does it say foreword or preface to refer to these writings; therefore, the reader understands that they are reading the *Kularnava Tantra*, an authority on Tantrism and among the followers of the *Kaula* path.

Probably, with the intention of selling what everyone would want to buy, Avalon and Calle called "Introduction" what should have been titled preface and "PRELIMINARY STUDY, THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY" what should have been titled foreword.

The text retains the 7th-century speech register and, moreover, the *Kularnava Tantra* being an encrypted text without any temporal-geographical location, is difficult to understand for the Western academic world and almost impossible for the general public, so the reader who bought those English and Spanish versions could only understand what the *Kularnava Tantra* "says" in the first part "PRELIMINARY STUDY. THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY" and in the so-called introduction, as when trying to penetrate the text itself, from the first paragraph, it can only be understood with a deep knowledge of the history and philosophies of

India of the period in which it was written. For that reader, that reading will be the *Kularnava Tantra* without any doubt.

Arthur Avalon's introduction, contaminated by his non-*advaita* (dualistic) body-soul, god-devil, heaven-hell, magical, mystical vision, typical of his theistic structure, generated in the West the idea of Tantra as a magical and mystical philosophy destined for the liberation of the soul and to reach an external deity.

The *New Age*, disbelieving of the leaders and institutions of their Christian deities but longing for the idea of salvation—which structured them—, found in the "tantric philosophy" spread in the West by Arthur Avalon the "secret key" and the "fast track" to reach paradise and what the theistic West understands as mystical ecstasy, like that of Joan of Arc. Only that instead of talking to God face to face, like her, they sought metaphysical cosmic orgasms.

Thus, until the late 90s, people who approached Tantra did so in a genuine search to find **a philosophy** that better suited their needs for progress and expansion to find liberation from their *karmas*.

From the interviews conducted, it emerges that in the 90s, people approached seeking a philosophy that would change their paradigm, knowing that this would result in a change in their way of relating to the world and to others. They sought to increase their capacity for pleasure, even sexual, but aware that this did not come from performing sexual practices but from changing their mechanical patterns and their attitude towards life.

And what they found was liberation from the guilt of their bodies "born in sin" and some, the excuse, provided by the sellers of illusions—gurus—who, aided by the use of drugs that they validated, gave free rein to their passions without meditating on the consequences, and others

were also liberated but from the excuse that prevented them from fully loving the other close to them instead of an intangible deity.

That is, until the late 90s, in the popular imagination of the West, and thanks to the English version of the *Kularnava Tantra*, Tantra was conceptualised as a philosophy, a religion. A way of being and perceiving the world that did not differ from the other philosophies of India or the practices of Yoga but was subtly differentiated from the worn-out previous one as it proposed the fast track to salvation —*moksha*—. Almost like an instant compressed Yoga.

With the appearance of the Eyras edition in 1980, the dissemination of that book in Spanish began. And, whoever bought that version could not understand anything other than what was written in the first part of the *Kularnava Tantra* called —in capital letters— "PRELIMINARY STUDY. THE SECRET PATH OF ENERGY."

Then the readers of that edition, sure of having perfectly understood the *Kularnava Tantra* and knowing what the tantric practices were, began to write notes about how Tantra requires the performance of "*five bad things, an intentional inversion of values, and the practice of the sexual act called maithuna that requires control of breathing and semen.*"

This multiplied into thousands of writings, newspapers, magazines, and websites, and the media repeated over and over that Tantra was slow sex without ejaculating and performing "the *maithuna*," a supposed ritual where a man and a woman have exotic sex drinking wine and eating grains to achieve cosmic orgasms.

This text, the one from Editorial Eyras, whose purpose in modifying the original was surely to sell the book regardless of the consequences, also served so that people who engage in sexual work —since prostitution is prohibited in many countries— used the word Tantra and *maithuna* to

cover up their services in the same way that others call them "massages" or "sauna." Thus, many sites speak of the "tantric massage" as a form of massage that includes the lingam —penis— and the yoni —vagina—. So that the authorities do not prohibit them and the clients who cannot even mention the word penis without being scandalised go looking for "sacred sex," "spiritual sex."

Thus, Tantra, which is a philosophical system, a doctrine, a way of living and seeing the world—in the 1998 Encarta encyclopedia it read "Tantra: Official religion of Tibet until 1959"— became in the imagination of the people who today approach Tantra, and as emerges from the interviews conducted, an exotic form of sex without ejaculating to achieve cosmic orgasms. They approach to do in groups, or have done to them, what their consciences do not allow them to do without excuses. They seek an excuse to have sex without commitment and call it sacred.

We understand that this conceptualisation that exists today in the popular imagination of simple exotic sex distances those who want to delve into the roots of modern European thought that **is not Eurocentric**. It also distances children, who if they understood Tantric philosophy, its concepts, and individual techniques to model emotional schemas and self-govern and govern their attention, could navigate their existences more effectively.

We hope that this text serves as an impetus for other scholars of the subject to deepen the reading of the *Kularnava Tantra*, using the bibliography we present, to place it on the same level as the texts corresponding to other religions or philosophies, such as the Torah, the Talmud, the Quran, the Gospels, which clearly fall into the categories of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and which show us a different vision of the world that emerged in the East and influenced, according to Gershom Scholem (Scholem, 2012), the thought of the most orthodox esoteric

currents of Judaism and Islam, as well as the literature (Foljambe, 2008), philosophy, and politics of the West.

We also hope that by properly categorising Tantrism, those who work on developing therapeutic intervention techniques based on a model of the subject that is not divided into body and soul will approach. To know the origin of that idea, that model. And, to know the origin of an idea and link it with the subsequent ideas generated from it, allows the continuous development of academic knowledge.

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