

— DEFINITION OF NONDUAL — ŚAIVA TANTRA

While we will address other Tantrik traditions in the following historical overview, this book takes as its exemplar and focal point the lineages of nondual Śaiva Tantra (pronounced *SHY-vuh TUN-truh*), most clearly typified by the Kaula Trika lineage. Later on, as we move through the history, you will understand how this specific tradition fits into the big picture of the Tantra. To begin, though, I want to define nondual Śaiva Tantra (NŚT for short) as clearly as possible, so you can get oriented to where we're headed and what we're going to focus on (please note in the period we are looking at, the Goddess traditions called Śākta Tantra were not separate from Shaivism. They were considered part of the same religion).

Definition of nondual Śaiva Tantra

My definition of nondual Śaiva Tantra is

A spiritual movement originating in northern India that reached its peak in the 9th to 12th centuries, primarily characterized by

- 1 Emphasis on direct experience of a divine reality that has transcendent and immanent aspects, called Śiva and Śakti respectively, with Śiva primarily understood as the pure consciousness that is ultimate ground of being and Śakti as the flowing energy making up the entire manifest universe.
- 2 Initiation into a guru-disciple relationship and an egalitarian *kula* (spiritual community).
- 3 Spiritual practice in four aspects: contemplation of View teachings, meditative ritual, yogic techniques of the subtle body, and the aesthetic cultivation of the senses, all aimed at accessing and assimilating the divine energy in all things, in order to achieve both worldly success and spiritual liberation.³⁰

