

## NORTH EAST INDIA'S TANTRIC TEXT AND ITS INTERPRETATION THROUGH MIMANSA

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### *Abstract*

*“Mimansa” is a philosophical school concerned primarily with the system of interpretation and construction of the Vedic text in general and “karma-kanda” in particular. Although the whole exercise of construction of and interpretation of the ancient scriptures and texts appears to be somewhat easy, the fact of the matter remains that it’s an extremely tricky task. The task becomes difficult for the reason that for proper appreciation of what has been written in the texts (be it “vedic” text or the “agama” text) uniform expansion of words, sentences and context is a must so that the same expression written in any kind of text does not differ to different kind of readers, scholars and researchers. North-east India’s tantric texts must be interpreted using “Mimansa” principles of interpretation, which happens to be an advanced system of exegesis, taking into consideration all the possible limitations.*

**Keywords:** *Tantra, Mimansa, Exegesis, Interpretation, Construction, Nyaya, Axiom.*

### INTRODUCTION

The “Mimansa” principles of interpretation represent an extremely rigorous form of epistemology and hermeneutics, because of which this sophisticated system is considered an “Indian hermeneutical” system. Though initially it was not meant to perform the task of construction and exegesis of the tantric texts, and only “vedic-rituals” and texts were intended to be interpreted by it, yet because of the extremely sophisticated technicality and robust methodology, its use for interpreting the tantric texts started.

There is a section of scholars who are of the opinion that this use started when the tantric scholars faced criticism from the traditional Vedic scholars and circles.

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The idea of “Agama-pramanya” believes that since “Agamas” are derived from conversation between Shiva and Shakti, they are also divine revelation. There is another section of scholars who believe that the tantra-texts are “veda-sammata”, i.e. in close concordance with the Vedas.

A clear-cut example of the abovementioned fact is the concept of “vidhi” and “pratishedha”, i.e., the idea of “prescription” and “prohibition”.

Tantric scholars like *Abhinava Gupta* tried to reconcile the ideological conflict between the generally accepted belief of allowing meat, wine and “maithuna” in the tantric system with the general prohibition of these substances in the “Vedic” injunctions.

This conflict is resolved by the idea and concept of “vishesh-vidhi” which is also called “special-vidhi” which is applicable only for a “sadhaka”, i.e. tantric sadhaka, who has already been initiated into the process and has acquired some specific qualification, and this is the reason why this overrides the normal prohibition of the Vedic injunctions which is popularly considered as “samanya-pratishedha”.

This scheme also fits in with the popular principle of the “Mimansa” school of interpretation and construction, which says that under all circumstances, a general rule shall be overridden by a special and specific one.

Similarly, the potency and ritualistic efficacy of the tantric system as elaborated in the “yogini tantra” and “kalika-purana” has been trans-positioned with the ideal of acquiring “apurva” vis-à-vis the inner transformation, kundalini awakening and acquisition of “sidhhi” and “shakti”.

Similarly, the glorifying sections of the tantric literature, like “yogini tantra”, have been trans-positioned with the idea of “arthavada” and thereby establish that those passages which are glorificatory and unnecessarily exaggerate the stuff need not be interpreted as injunctions as per the “mimansa” principles of interpretation and construction, and this is the reason why the prescriptions like “maithuna would lead to attainment of sidhis” have been interpreted as “arthavada” and not as obligatory injunctions in the tantric system.

Likewise, the idea of “adhikara” has been drawn from the “mimansa” principles of interpretation and has been used for the construction of tantric literature and as in the Vedic system, those having “adhikara” could only perform the Vedic rituals; similarly, in the tantra

system, only the qualified “sadhaka” could perform the tantric rituals ordained for the initiated only.

Similarly, the “Mimansa” principle of “Lakshanika-vritti” and “Upamana” have also been utilised by the tantric scholars to arrive at an unambiguous and clear conclusion whenever there is any case of contradiction, if the literal meaning is adhered to, and multiple practices were interpreted in a symbolic manner in tantra.

Six axioms (Sarthakyata, Laghava, Arthaekatva, Gunapradhana, Samanjasya, Vikalpa) and the six rules of interpretation ( Shruti, Linga, Vakya, Prakaran, Sthana, Samakhya) of “Mimansa” principles have been exhaustively applied by Abhinav Gupta in interpreting the tantric rituals and injunctions as contained in “Yogini Tanta” and other “Shakta tantra” texts to arrive at a logical conclusion and decipher the intended meaning of the tantric text.

Similarly, the various “Nyayas” of the “Mimansa” principles of interpretation have been vehemently used by the tantric scholars to resolve the conflicting situation.

These “Nyayas” are of various categories:-

- Nyaya relating to the interpretation of expressions,
- Nyaya relating to textual construction,
- Nyaya relating to the interpretation of conflicting and prohibitory texts,
- Nyaya relating to miscellaneous elements.

A few of the examples of these “Nyayas” are Sfadi Nyaya, Aruni Nyaya, Shastric Usage Nyaya, Sarvasya Dakshina Nyaya, Phalachamasa Nyaya, etc.

## CONCLUSION

“Tantra” of North-East India is an altogether different paradigm and often claims to be dialogic in nature, i.e. seeking its origin in the conversation between “Shiva-Parvati”. Apart from the “ritualistic prescriptions” and “tantra-specific mantras”, it also contains esoteric elements. Many brilliant tantric scholars like Abhinav Gupta have successfully attempted this and achieved success in it.

Not only Indian scholars but many foreign scholars like Alexis Sanderson and David Lawrence have also shown how the “Mimansa” system of interpretation can aid in the proper understanding, viable construction and accurate exegesis of tantric texts.

Therefore, the need of the hour is the exploration of this great gem of exegesis, interpretation and construction so that our cultural heritage can be preserved in a better way.

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