Abhinavagupta’s Hermeneutics of the Absolute
Anuttaraprakriya
An Interpretation of his Paratrisikā Vivaraṇa

Bettina Bäumer
The Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa by the great Kashmiri philosopher and mystic Abhinavagupta is an extensive commentary on the Parātrīśikā Tantra, and it is one of the most profound texts, not only of non-dualist Kashmir Śaivism, but of Indian philosophy and mysticism in general. The present work attempts to make this difficult text accessible, by culling out the important themes and offering an interpretation. The main focus is on the understanding of the Absolute (Anuttara) and the ways to realize it. The central theme of mantra also leads to a mysticism of language with its philosophical implications. All these reflections and practices are inscribed in the theory that “everything is related to the totality”, “every part contains the whole of reality” (sarvam sarvatmakam). It is this holistic vision of Abhinavagupta, based on the Tantras, which makes this work so relevant in our times of fragmented aspects of life and knowledge in search of integration. No doubt, in the view of the Tantra and of Abhinavagupta, language and mantra provide the key.

This fascinating book is an important contribution to studies and interpretations on Kashmir Śaivism, its spirituality and philosophy, and on Abhinavagupta in particular.

Dr. Bettina Bäumer, indologist from Austria and Professor of Religious Studies (Visiting Professor at several universities), living and working in Varanasi since 1967, is the author and editor of a number of books and over 50 research articles. Her main fields of research are non-dualistic Kashmir Śaivism, Indian aesthetics, temple architecture and religious traditions of Orissa, and comparative mysticism. She has been Coordinator of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Varanasi, and Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. She has translated important Sanskrit texts into German and English.

Dr. André Padoux, Paris, is one of the foremost scholars on Tantra, Kashmir Śaivism, and mantraśāstra.

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Triśula with Kāli, Tanjore Region, 10th century.
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Bettina Bäumer

Foreword by
André Padoux

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Foreword

This study by Bettina Bäumer is important and welcome because it deals with what may well be considered as the very core—metaphysically and mystically—of Abhinavagupta’s teaching, and all that he still explains and teach us. Its importance is, of course and foremost, due to the fact that it deals with a work by Abhinavagupta who—as Bettina Bäumer rightfully says in her introduction—is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable, extraordinary, thinkers of India, perhaps the most exceptional one in the history of the great minds of the subcontinent.

In Sanskrit sometimes difficult to discover because of the subtlety of the thought it expresses, and bearing on linguistic phonetic elements, phonemes, syllables (saras, sūtra), or metaphors, typically Indian indeed, in this respect, the Abhinavagupta’s thought is more than the Indian one has given the same importance to speech and language—here in the form of Sanskrit—speculating about the nature of the constituents of language. As constitutive elements, its organisation, the concept of the Saṃskṛta, the systematic... one could say scientific—description of a language, Pāṇini’s grammar, appear in India.

Such metaphysical-linguistic speculations (linked to ritual) are essential in the PTV, more than half of the thirty-six stanzas of the Parātrīśikā (PT) concerning the subject. For the PT, the path to the Supreme, anuttara, to liberation, is the spiritual-mental, sum bodhī and ritual, experience and mastery of a mantra, the ṣaumatic SAUH. Very typically Tantric (we may note) are the PT and the nirūpaṇa in this global approach, for its condition aimed at by the adept is spiritual-transcendental, it is experienced, lived, mentally and corporeally by an incarnate person, living in this world, an adept or devotee performing rites. These are not mere accessory concrete elements to a purely spiritual quest! The quest, surely, is spiritual—and this is the fundamental aspect which is the theme of this hermeneutical study. But it is the quest of a human being, not of a purely spiritual...
The bonds of Śātras cannot constrict the Heart, nor can this world contaminate consciousness. May there be the state of absolute Fullness filled with absorption flashing forth, the true natural path of the essence of Plenitude.
Foreword

This study by Bettina Bäumer is important and welcome because it deals with what may well be considered as the very core — metaphysically and mystically — of Abhinavagupta’s teaching, and of what he still can tell and teach us. Its importance is, of course and foremost, due to the fact that it deals with a work by Abhinavagupta who — as Bettina Bäumer forcefully says in her introduction — is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable, “extraordinary,” thinkers of India — perhaps the most exceptional one by the breadth of his interests and talents, his acumen and profoundness. He was also a master of Sanskrit — a Sanskrit sometimes difficult to decipher, because both of an idiosyncratic style and of the subtlety of the thought it expresses — and Sanskrit has the pride of place in the Parātrīṣikavivarana (PTV) several of whose main conceptions bearing on linguistic-phonetic elements: phonemes, syllables (varṇa, aksara), or mantras. Typically Indian, indeed, in this respect, was Abhinavagupta. For no other culture than the Indian one has given the same importance to speech or language — here in the form of Sanskrit — speculating endlessly during centuries on its constitutive elements, its organisation, uses and powers. Not by chance did the first ever systematic — one could say scientific — description of a language, Pāṇini’s grammar, appear in India.

Such metaphysical-linguistic speculations (linked to ritual) are essential in the PTV, more than half of the thirty-six stanzas of the Parātrīṣikā (PT) concerning the subject. For the PT, the path to the Supreme, anuttara, to liberation, is the spiritual-mental, cum bodily and ritual, experience and mastery of a mantra, the hṛdayabīja SAUḤ. Very typically Tantric (we may note) are the PT and the vivaraṇa in this global approach; for if the condition aimed at by the adept is spiritual, transcendental, it is experienced, ‘lived,’ mentally and corporally by an incarnate person, living in this world, an adept or devotee performing rites. These are not mere accessory concrete elements to a purely spiritual quest. The quest, surely, is spiritual — and this is the fundamental aspect which is the theme of this hermeneutical study. But it is the quest of a human being, not of a purely spiritual
entity. Hence the importance of concrete elements, linguistic or ritual, uttered, visualised, or both intellectually and bodily acted out — the linguistic elements, when they are mantras, being themselves ritually "extracted," then animated and put into action by rites which, being Tantric, consist as much in mental visualisations as in actions. What takes place is the transformative total experience of a living being.

One might, in this connection, note that what the Goddess asks for in the first stanza of the PT is how khecarīsamatā is to attain: how to penetrate, that is, in kha, in the central mystical void within the heart. This is a spiritual, mystical, process. But, in early Tantras such as the Brahmayāmalā/Picumata, one meets Khecarīs, which are a class of Yoginīs moving in the space who can bestow supernatural powers. Later, the Krama tradition saw the creation of the world as being due to four forms of divine power imagined as swirling wheels of energy (śakticakra) whose movements create and animate not only the cosmos but also the senses and the mind of human beings, the highest of these being khecari, a conception taken over by Abhinavagupta as appears in the gloss on khecarīsamatām of the PTV (pp.39 ff. of the Kashmir Series edition). If khecari can be in a state of equilibrium (samatā), she is nevertheless made up of the senses and their objects. She is characterised by "the fluctuations of passion, anger, and so forth" (śaiva khecari kāmakrodhādirūpatayā vaiṣamyena lakṣyate). Her equilibrium therefore is charged with power. It is not a peaceful calm, but the intensity of dominated power. This is what a Tantric adept is looking for. The Tantric liberated person is a siddha: transcending this world but also dominating it. Abhinavagupta, when he is described as a living person (apocryphally, of course, but not without plausibility), is not shown as an ascetic world-renouncing sadhu, but on the contrary as enjoying many worldly pleasures. He was an aesthetician; an aesthete too, we may presume. The world of Tantra is a world of passion. Passions dominated, of course, but passions made use of to reach what is beyond them, but includes them. The Tantric case as a way of life is a case of particular, extreme, intensity. In this respect it differs from other traditions which are also ways of life. We may also note here in passing that all philosophies are ways of life, as was underlined by Pierre Hadot (who I was happy to see quoted in the introduction).¹

¹ Pierre Hadot taught classical philosophy in the Collège de France during several years. He died in April 2010, aged 88.
Am I here contradicting the main theme of this excellent book? Of course, not! I merely take the opportunity of this preface to evoke some aspects of the Tantric domain I happened to study. My approach differs from Bettina Bäumer’s more on details or orientation than on essentials. Ours is an old friendship. I have known Bettina Bäumer when she was still a young scholar. We worked together for some time in a research unit of the CNRS. We have remained friends and colleagues ever since, exploring, each in his/her own way, the same domain, treading in some respects the same not always easy path. We have both worked with Swami Lakshman Joo, I however much more briefly than Bettina, never being as near to him as she was and still is. My somewhat different approach to some problems does not prevent me from fully appreciating the present work. We differ but sometimes converge: this is the case here. Her hermeneutical approach of the PTV is, I feel, very fruitful both in setting out and clarifying Abhinavagupta’s meaning, and in bringing out what it can still say to us. In this respect, her approach will prove very useful. I confess to being all the more ready to commend this approach, and the fact that it concerns Abhinavagupta’s thought, because Indian philosophers of today seem to be either fascinated by Śaṅkara’s advaita as if it were the acme of Indian philosophical thought, which, whatever its merits, I believe it is not, or, when they develop a philosophical stance of their own, to be mere epigones of the analytical thought the British have inherited from Vienna — a less ‘philosophical’ form of thought being hard to imagine.

To come back to the PTV, Abhinavagupta’s emphasis on gnosis, on the intensity of immersion, on the absorption in the Supreme, is not to be doubted. The ultimate teaching of the PTV is clearly the transcending of ritual (to use the title of the last chapter of this book). One may perhaps ask oneself whether Abhinavagupta wasn’t, in this respect, overemphasising this aspect of the PT’s teaching. This is possible, but all the less certain since already such earlier Tantras as the Jayarathayāmala, to which Abhinavagupta often refers, notably in the Tantrāloka, prescribe the adept to respect, in the social field, the rules of the varṇāśramadhharma. He had all the more reasons to do so since in his time Tantra had ceased being the practice of small transgressive ascetic groups (were they ever those of larger groups? in spite of its pervasion of the Hindu world, Tantra was always a matter of active minorities), but were the secret private practice of well-established, socially conservative
grhastras\(^2\). (Tantra was never socially transgressive — quite the contrary). As such it has survived during centuries, marked innumerable aspects of Indian culture, however, in the particular case of the Trika, remaining only as a metaphysical system (mystical, too), its ritual aspect having disappeared. Tantric rites and practices went on surviving and survive, sometimes very actively, but in other traditions, for other cults, among other groups, in other centres (or countries). We go on reading the Tantraloka, but nobody would dream (or be able, and still less qualified for) performing the rites described in the thirty odd chapters of this text which follow the first five where Abhinavagupta (as we are reminded here) proclaimed the equal usefulness and uselessness of ritual practice.

But, ritual being transcended, what remains, on the metaphysical and the mystical plane, expounded in several passages of the PTV, is precisely that which can say something to us, be of some — essential! — use in this present world. By translating and interpreting this text over 1000 years of history into a completely different context is surely hazardous. It is a difficult work, where subtlety, 'acribie,' empathy are needed — and are found here. Bäumer’s “double adhikāra,” as she calls it: to have worked with Swami Lakshman Joo in “a unique personal union” and to be well trained in European Indology, made her specially apt for this work.

In her introduction, Bettina Bäumer hopes that her “intercultural work in hermeneutic” on the PTV will not only make this text accessible but also have its relevance for our present world: she has, I believe, perfectly succeeded in doing so.

Paris, November 20, 2010

André Padoux

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2. Jayaratha, commenting the Tantraloka 4.24, quotes the formula: antah kaulo bahi śaivo lokācāre tu vaidikah which sums up the behaviour of the grhastra Brahmin follower of the Trika.
Acknowledgements

First of all my thanks goes to the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, for providing me a Fellowship which permitted me to work on this book for three years (2005-2007). I specially thank the former Chairman, Prof. G.C. Pande, who encouraged me to take up such a difficult topic, and the former Director, Prof. Bhuvan Chandel, who gave me all support and encouragement. The Institute with its wonderful natural surroundings provided an ideal place for study, research and meditation on the text. The interdisciplinary interactions with other Fellows were very inspiring, and I specially want to mention gratefully: Prof. R.N. Misra, Prof. S.C. Pande, Prof. Karuna Goswami, Prof. Jaiwanti Dimri, Prof. Anu Kapur, among others who enriched my stay by their discussions. I owe a special gratitude to Prof. Pabitra Kumar Roy, who not only discussed with me on the topics concerned and gave me feedback, but who edited the English of this text and improved my style.

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I am also grateful to the scholars of Kashmir Šaivism and Abhinavagupta from whom I have learnt in Varanasi, to mention specially Pandit H.N. Chakravarty and Prof. K.D. Tripathi.

My thanks and respect go to Prabha Devi, the living and learned representative of the tradition of Kashmir Šaivism and direct disciple of Swami Lakshman Joo, for her inspiration and support.

Without the guidance and inspiration of the last Master of Trika and Pratyabhijñā, Swami Lakshman Joo of Kashmir, I could not have approached...
this difficult text. I was extremely fortunate to sit at his feet from 1986 till his samādhi in 1991. This book, with all its deficiencies, is laid at his feet as a sign of my total indebtedness. He gave me access to this rich tradition which he wanted to continue and be passed on.

I am extremely grateful to Professor André Padoux for agreeing to write a Foreword. He is the most eminent scholar in the field of Mantrāsastra and I am deeply indebted to his work.

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Bettina Bäumer
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# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>APS</td>
<td>Ajañapramātṛ Siddhi (Utpaladeva)</td>
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<td>BhG</td>
<td>Bhagavad-Gītā</td>
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<td>ĪPK</td>
<td>Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā (Utpaladeva)</td>
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<td>ĪPV</td>
<td>Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśinī (Abhinavagupta)</td>
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<td>KaṭhU</td>
<td>Kaṭha Upaniṣad</td>
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<td>KSTS</td>
<td>Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies</td>
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<td>MBh</td>
<td>Mahābhārata</td>
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<td>MVT</td>
<td>Mālinīvijayottara Tantra</td>
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<td>PTV</td>
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<td>SāKā</td>
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<td>SvT</td>
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<td>TĀ</td>
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<td>VBh</td>
<td>Vījñāna Bhairava</td>
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<td>YSā</td>
<td>Yogasūtra</td>
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Introduction

etad guhyam mahāguhyam

(Tell me) This secret, this great (non)secret.

The Parātrīśikā Tantra belongs to the highest class of Tantras or revealed scriptures of the non-dualist Śaivism of Kashmir. The text has attracted the attention of the greatest philosopher of the school, Abhinavagupta. Along with the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra and the Vijnāna Bhairava (on which he did not write a separate commentary) he accepted them as authority in the field of spiritual practice and mystical realisation. The reason is that they approach the ultimate Reality in an attitude of "supreme non-dualism" (paramādvaita), which transcends not only the dualism of the Śaiva Siddhānta scriptures, but also their reliance on the performance of ritual for attaining liberation.¹ To give only an example of this attitude from the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra:

In (the practice of) this Tantra there is neither purity nor its absence; no concern for what may be eaten and so forth; neither dualistic observance nor its rejection; neither such (rituals) as linga worship nor their abandonment; neither (the rule of) owning nothing nor its opposite. . . . Everything (may be) enjoined or forbidden in this scripture. This is strictly ruled in it, O Empress of the Gods, that the meditator, striving with all his strength, should fix his awareness firmly on Reality. He may adopt whatever form of practice enables him to achieve that. — 18.74-79

These texts propound as their final position “an enlightened Śaiva consciousness which enjoys a perfect freedom of practice by embracing and transcending all the

¹ In spite of the fact, as examined by A. Sanderson, that the MVT as such does not contain an Advaita doctrine: The Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra. R. Torella (in: The Śvarapratyabhijñākarika of Utpaladeva, p. XXI) defines paramādvaita as “such an elevated viewpoint that it does not fear what is different from itself. . . .”
Saiva systems. . .” (Sanderson 2005: 106). These Tantras, in different ways, believe in the sudden enlightenment of what Abhinavagupta calls anupāya in his Tantrāloka, the “no-means,” “the pathless path.”

The Text and the Commentary

The Parātrīṣikā, frequently called Parātṛīmśikā, is a short Tantra containing 36 verses, which claims to be a part of the Rudrayāmala Tantra (v.37 ityetad rudrayāmalam). The Yāmala Tantras are an important group of Tantras of the Vidyāpīṭha, most of which still await publication, but the claim of two short and in themselves complete Tantras, the Parātrīṣikā and the Vijñāna Bhairava, to belong to a larger Rudrayāmala does not seem to be justified: the style of these two Tantras is very different, and even without being a part — or even the essence of a larger Tantra, they retain a very high status of spiritual authority in the tradition. This claim may only reflect the desire of the redactors to enhance their authority by inserting them in the class of Yāmala Tantras. Thus the expression ityetad rudrayāmalam may only refer to the state of union of Rudra and Rudrā (Śiva-Śakti) as the end-result of the Tantra and its practice. The name Parātrīṣikā, indicating a text of 30 verses, is misleading, because it contains 35, 36 or 37 verses. It may have gained popularity only because of its familiar sound. Abhinavagupta makes it clear that the real name is Parātrīṣikā: “(The Tantra relating to) The Supreme (parā) Goddess (īśikā) of the Three (tri).” Thus the name itself indicates that it is a scripture of the Trika whose central Divinity is Parā. It is best to quote Abhinavagupta’s own interpretation when he states the abhidheya or subject matter of the text:

Now, we are going to describe the abhidheya or subject matter. Trīṣikā is a compound word. This is its analysis: “the īśikā of the three” (tisṛṇāṁ īśikā). “Of the three” means “of icchā (will), jñāna (knowledge), kriyā (activity).” The three are also designated by such other words

2. TĀ II.
3. 37 in the edition of Jaideva Singh, depending on the arrangement of the manuscripts.
5. The published Rudrayāmala is a different text and its style is quite different from both these short Tantras: Rudrayāmala (Uttaratantram), Parts I and II, ed. S. Malaviya, Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan, 1999.
6. PT v.37, VBh v.162.
as srṣṭī, sthiti, saṁhāra — creation, maintenance, dissolution — or udyoga, avabhāsa and carvaṇā. Īṣikā means Īśvarī, the Goddess who governs and controls the three, i.e. icchā, jñāna and kriyā (Śaktis) or srṣṭī, sthiti and saṁhāra, or udyoga, avabhāsa, and carvaṇā. It should be borne in mind that īṣanā or governance or control in this context means “being non-different or identical with that which is to be governed or controlled.” Therefore, the revered goddess para ṣakti (i.e. the supreme divine Consciousness) who at once transcends this division of three (viz. srṣṭī, sthiti, saṁhāra, etc.) and is identical with it is the abhidheya or subject matter of the book, and because of its connexion with para, the title (lit. name) of this Śāstra is Trīṣikā. Another reading of trīṣikā, given by venerable teachers is trīṁśakā, and owing to the similarity of words, they give the following etymology:

That which speaks out (kāyati) the three saktis or “powers” is trīṁśakā. The word trīṁśakā derived from its connexion with thirty (trīṁśat) verses is not correct. Even thus, it is not the number of verses but only the sense of trīṁśakā, that should be adopted. — pp. 17-18

Thus some of the different triads of Trika are implied in the title:

para — para-parā — aparā: Supreme — supreme-cum-non-supreme — non-supreme
icchā — jñāna — kriyā: the Energies of Will — Knowledge — Activity
srṣṭī — sthiti — saṁhāra: emanation — sustenance — dissolution

Another important name of the Tantra is Anuttarasūtra: the concise statement or aphorism relating to the Absolute,8 and Trikasūtra, the essence or aphorism of the Trika. That the Parātriṣikā occupied a very high place among the scriptures of the Trika is testified also by the number of commentaries, and, as we shall see later, by

7. Page numbers without any other reference refer to Jaideva Singh’s translation. B.N. Pandit, in his Kāśmirāśaivadarśanabṛhatkośa (vol. III, pp. 375-76) expresses his surprise that scholars continue using the title Parātriṣikā when Abhinavagupta himself has made it clear that it is not correct: aścaryametad yadevarh vidhe ’bhinaṇavaguptīye vyākhyāne vidyamāne ’pi vidvairno granthasyāsy, svakalpitameva tannāma vyavaharanti yannirastamācāryena spaśtam! p. 375.

8. Abhinavagupta refers to earlier teachers/commentators who have given this title: trīṁśikā cānuttarasūtra iti guravaḥ, p. 102 J.S. (Jaideva Singh has taken anuttara- here as an adjective: “unsurpassable Śūtra”, p. 267, but it is more than that).
its influence beyond Kashmir, its place of origin. Its age is uncertain, but in any case it already enjoyed a high reputation in the eighth-ninth centuries. It may not be wrong to place the text in the seventh century or earlier.⁹

There have been commentaries pre-dating Abhinavagupta which unfortunately have not survived. We find the names of authors Bhavabhūti and Kalyāṇa.¹⁰ Abhinavagupta criticises earlier commentators and rejects their interpretation, but he relies on the Vivṛti by Somānanda, the author of the Śivadṛṣṭi and founder of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy. This commentary in its entirety has also not survived. We can only reconstruct some of his interpretations on the basis of the fragments quoted by Abhinavagupta, who always refers to his predecessor (guru of Utpaladeva, his own paramaguru) with the greatest respect. Only here and there does he differ from his interpretation.

I have written this work after (fully) reflecting on the doctrine of Somānanda which has spontaneously entered my heart which shares the pure state of truth taught by my guru.

— Summary verse 18, p. 272

A late and brief commentary by Rājānaka Lakṣmīrāma alias Lasakāka (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries) shows that by his time a part of the oral transmission has been lost. His commentary

is ignorant of . . . the true character of the text as instruction in the worship of, and meditation on, the Mantra of the Trika's Parā, wrongly taking the Mantra to be the Aghora . . . Mantra of Svācchandabhairava, thus assimilating the text to the Svācchanda-based cult of that deity. . . .¹¹

The Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa is one of the most mature and difficult works by Abhinavagupta on the Trika, in the following chronological order:¹²

¹⁰. Cf. Tantrāloka XIII.149.
¹². Cf. A. Sanderson in Samarasya, p. 124, note 88, where he gives the arguments for this sequence. "That the Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa was written before the Tantrāloka is shown by TĀ 9.313. There Abhinavagupta says that he has explained at length his assertion that each reality level contains all those above it in his treatise on the Anuttara (anuttaraprakriyāyāṃ),
Abhinavagupta left the task of exegesis of other important Tantras of the tradition, namely the Svachchanda Tantra and the Netra Tantra, to his most gifted disciple and prolific writer, Kṣemarāja, whose commentaries on these Tantras are of invaluable merit. Unfortunately his commentary on the Vijñāna Bhairava remained incomplete.

The Tantra

As with all Śaivāgamas, the Tantra is revealed in the form of a dialogue between the Devī and Bhairava. This dialogue form has been given a non-dualistic interpretation in the context of the Advaita Bhairavāgamas — it starts from different kinds of relationship (sambandha). Since the commentary will go into great detail of every aspect of this dialogue, it is not necessary to elucidate it in this
introduction. However, although the Tantra opens with a question from the Goddess in a verse containing the essence of the Tantra, and Bhairava reveals it in the form of answer, the dialogue is not brought to a conclusion at the end, as is the case in the Vijñāna Bhairava. There the Devī reappears at the end and expresses her full satisfaction with the answer given by Bhairava, and hence she merges with Him.13 The Parātrīśikā ends without such a dramatic conclusion.

The intense question of the Devī covers two and a half verses. From verse 3cd begins the answer by Bhairava with an address to the Goddess. From verse 5 to 9ab Bhairava expounds the tattvas in the order of creation (sṛṣṭi) and relates them to the elements of speech or the phonemes of the alphabet, the basis of all mantras. In verses 9cd-11 he reveals the central mantra of Parā, "the seed of the heart, hṛdayabīja," "the heart of the God of gods," in encoded form, followed by the powers of the mantra and the fruit attained by its practice (vv. 12-20), and the substitution of ritual by gnosis (21-24). The summing up starts from v. 25, followed by the ritual practice of the mantra (sṛṣṭibīja or hṛdayabīja = SAUḤI) in verses 26-35. The result or phalaśruti of this practice is stated to be the state of omniscience in verses 36-37.

There are other possible arrangements in structuring the text. In the course of the analysis we shall come to further details.

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A broad division of the text in two sections (even called grantha, texts) is given by Abhinavagupta as:

13. VBh v. 162-64.
1. **bimba**: verses 1-4
2. **pratibimba**: verses 5-37

The *bimba* section contains the description of the nature of the Absolute (*anuttara-svarūpa*), the principal theme of the text; the *pratibimba* section describes the expansion in manifestation, being a reflection of the Absolute in language and in creation (*ṣrṣṭi*), including the ritual associated. Again, in short, the first section relates to *anuttara*, the second to *uttara*, or to *kaulika vidhi*, the order of universal expansion of the Absolute.¹⁴

Before moving on to the second section (starting from v. 5 of the Tantra), Abhinavagupta gives a kind of summary of the question and relates it to Trika: The question of the Devī in one and a half verses starting with *anuttaram* relates to Śiva. The second part of her question (v. 2) starting with *ḥṛdayasthā tu yā śaktiḥ* relates to Śakti. Then the question arises about the third element of Trika, Nara (*atra yadi eṣā trikārthābhiprāyena vyākhya tat nara viṣayapraśnaprasaṅgah*, p. 32, 1. 21). This seems to be an introduction to the second part: *pratibimba* or *uttara*, which contains every aspect of Nara. But the alternative is that the two questions concern Yāmala, i.e. “Śiva and Śakti whose connection is known as *yāmala* so that a separate question about each could be justified” (p. 82).

**Abhinavagupta**

Abhinavagupta is one of the most extraordinary figures, not only in the domain of Indian philosophy, but also in a universal context, comprising aesthetics, philosophy, Tantra and mysticism all in one. Therefore his importance cannot only be assessed in the context of Sanskrit literature. It is high time that his genius got duly recognised beyond the area of his origin and language. For this we need translations of his works and studies which make him accessible outside the Kashmiri, Sanskrit and Indian contexts.

This is not the place to give an exposition of his life and work,¹⁵ but a few introductory remarks may be necessary, especially in view of the fact that he is so little known, even in India. It is mainly his works on aesthetics and poetics which

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have been received and acknowledged: his *Abhinavabhāratī* or commentary on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and his *Dhvanyāloka Locana*, the commentary on Ānandavardhana’s *Dhvanyāloka*. His aesthetic theory, based on the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, has become an indispensable method to apply, not only in drama and poetry, but in all fields of the arts, especially music.\(^\text{16}\)

There are few authors, even in the Indian tradition, who, like Abhinavagupta, combine such an enormous range of subjects and fields with the depth of mystical experience and philosophical insight. All these areas of knowledge are not diverse, but are interconnected within a consistent cosmology and soteriology, based on the Śaivāgamas. But whatever subject Abhinavagupta touches, it has the fragrance of his own personal experience and understanding. He is thus a perfect example how allegiance to the tradition, be it the Āgamic revelation or the lineage of teachers (sampradāya), does not stifle original thought, but rather nourishes it.

The final part of the text itself, i.e. the concluding verses of the *Vivaraṇa*, will provide us the personal touch of the author, his biography, his indebtedness to his parents and teachers, and love for his disciples and pupils.

To get a taste of his own evaluation of the different fields of knowledge and works we may quote one of the moving verses in which he sums up his career:

> I have cleansed myself first by bathing fully in grammar, I have collected the flowers of discerning wisdom that grow in that wish-granting creeper of insightful imagination which grows out of the roots of good reasoning, and worshipped the Lord of my heart with them; I have enjoyed the benefits of such beautiful great literature and poetry as can be compared with liquor made out of the essence of Ambrosia; and now, in the company of my beloved lady: discourse on divine non-duality, I am going to repose.\(^\text{17}\)

And he concludes his *maṅgala* verses by hinting at the different Tāntric traditions which he masters:

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17. Sanskrit Benedicatory verse 5 to the *IPVV*, tr. by Arindam Chakrabarti, in: *Śāmarasya*, p. 27.
I praise the immortal, infinite Absolute (anuttara), Aghora, the one who governs the wheel of the twelve Energies (= 12 Kālīs), who is the first initiator for removing mental dullness.

— IPVV maṅgala v. 6

His south-Indian ascetic disciple Madhurāja who composed an eulogy on his guru, Gurunāthaparāmarṣa, mentions the following Tāntric schools of which he was a master:

\[ \text{siddhānta-vāma-bhairava-yāmala-kaula-trika-ekavīrānām} \]
\[ \text{abhinavaguptaḥ śriṁānācāryapade sthito jayati} \] — v. 20

It is interesting to note that he mentions the Ekavīra after Kaula and Trika, namely the tradition of Trika to which our present text belongs. In the verse immediately following he praises Abhinavagupta, comparing him with other authors:

\[ \text{abhinavaguptanāthalikhitam likhitam hṛdaye} \]
\[ \text{taditaraśastrakāralikhitam likhitam salile} \] — v. 21ab

Whatever Abhinavagupta has written, it is written on the heart,
What other authors of texts have written is (as if) written on water.

His relation to the different Tāntric traditions which he received and practised will be dealt with later, also in the context of his paying respect to his gurus. Whatever knowledge he has received from a number of teachers of different traditions, he never fails to acknowledge that he has attained his enlightenment from Śambhumātha, his guru in Kula/Kaula and Trika traditions.

The dating of Abhinavagupta’s works has already been established, but it may be mentioned here as well, as summarised by A. Sanderson:

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To determine the chronology of the Kashmirian Śaiva literature in its most creative phase we have only three precise dates, found in concluding verses at the end of three of Abhinavagupta’s works. These report that his *Kramastotra* was completed in [40]66 (=CE 991), his *Bhairavastotra* in [40]68 (=CE 993), and his *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛttivimarsini* in [40]90 (=CE 1015).19

It may be possible, therefore, to date his *Vivaraṇa* around the turn of the millennium.

**Vivaraṇa**

At the beginning of his *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛttivimarsini* Abhinavagupta elaborates on the different levels of root-text and commentaries. This passage throws light on the relationship between *Sūtra* and *Vivaraṇa* in the *Parātrīṣikā Vivaraṇa*, since he calls the Tantra a *Sūtra*, and his commentary *Vivaraṇa*. In the context of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā* he calls Utpaladeva’s Kārikās *Sūtra*, not formally, but as being the condensed base text. The Sūtras are followed by the author’s own *Vṛtti* and then *Vivṛtti* (the latter lost in its entirety), and by Abhinavagupta’s *Vimarsini*. In summary:

In the *Sūtra* the author’s heart opens up (*sūtre sphuraddhādaya . . . , p. 16), in the *Vṛtti* the essence of what has blossomed forth/opened up is exposed (*arthan sphuritasāra*), and in the *vivṛtti* it is manifested in order to reach the understanding of all people (*vivṛttau tu vyaktā sarvajānagocaratām gatah*). Then he relates these stages to the levels of manifestation of the Word (*vāc*):

At the level of the reality of the Supreme Word the universe exists without any distinction/separation. The nature of *pasyantī* (the visionary) hints at differentiation (*āsūritabhedam* is consciously used to contain the essence or *Sūtra*); at the level of *madhyama* (the intermediary) differentiation becomes unfolded (*unmīlita, opens, is disclosed), and at the level of *vaikharī* (the expressed word) differentiation becomes clearly manifest in the form of separate acts of reflection (*bhinnaparāmrśyamānarūpataya*).

This is possible because they are coming down from *parāvāk*. In the context of the Kārikās, R. Torella says: “On the supreme plane the essence of the doctrine still lies

in the consciousness of its author, Utpaladeva, undivided from Śiva, and is given the name of “heart,” precisely because of its quintessential nature.”\(^{20}\) In the case of the Tantra, there is, of course, no distinction between parāvāk and Śiva.

Thus, Torella continues, at the level of Sūtra “the author reveals his undivided supreme heart, taking place in the nature of intuitive insight (pratibhā). . . . In this way the awakening of the self, resting in the heart of the guru, becomes gradually clear in the form of Sūtras.”\(^{21}\) Again he defines the different steps of unfolding of a text, leading up to Vivaraṇa: “Sūtra is that which “threads” meaning”; Vṛtti is the turning around of the very subject matter of the Sūtra; “Vivṛtti is the Vivaraṇa (= uncovering) of the hidden meaning of a text which is as if covered by the heap of dust consisting in the doubt of other opinions, which is removed by it” (p. 17). The definition of Vivaraṇa is hence clear — its function consists in removing the coverings (āvaraṇatvaṃ) which enclose the real meaning of the text or the Sūtra. At the same time a Vivaraṇa shares the function of Vivṛtti in the sense of disclosing the meaning for the understanding of all readers/listeners.

What is the purpose of this excursus on the definitions of different levels of a text and its interpretations?

Abhinavagupta calls the Tantra which he comments upon a Sūtra, more so, Anuttarasūtra, the essence of the Absolute, as we shall notice at the end of the commentary, although it does not have a human author as do the Karikās of Utpaladeva. He consciously calls his commentary Vivaraṇa, keeping the above definition in mind. In a modest sense it is that which removes the obstacles and coverings, in a broader sense it expands the insight of the Tantra understood as a Sūtra. Similarly as in the case of the Īśvarapratyabhijñā, the Vivaraṇa (resp. Vimarśini) is a further step of interpretation after the Vivṛtti by Somānanda on the Parātrīśikā. In both cases, the entire Vivṛtti is not available any more, and it can be reconstrued only on the basis of the fragments quoted.

Among the extant works of Abhinavagupta the Vivaraṇa stands unique in that it is a direct commentary on the Tantra. In the case of the Mālinīvijayottara, his


\(^{21}\) . . . evam atmasambodho guruḥṛdaya viśrāntah sūtrādiṣu kramaṃa sphuṭibhūtah . . . , pp. 16-17.
proclaimed central scripture of the Trika, we have the Vārttika which expands on various themes of the Tantra, without even quoting it for the most part,\(^{22}\) and the Tantrāloka, which is a Śāstra or a paddhati — based mainly, but not exclusively, on the Mālinīvijayottara, not in the form of a commentary. Therefore, his commentarial genius, his combination of faithfulness to the urtext and originality of interpretation, can be seen only in the Vivaraṇa in relation to the Parāṭrīṣikā.

What has doubtlessly contributed to Abhinavagupta’s predilection for this Tantra is the very first word in the question of the Devi: Anuttara. And in fact, this is also the only work\(^{23}\) which is wholly focused on the concept of Anuttara. This uniqueness of the Vivaraṇa will be observed throughout the text.

**Anuttaraprakriyā**

Abhinavagupta refers to his own work in his Tantrāloka as Anuttaraprakriyā.\(^ {24}\) “The treatise/the method relating to the Unsurpassable/Absolute” (IX.313). Not only do we know from this auto-quotation the sequence of his works, namely that the Tantrāloka has been composed after the Vivaraṇa, but the title given by him is significant in two ways:

1. That the entire purport of the Parāṭrīṣikā is related to Anuttara; and

2. Prakriyā is more than a method or procedure, it has a very specific meaning.

The title of the present work is one possible translation of Anuttaraprakriyā, taking prakriyā in the sense of hermeneutics, which is true, as we shall see in the first part: “Hermeneutics of the Absolute.” But prakriyā is obviously more than a linguistic or philosophical elaboration of the idea or “concept” of anuttara, it is very much a practical approach, be it by way of ritual or yoga.

The Svacchanda Tantra contains the oft-quoted phrase: *na prakriyāparāṁ jñānam*

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24. Interestingly, Jayaratha explains this title by: *śri-parāṭrīṣikāvivaraṇādāvītyarthah*, vol. IV, p. 1883, implying that there are other texts by Abhinavagupta which could receive the same title.
(XI.199), “There is no knowledge higher than prakriyā (knowledge).” We have to look at the context to understand the implications. The Tantra speaks of the levels of reality or categories, the tattvas and the various worlds, within which there are manifold scriptures:

\[
\text{evam śṛṣṭāni tattvāni jñānāni ca varānane} \\
\text{tattvai r etairjagatsarvam visṛṣṭam sacarācaram} \\
\text{bhuvanāni vicitrāni sataśo 'tha sahasraśah} \\
\text{tattvābhyantrasamsthāni śastrāṇi vividhāṇi ca} \\
\text{vijñānam kuhlām śilpaṁ siddhisandhalakṣaṇam} \\
\]

— SvT XI.195-197

The various Śāstras contain different branches of knowledge, including ritual and philosophical, magic and the arts. And all this is to be understood in the context of the categories of existence or levels of reality, the 36 tattvas. But the means or method of attaining this knowledge through the tattvas is initiation: prakriyā śivākṣā ca tattvair etairhi labhyate (XI.198). And there is no liberation other than by initiation:

\[
\text{nāsti dīkṣāsamo mokṣah} \\
\text{na vidyā mātrkā para} \\
\text{na prakriyāparam jñānam} \\
\text{nāsti yogastvalakṣyakah} \\
\]

— SvT XI.199

Kṣemarāja makes it clear that prakriyā knowledge alone, the pre-condition of which is śivākṣā, leads to liberation. Compared to this all other categories of knowledge are inferior. This is also with reference to other schools and systems enumerated before.25 Kṣemarāja comments on yoga: “That is no yoga when the supreme goal is not known, which is the abode of repose. Even if it is known, it is considered limited yoga in this system (iha), it is no yoga in the elucidation of the Unsurpassable, for here only that is called supreme yoga which can unite (with the Absolute).” (... iha anuttaracarcāyāmayoga eveti yojanikoktaḥ parayogah eveti iha yogah). Here

25. Cf. XI.173-82, mentioning, e.g. logic, hetuśāstra, vādajalpa, laukika, pāñcarātram, vaidikam, bauddham, arahata (= Jaina), sāṇkhya, yoga, etc.
anuttara-carca refers to the Advaita system. And the Tantra sums up: *tatsarvam kathitam devi śivajñānamahodadhau,* “all this has been explained in the great ocean of Śiva knowledge.” Kṣemarāja explains this simile thus: “Because the śivajñāna is deep and it is the resting place of all the rivers of knowledge, and because it is the cause of obtaining all spiritual treasures,\(^{26}\) therefore, it is (like) a great ocean.” (on *SvT* XI.200 ab)

This understanding of *prakriyā* has to be kept in mind when Abhinavagupta calls his *Vivarāṇa* commentary *Anuttaraprakriyā*, implying also the integration-and-transcendence of all the *tattvas*.

In the context of the “Way of Space,” *desādhvan*, Abhinavagupta quotes this phrase of the *Svacchanda* in his *Tantrāloka*:

That “path” (*adhvan*) should be examined by which the *yogī*, by a unifying contemplation on the order of the *prakriyā* alone, attains shortly the state of Bhairava.

---

And Jayaratha explains *prakriyākrama* as follows:

The order of *prakriyā* means the station following the sequence starting from Kālāgni up to Anāśrita (Śiva), as they arise sequentially. “He should contemplate” means, by the reflection “I am all” the *yogī* attains the state of repose in his own Self (*svātmaviśrāntimayatām*), and quickly realises the identity with Supreme Consciousness.

---

In verse 11 Abhinavagupta quotes the *Svacchanda*:

Having considered that Śivahood is attained in this way, (the Lord has said) in the *Svacchanda Tantra*: “there is no knowledge higher than *prakriyā*.”

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Quoting the *Trisirahśāstra (=Trisirobhairava Tantra)* he explicitly states that *prakriyā*  

\(^{26}\) *samastasampatsamavāptihetuṃ: this refers to Utpaladeva, *IPK* I.1.

\(^{27}\) *tatradhvaivam nirūpyo 'yaṁ\*  
\*yatastatprakriyākhyām ī\*  
\*anusamdadhadeva drāg\*  
\*yogī bhairavatām vrajet II TĀ VIII. 5.*
implies the integration of the 36 tattvas in consciousness. In conclusion he says:

(The yogi) who directs all things, elements, beings (states), worlds, etc. in unity with (his own) consciousness in an act of undivided awareness, he is (himself) Bhairava, the Supreme Lord (Parameśvara).

The reference to the Svacchanda Tantra and to Abhinavagupta’s use of it in the context of adhvapprakriyā and deśādhvān may suffice to show the technical implications of prakriyā when applied to the Vivaraṇa, as will be clear in the course of interpretation of the text.

**Abhinavagupta’s Method**

Whatever text or subject matter he deals with, Abhinavagupta does it with intense awareness of the methodology, and using all the tools at his disposal: from grammar to etymology to logic, to all the principles of scriptural hermeneutics, literary criticism, poetics, etc. He used not only traditional methods of interpretation, but he was also a keen observer of the phenomenological and psychological states and applies appropriate methods to bridge the gap between theology and everyday experience. In the present Vivaraṇa we find such an employment of a phenomenological method, for example, in the fields of language and of sexuality. He perceptively narrates the development of language in a child, for instance, and relates it to the levels of the Word (vāc). We shall find many such examples of subtle psychological observations.

Abhinavagupta’s hermeneutical genius has been well expressed by Arindam Chakrabarti, in relation to the Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛttivimarśini:

Anyone who has wrestled with the complex argumentation, the mixing of esoteric meditation techniques with conceptual logical subtlety, the relentless play of hermeneutic imagination, the amazing

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28. trīśiraḥśāsane bodho
mūlamadhyāgrakalpitaḥ  
ṣaṭṭrinśattattvasamrambhaḥ
smṛtirbhedavikalpanā  I TĀ of VIII.12-15 ab.

29. samvidekātmāntātta-bhūtabhāvapurāḍikāḥ  
avyavacchinamasamvittir-bhairavaḥ parameśvaraḥ  I TĀ VIII.15 cd-16ab.
width of erudition and incisiveness of psychological observations would know that it is anything but the work of a tired retiring intellect.  

There are two basic principles which Abhinavagupta applies to the exegesis of an Āgama: One is the need to discover internal coherence and consistency, called ekavākyatā. This implies, on the one hand, establishing the connections between the different parts of the Tantra and to see their interrelatedness. The second principle of exegesis is to discover and describe the inexhaustible store of meaning contained in a sacred text. Therefore he calls his root-text a Sutra, as we have seen, and calls a Sutra "that which gives scope to manifold senses" (p. 267 tr.). That these several meanings cannot be arbitrary but have to be in consonance with the first principle is clear. And these multiple meanings also follow a certain methodological pattern, based on Sanskrit grammar, semantics, and principles of logic and philosophy. The Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa is one of the most important works by Abhinavagupta on philosophy of language, and hence he justifies every interpretation of a word, a root, a syllable, in the light of his insight into the many layers of meaning, and the four dimensions of the Word (vāc).

The highest concentration of language is the mantra, especially the bijamantra, and in the Parātrīśikā, the one seed-syllable called hṛdayabīja, "the seed of the heart": SAUḤ. But we shall come to this in the course of the interpretation. Within the frame of the exegesis of the Tantra, Abhinavagupta follows the rules of composing a Śastra. The four elements of a Śastra or anubandhacatuṣṭaya are: (1) prayojana: the purpose or aim for which it is composed; (2) the adhikāri: who is qualified and able to study the Śastra; (3) abhidheya: the subject matter, related to the title; and (4) sambandha: the connection or internal relationship. Abhinavagupta provides a survey of these four elements, giving them an original interpretation, as may be expected from him. Just as he states these elements of a Śastra at the beginning, so does he come to the conclusion at the end. Jaideva Singh summarised the logical structure as follows:

The whole book may be regarded as a complete five-membered syllogism according to Nyāya-Śastra. The first verse, viz. "anuttaram
"katham deva . . . vrajet" is the pratijñā or introduction of the topic. The intervening verses constitute the hetu (logical reason), udāharaṇa (example) and upanaya (application). The 35th and 36th verses constitute the nigamana (conclusion).33

The Vivaraṇa is a prose text, but as it is the tradition with any Śāstra or commentary, it is framed by maṅgalaślokas or benedictory verses, and concluded by summary and autobiographical verses. Both reveal a very personal touch of the author and his relationship with his teachers, his ancestors, parents, relatives and disciples. Especially the concluding verses throw light on the spiritual situation of his time also — in a way not very different from our twenty-first century with its confusing claims of gurus exploiting disciples!34 And apart from these introductory and concluding verses, in the middle of the work, at important moments of transition, Abhinavagupta inserts summary verses.35 However, some of the summary verses are in Prākṛt, which have not been translated.36

The Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa is perhaps the best example for Abhinavagupta’s genius in explaining every word of the Tantra in its multiple meanings and verbal roots, the ultimate example being the sixteen meanings of the word anuttara.

Addressees of the Vivaraṇa: Prayojana and Adhikāra

As a part of the prayojana or purpose for which a work is composed, the question is asked, whom it is composed for. In most orthodox Sanskrit texts this refers to the adhikārin, the persons who are entitled, qualified or authorised to study the text. Here, too, Abhinavagupta goes his own original ways. There are three levels on which he responds to this question:

34. Cf. concluding verses 14-16.
35. E.g., pp. 22, 32 (in Prākṛt), 72-74, 99-100 mostly introduced by: ayam tātparyārthaḥ or samkṣepārthaḥ.
36. R. Gnoli notes in his introduction to the PTV (pp. XXXIII-XXXIV) that this kind of Kashmiri Apabhramśa is no longer understood by any Kashmiri pandit and that the passages in question are very corrupt and can therefore not be emended. Similar summary verses in Prākṛt in the Tantrasāra are accompanied by a Sanskrit chāyā which is not the case in the Vivaraṇa. He also states that this language is quite different from the Prākṛt or Old Kashmiri of the Mahānaya Prakāśa (studied by Grierson). Just as the other scholars dealing with this difficult text, I may also be excused for ignoring the Prākṛt passages.
One is a very personal and biographical one. In other works too he admits that they have been written on the request and insistence of his disciples, who are every time named and described. In the concluding verses of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta mentions with great affection three disciples for whom he has very specially composed this commentary:

... Karṇa who is a brāhmaṇa, very well understands the mystery of the manifestation and maintenance of the world, who delights in the meditation and reflection on and worship of Śiva, who even in boyhood and youth, abandoning attachment to objects of sense, has resorted to unswerving reflection which eradicates transmigratory existence.

My own brother, Manoratha Gupta by name, having a longing for the Supreme Self, is engrossed in the Śaiva Śāstras, who, in order to destroy transmigratory existence, is eager to examine the entire range of Śāstras and Tantras in order to attain the supreme status of Śiva.

There is also another person, named Rāmadeva, who is devoted to Śaiva Śāstras, who is well-versed in grammar (*pada*), Mīmāṃsā (*vākya*) and Nyāya (*pramāṇa*), and who brings about veritable adornment to his birth in the highest caste (i.e. brāhmaṇa).

May that which I have written with heart full for the good and delight of all these serve as a guide for all for the attainment of (the nature of) Śiva. — concluding verses 6-9, p. 271

Even more, he mentions Karṇa’s parents, specially his mother Vatsalika, “whose mind is filled with an inner disposition towards spiritual matters and expands with delight by the worship of Śiva” (concluding verse 5, tr. pp. 270 f.).

This personal touch is very characteristic of the author. Further, Abhinavagupta mentions two levels of spiritual qualification in the last of the *maṅgalaślokas* (v. 5):

\[
nijaśisyavibodhāya prabuddhasmaraṇāya ca ī
\]
\[
mayābhinavaguptena śramo ‘yam kriyate manāk ī
\]

For enlightening my own disciples, and for reminding the already enlightened ones (of their enlightenment), I, Abhinavagupta, am making some effort (in writing this commentary).

These two functions are important, for even those who have already reached a
stage of enlightenment need to be established in their state by an ever deeper knowledge and understanding. Even for them such a text is not superfluous.

In the course of the Vivaraṇa he will frequently come back to the spiritual requirements for understanding this work and putting it into practice. But, contrary to the usual exclusive adhikāra mentioned in most Śastras, he totally rejects any social conditions for reading the Śastra and practising its injunctions. This, he says, is supported by the Tantras/Āgamas:

In Trika Śastras, this very activity almost without any curb is worship. All things are available for the fulfilment of this worship. The course of knowledge has been described in detail. Regarding the castes — brāhmaṇas, etc. — there is no fixed principle, for the caste distinction is artificial. The specification that brāhmaṇas alone are entitled for instruction can convince only the silly herd. This has been conclusively clarified in detail by the Lord in “Mukūṭasamhitā.” In Trika, it is established without any effort at proving. — p. 223

In one of his efforts at stopping himself from going into greater detail he mentions those recipients who are really qualified and able to enjoy the commentary:

So enough of elaboration of a topic which can appeal to the hearts of only a few people who have received the teaching from a guru, who are of refined taste, who are well-read (lit., who have heard from the learned people a great deal), and who have been purified by the descent of the supreme grace. — p. 74

The conditions mentioned are important, they imply the living tradition. The text has only meaning in the context of receiving it from a guru, which is again related to the purification by paraśaktipāta, grace of the supreme order. Being learned or well-read (bahūsruta) has to be balanced by internal purification which cannot be the result of one’s effort, but can be brought about only by śaktipāta. (Skt., p. 28)

In a beautiful poetic way he summarises the spiritual purpose of composing the commentary:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{iti śivarasaṁ pātuṁ yeśāṁ pipāsati mānasāṁ} \\
\text{satatamaśivadhvarne saktam śivena nīveśitam} \\
\text{hṛdayagaganagranthim teśāṁ vidārayitum haṭhād} \\
\text{abhinava imāṁ praśnavyākhyāṁ vyadhāttrikatattvagāṁ}
\end{align*}
\] — Skt. p. 21
Abhinava has composed this commentary on the question (of the Devī) which reveals the essence of Trika, for cutting asunder forcefully the knot (obstructing) the ether of the heart of those whose mind thirsts to drink the nectar of Śiva, (whose mind) has been penetrated by Śiva, and which is ever engaged in destroying the evil (aśiva).

— tr. on page 63 (modified)

The purpose (prayojana) as well as the recipients (adhikārin) of the commentary could not be stated more forcefully. Besides, by calling his Vivaraṇa a praśnāvyākhya, Abhinavagupta states implicitly that the question of the Devī contains the entire essence of the text (trikatattva).

The Context: The Place of the Text in the Tradition

This introduction is not the place to give a survey of the various Tāntric schools of Śaivism in Kashmir, for which I refer to the work by Alexis Sanderson.37 And yet we have to situate the text of the Tantra and Abhinavagupta’s interpretation in the context where it originated, and continued to be of significance till the present day, whether or not there have been interruptions in the tradition.38 At the outset it has to be made clear that whatever distinctions are made between the different streams of the tradition, coming down from the revelation by the five faces/mouths of Śiva,39 they are not to be treated as mutually exclusive, there are not only common elements, but also cross-currents and mutual inclusions. Hence the term “sects” with regard to these schools or sampradāyas has to be avoided.40 Kashmir has been the place of origin of various Tantras/Āgamas, not only of Śaivism, but also Pāncarātra (Vaiśnava) and Śaṅkta. The general broad division within the Śaiva

37. Especially his articles: Śaivism and the Tāntric Traditions; Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir; Meaning in Tāntric Ritual; The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir (see Bibliography).
38. For this question see A. Sanderson, Swami Lakshman Joo and His Place in the Kashmirian Śaiva Tradition, in: Samvidullāsah.
39. See J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation; M. Dyczkowski, The Canon of the Śaivāgamas.
revelation is that between the Siddhânta, the orthodox and “Veda-congruent”
tradition of Śaivism, and the Mantramārga of the “Left” with its various texts and
traditions, comprising the Kula/Kaula, Trika, Krama, including the Yoganī
cult and the Kālikula which are more Śākta in nature. Among the more popular Tāntric
traditions in Kashmir, to this day, are the cults of Svachchanda Bhairava or Aghora,
based on the Svachchanda Tantra, and of Amṛtesvara Bhairava or Netranātha, based
on the Netra Tantra or Mṛtyujit (Overcoming Death). These two cults put more
emphasis on the aspects of Śiva as Bhairava, whereas other Tantras, belonging to
the Vidyāpiṭha, emphasise the feminine or Śakti aspect. Sanderson draws an
interesting conclusion from his analysis of these schools, namely the Śaiva-
Siddhânta, Mantrapīṭha, Yāmala Tantras and Trika Tantras (in ascending order):

As we ascend through these levels, from the Mantrapīṭha to the
Yāmala Tantras and thence to the Trika and the Kālī cult, we find
that the feminine rises stage by stage from subordination to complete
autonomy.\footnote{Śaivism and the Tāntric Traditions, p. 669.}

It is generally accepted in the non-dualist or Advaita Śaiva traditions that the
revelation of the Śaiva-Siddhânta Tantras/Āgamas represents a base of “common”
revelation (sāmānyya), which is more ritual-oriented and dualistic/pluralistic in its
philosophy, as compared to the different traditions of the “Left” (vāma), which are
more esoteric, with a tendency to interiorise ritual, and with a non-dualistic
philosophy, hence viśeṣa. Thus there is a sense of inclusivity in the order of ascent
through the levels of esoterically/spiritually “higher” traditions. They accept the
“lower” levels of Śaiva revelation also in the sense that they do not deny that their
followers attain liberation through initiation (dīkṣā) and regular ritual practice
(samayācāra) at the time of death. However, the higher the revelation, the more
stress is put on knowledge over ritual, and primacy of non-dualism (between the
soul, the world and the Divine) not only in philosophy, but also in practice: hence
paramādvaita, an inclusive, not exclusive non-dualism, and advaitācāra, “the practice
of non-dualism,” which includes the reversion of orthodox rules and prescriptions.
Their ideal is liberation-in-life (jīvanmukti), which means a recognition of one’s
own divine nature (Īśvarapratyabhijñā, svarūpaprathana), or union with Śiva/
Bhairava in a state of complete penetration (samāveśa). The system which had
the greatest capacity of absorbing the other schools, and which had the most prominent exponent who contributed to this integration in Abhinavagupta, is Trika: the “triadic,” “trinitarian” school. It comprises several triads, as we shall see later:

The three goddesses: parā — parāparā — aparā
the three metaphysical categories: Śiva — Śakti — Nara
the three Divine Energies: icchā — jñāna — kriyā
and other related triads.

This school has to be viewed at three historical levels: the early phase with its three goddesses, symbolically represented on lotuses on points of the trident or trisūla:

This trident is superimposed in imagination along the central vertical axis of the worshipper’s body so that the trifurcation rises through a space of twelve fingers breadth above his head, the whole from its base at the level of his navel to this summit being identified with the series of cosmic levels from gross matter to the Absolute. The central goddess, Parā, is white, beautiful and benevolent.42

Parā has two aspects, for she is worshipped both as one of the three and as their sum and source. In this higher aspect she is called Mātṛsadbhāva (essence of the Mothers), the summit of the hierarchy of the female powers which populate the cult of yoginīs. Later, all this would be interpreted along more metaphysical and mystical lines. Mātṛsadbhāva was read as Essence of (All) Conscious Beings ([pra-]matr-) and the three goddesses were contemplated as the three fundamental constituent powers of a universe which was consciousness only. Parā was the power of the subject-element (pramāṇa), Aparā that of the object-element (prameya) and Parāparā that of the cognitive field or medium (pramāṇa).

The Tantras of the Trika comprise the Siddhayogēśvarīmata, the Tantrasadbhāva, the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra, and the present Parātrīśikā. The first two are unpublished, but they are available in manuscripts from Nepal. The Mālinīvijayottara forms the basis for the most encompassing works of Abhinavagupta’s Tantric exegesis, the Tantraloka, Malinīvijayavārttika, and the Tantrasāra.

42. A. Sanderson, Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions, p. 673.
The Trika has been combined with various other Tāntric schools: the Kālikrama or Kālikula (Sanderson, p. 678), and the Kaula in the Eastern Transmission or Pūrvāmnāya (ibid., p. 681). The Kaula tradition goes back to the siddhas, and to the pervasive mythical-historical Siddha Matsyendranātha (or Macchandanāth), who brought this esoteric tradition down to earth (avatāraka). His veneration and recognition transcends the borders of Śaivism and of the Indian subcontinent, since he is equally known in Tibet and in Tāntric Buddhism. It is important to mention him here, because Abhinavagupta also pays obeisance to this founder of the Kaula Tāntric Yoga as one of the Masters, however remote the latter may have been historically.

The Kaula tradition of the Trika saw itself as essentialising Tāntric practice. In this spirit it offered a much condensed form of the liturgy followed in the Tantra system, emphasising spontaneity and intensity of immersion (tanmāyībhāva, samāvesa) over elaborate ritual. Thus the usual preliminary purification (snāna), the internal worship (antaryāga) which always precedes the external in Tāntric rites and the offering in the sacrificial fire (homa), which follow and repeat the worship of the deities, may all be discarded as superfluous. Moreover, the worshipper may advance from an initial stage in which he worships the full Kaula pantheon until eventually he worships only the central Kuleśvara.

Another tradition which has entered the whole stream is the Krama, lit. “Sequence”:43

A much more elaborate or rather better documented Kaula system of Kālī worship is found in the literature of the Krama. The outstanding characteristic of this tradition is that it worships a sequential rather than a simply concentric pantheon. A series of sets of deities (cakras) is worshipped in a fixed sequence as the phases (krama) of the cyclical pulse of cognition (samvit). These phases are Emission (srṣṭikrama), Maintenance of the emitted (sthitikrama) (also called Incarnation (avatārakrama), Retraction of the emitted (saṁhārakrama) and the Nameless fourth (anākhyakrama), also called the Phase of the Kālīs (kālikrama), in which all trace of the preceding

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process is dissolved into liberated and all-pervading consciousness. . . . External worship is greatly simplified and looked upon as inferior to worship in the mind, it being understood that the order of worship (pujākrama) is no more than a reflection of the ever-present order of cognition itself (saṁvitkrama).

— Ibid., pp. 683-84

Apart from the form of the Trika worshipping the three goddesses (and eventually a fourth one above them, e.g. Kālasaṃkāraśī, there is a higher esoteric tradition of Trika centred on the Supreme, Absolute — in masculine or feminine or also neuter form: Anuttara. Hence it is called Anuttara Trika, the Ultimate, Unsurpassable, or also Ekāvīra “(the tradition of spiritual) heroes,” or Parākrama. It is Parākrama because the entire process (krama) is centred on the main Divinity: Parā, the Supreme (f.). We shall see in the context of the Tantra that Parā is at the same time the Supreme Word (parāvāk). This highest form of Trika is that “of the Parātrirnāṅkā [sic!], in which the worship of the liberationist is fully aniconic, resting entirely on the mantra and subjective contemplation.” We shall come to the spread of this esoteric tradition beyond Kashmir, especially in south India.

The present text, Parātrīnāṅkā, belongs to this tradition of Anuttara Trika, but, as the very first verse will reveal, it is related also to the Kaula tradition (kaulikasiddhi is the spiritual power aimed at in verse 1). The final phase of the Trika culminates in the great synthesis of the non-dualistic Śaiva thinkers and exegeses of Kashmir, foremost in Abhinavagupta. It is Abhinavagupta who places the Trika at the highest level of all the other revelations. In the words of A. Sanderson: “His purpose is to formulate a position for the Trika that enables its followers to see it not merely as the highest revelation but as that which pervades and validates all others.” This “highest revelation within the Trika itself [found in MVT chapter 18] transcends transcendence by propagating the position that all forms of Śaiva practice, including that of the Siddhānta, are equally valid provided they are informed by the non-dualistic awareness enjoined here” (Ibid., p. 124).

44. Ekāvīra because it is practised by siddhas who are “solitary heroes”, without a female partner (dūtī) or yoginī.

45. A. Sanderson, “The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika”, in: A. Padoux (ed.), Images Divines, p. 80. In more recent publications Professor Sanderson has also adopted the correct spelling of the text as Parātrīnāṅkā.

46. The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir, p. 376.
The non-dualism of the school has been established in the tradition starting with the Śivasūtras revealed to Vasugupta in the eighth century, followed by his Spandakārikā which expounds the "doctrine of vibration" of consciousness. Hence follows the line of masters of the Spanda and the Pratyabhijñā School: starting from Somānanda (ninth–early tenth century) with his Śivadṛṣṭī, "the Vision of Śiva," who had also authored the (now lost) commentary on which Abhinavagupta bases his Vivaraṇa on the Parātrīṣikā. Hence the interpretation is based on such philosophical foundations as the non-dualism of Consciousness (samvidadvayavāda), and of the doctrine of Recognition (pratyabhijñā). It is Somānanda’s disciple Utpaladeva, who had not only systematised the philosophy of Pratyabhijñā in his Iśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā and in his Siddhitrayi, but was also a mystic of non-dualistic bhakti, as could be seen in his great hymn collection, the Śivastotrāvalī. Utpaladeva’s disciple in Pratyabhijñā, Lakṣmanaṅgupta, was the direct teacher of Abhinavagupta, but he left no work. It was again Abhinavagupta’s task to compose two extensive commentaries on Utpaladeva’s Kārikās (called “Sūtras,” as we have earlier noted), the Iśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśiṇī and Vivṛtivikarśiṇī on the (mostly lost) Vivṛti. This line of the tradition — without mentioning the other schools — has been continued by Abhinavagupta’s pupil Kṣemarāja, a prolific commentator on the Tantras and also an original author (especially of the Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya, “The Heart of Recognition”). Although he has not commented on the Parātrīṣikā or Vivaraṇa, he has composed a brief text summarising it: the Parāpraveśikā. He did not write a commentary on his teacher’s Tatrāloka, a task that was accomplished in the thirteenth century by Rājānaka Jayaratha. It was Kṣemarāja’s pupil Yogarāja who wrote a commentary on Abhinavagupta’s Paramārthasāra.

This brief survey of the works belonging to Trikā and Pratyabhijñā traditions was necessary for situating the Vivaraṇa in its historical and philosophical context.

47. Also attributed to his disciple Kallata.
49. The three siddhis of Utpaladeva are: Ajaḍapramātṛsiddhi, Iśvarasiddhi, Sambandhasiddhi. Cf. A. Sanderson, The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir, p. 129. I have tried to connect these two sides of his work in my Introduction to Śivastotrāvali of Utpaladeva, Exposition by Swami Lakshman Joo, pp. 1-18.
50. Fragments have been found and published by R. Torella (see Bibliography).
The position of this commentary in Abhinavagupta’s works on the Trika has already been stated.

**Hermeneutics and Tāntric Exegesis**

*Hermeneutics* is derived from *Hermes*, the Greek God, the divine messenger. Besides all its philosophical refinements and intricacies, it is first of all a method which “transports” a text from one context to another, which “carries over” the meaning and reflects on the perils and transformations which may happen on the way. It is more than a matter of translation, more than exegesis, but it includes these indispensable means to make a text significant beyond its original context. India has developed several methods which are essential elements of hermeneutics, from the grammatical analysis to Vākyāśāstra, Kāvyāśāstra, Mīmāṁsā, etc.

Translating and interpreting a text over a thousand years of history into a completely different historical, cultural, social, psychological, religious, spiritual context is a task which requires a conscious effort, ideally taking into account all these factors which have shaped the original text in the first instance, and which shape our understanding of it today. Even if this exercise is taking place in an Indian context, it is nevertheless an intercultural exercise, starting from the very language in which this hermeneutics is expressed, which is already shaped by another culture and philosophy or theology. It is obvious that the present study cannot do justice to all these connected methodological issues, I can only make an attempt while remaining conscious of the implications.

A messenger — like Hermes — has to be at home in both worlds between which he mediates. He has to move to and fro, but also at some point remain stable like a bridge, so that others can cross over from one side to the other. This is the aim of the present hermeneutical exercise: to make a text and a tradition accessible beyond its historical and linguistic context, which means, first of all, discovering its relevance for our present world of the twenty-first century, with its unprecedented contradictions between (material, technological) progress and (human, ethical and spiritual) regress.

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51. Cf. *Rgveda* X.36 where the munis are said to be “at home in both seas, the east and the west” (v. 5).
But hermeneutics in the present work refers to two levels of interpretation: the first one is Abhinavagupta’s own hermeneutics in relation to the Tantra, there being at least three centuries between the text and the commentary, and the second, the translations into European languages (and into modern Hindi), and the present exposition.

The role of hermeneutics is essential for the tradition itself and its survival. Ernst Steinkellner writes in the context of Buddhist Tantras:

Religious contents, beliefs, are subject to history. They stagnate and die as soon as they become unresponsive to new needs and questions arising in the societies harbouring them, but they also lose their religious value when they deviate from tradition by such changes. Hermeneutics\(^5\)\(^2\) works against such deviation. Its methods have been established in order to separate, via an act of interpretation, the various forms of religious contents within a tradition in such a way that the unity with revelation is preserved in each case and that freedom is created at the same time for a rational foundation of the differences. While the possibilities of change in this way guarantees the survival of a religious tradition, it is hermeneutics which guarantees the continuity of this tradition as such.\(^5\)\(^3\)

His reflections on Tantristic hermeneutics apply to our text as well, since there is the need, on the one side, to preserve the tradition, and on the other to find suitable methods to keep it alive by reinterpreting it. Eivind Kahrs says with regard to “trustworthy” methods of interpretation:

When people share a belief system, then assurance of a change in belief cannot come from outside the system, nor can something inside it produce support except when it can be shown to rest on something independently trustworthy. To some extent such a trustworthy entity exists in the Indian tradition in the form of established and widely accepted methods of interpretation.\(^5\)\(^4\)

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52. I.e. the study of those methodological principles which rule over the interpretation and explanation of revelatory texts.


In relation to sacred texts the exegetical possibilities are multiple. A. Sanderson describes them as follows:

This style of exegesis governed by possibility rather than probability is more appropriate to the texts of scripture, which as divine revelation are not thought to be tied to the semantic limits that restrain human beings when they attempt to convey their meaning to others in ordinary or poetic utterances. Whereas human statements are assumed to be unitary, however complex, a scriptural passage may be treated without apology as conveying simultaneously as many meanings as are possible within the limits set by the exegete’s beliefs and the generous disciplines of traditional text-analysis.\(^{55}\)

This description applies eminently to the *Vivaraṇa*, as we shall see.

**The Problem of Translation**

What terminology are we going to adopt when translating some of the central and esoteric terms of the text and the commentary? Every translator had to face the same question, and there is no universal solution to it. We have got used to translating certain concepts of Indian philosophy in a particular way, with some variations, but do these translations really convey the various levels of meaning? In the eyes of a non-Sanskrit knowing reader, are they not sometimes more misleading than helpful?

The concept of *cit/caitanya/samvit* is a classic example. First of all, the three terms are not strictly synonyms, but they have been uniformly translated by “consciousness,” sometimes with the adjective “pure” or “absolute.” Ernst Fürlinger has devoted a chapter in his book *The Touch of Śakti* to the question: “Is *cit* Consciousness?”\(^ {56}\) His conclusion, after going through arguments of the philosophical implications of “consciousness,” “Bewusstsein,” in Western philosophy, leads to the suggestion to leave such terms untranslated. But this does not solve the question of communicability — after all, the reader has the right to connect to the meaning without every time looking at the Glossary.

The problem of *cit* raises the question of the East-West understanding or

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55. A. Sanderson, in: *Samarasya*, p. 141, and see also his footnote 123.
misunderstanding of the term “consciousness”: Western philosophy and psychology definitely understands it as individual consciousness. Indian philosophy definitely understands cit as universal — you cannot speak of the cit of a certain person, although the person possesses, participates in cit (depending on the philosophical system, dualist, non-dualist, etc.). An intermediary solution is certainly to translate the term, maybe to capitalise it, and put the Sanskrit in brackets.

The specific terms of Trika and Pratyabhijñā present even more problems: to give only the example of prakāśa-vimarśa, the basic conceptual pair of its metaphysics. They are usually translated as “Light (of Consciousness)” and “Reflection,” or “reflective awareness,” etc.57

Muller-Ortega combines the two terms as “self-reflecting illumination,”58 and translates them separately as “primordial light” and “self-apprehension” or “self-referential capacity” (ibid., p. 96). Padoux translates vimarśa as “self-representation” or “creative self-awareness of consciousness.”59 Torella’s translation is both balanced and intelligible: “light” and “reflective awareness.”60

Sanderson, on whose critical and extensive work I rely heavily, has chosen the terms “manifestation” for prakāśa, and, in his earlier work “self-cognition” for vimarśa (1988: 695), in his later articles he renders vimarśa by “representation.”61 Even though I agree with most of his interpretations, I find it difficult to accept the translation of these crucial terms, basically because of their implications in Western philosophy.62 “Representation” has more the connotations of vikalpa.

Prakāśa is more the source of manifestation than manifestation itself. The symbolic value of “light” in all philosophical and spiritual traditions makes this

57. L. Silburn translates in French mostly as “lumière consciente” and “prise de conscience.”
58. The Triadic Heart of Śiva, p. 95.
59. Vāc, Index, p. 458.
60. Cf. The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārika, tr. of IPK I. 5.10-11, et al., p. 118.
62. Cf. also the criticism by Isabelle Ratié in her article on “Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā philosophy” (Journal of Indian Philosophy, 2007), where she gives a survey of the different translations with a similar criticism of the term “representation” for vimarśa. See her discussion on prakāśa and vimarśa, pp. 18-20.
literal translation more meaningful than any interpretation. Of course, it has to be kept in mind that prakāśa stands for Śiva as the source of illumination, and vimarśa for Śakti as his self-reflective awareness. Both, in the texts and in the usage in the living tradition, vimarśa also refers to “meditation” as the self-reflection of consciousness.\footnote{In the living tradition comparable to what Ramana Maharshi calls ātma-vicāra, more in the Vedantic sense: self-reflection.}

David P. Lawrence translates prakāśa as “awareness,” and vimarśa by “recognitive apprehension,”\footnote{Remarks on Abhinavagupta’s use of the analogy of reflection, p. 586.} but this raises the same problem regarding prakāśa.

Mark Dyczkowski defines it as follows:

Absolute consciousness understood as the unchanging ontological ground of all appearing is termed prakāśa. As the creative awareness of its own Being, the absolute is called vimarśa. Prakāśa and vimarśa — the Divine Light of consciousness and the reflective awareness this Light has of its own nature — together constitute the all-embracing fullness (pūrṇatā) of consciousness.\footnote{The Doctrine of Vibration, p. 59.}

The matter becomes more complicated when we deal with TANtric concepts which are both, specific to the tradition and symbolic, multi-layered. This concerns the central terms contained in the very first verse: kaulika and the related complex kula, kaula, and khecarī (and their compounds kaulikasiddhi and khecarī-śamatā).

How to bring out the complexity of these concepts in one or even more words? Muller-Ortega has coined the term “Embodied Cosmos.”

This complex baggage of meaning borne by the term kula presents a problem for its translation as well as the translation of its related forms, kaula, kaulinī, kaulika and kaulikī. Clearly, the term group simply does not generate the rich resonance and wide range of applicability that is intended by kula. We may posit as a primary translation something like “embodied Cosmos.” It is clear that the Kaula tradition teaches the primary importance of the body as the essential tool of sadhanā. In an important sense, following the logic just outlined, the Cosmos is the body.

\footnote{In the living tradition comparable to what Ramana Maharshi calls ātma-vicāra, more in the Vedantic sense: self-reflection.}

\footnote{Remarks on Abhinavagupta’s use of the analogy of reflection, p. 586.}

\footnote{The Doctrine of Vibration, p. 59.}
Abhinavagupta comments: Thus the body should be seen as full of all the paths, filled with varied operations of time, and seat of all the movements of time and of space. The body seen in this way is in itself composed of all the divinities, and thus must be made an object of contemplation, of adoration and of the rites of fulfilment. He who penetrates in the body achieves liberation.

He continues by saying that,

"the mantra is the instrument by which one comes to perceive the divinities within the body."66 Thus the body, like the cosmos, can be seen as a separate unit of manifestation, which is composed of many different parts, all of which are interrelated by the presence of the divine within it.67

Unless one enters into the spirit of the kula/kaula tradition, the neologism "Embodied Cosmos" will not help the reader to understand the implications. For, as in the case of consciousness, the body also carries such different connotations in the non-dualist Tantras. Many of the misunderstandings regarding the sexual aspect of these Tantras are precisely based on a limited understanding of "body."

These remarks on the untranslatability of the specific terms and concepts of Trika only intend to state the problem, and to remain aware of the implications, they cannot solve the difficulties involved.

The State of Scholarship on the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa

After the first edition in the “Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies” (1918) the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa has received the attention of the pioneer scholar on Abhinavagupta, K.C. Pandey.68 The text has obviously been taught to the last Ācārya of Kashmir Śaivism in Kashmir, Swami Lakshman Joo Raina, by his Śaivaśāstraguru, Pandit Maheshvar Razdan. Having also access to manuscripts, Swami Lakshman Joo made amendments in the faulty text of the “Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies,” and he taught the text to various scholars in Hindi, Kashmiri and English. Two of his disciples prepared annotated translations: in Hindi by Nilkanth Gurtoo, in English by Jaideva Singh.69 Raniero Gnoli prepared independently an edition with

66. Quote from TĀ XIII.6-7.
68. See Abhinavagupta, pp. 44f.
69. See Bibliography.
an Italian translation along with an introduction and critical notes. All these editions and translations will be taken into account in the present study. But the text is so terse and intense that it requires an exhaustive commentary to be understood and elucidated. The Mālinīvijayottara Tantra, the other most authoritative Tantra of Trika, has received such a detailed treatment by Prof. Alexis Sanderson⁷⁰ and by his student Somadeva Vasudeva.⁷¹ Prof. Sanderson, in his extensive work on the history and the textual traditions of the different schools of Kashmir Śaivism, has placed the text in its context, to which we will refer later.

V. Raghavan, in his study on “Abhinavagupta and his Works,”⁷² has given several important references to the Vivaraṇa in the context of Abhinavagupta’s works, without having gone into the content. It is André Padoux who has given an interpretation of the central themes of the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa in relation to the Word (vāc) and mantra in his illuminating work: Vāc. The Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras.⁷³ Another central concept has been dealt with by Paul Muller-Ortega: the theme of the heart, however based on the short commentary on the Parātrīśikā, the Laghuvṛtti, which was assumed to be equally by Abhinavagupta. Although the theme of the heart is very much related, there are some fundamental differences between the two commentaries.

All the authors and works mentioned have contributed to making the importance of the Tantra and its Vivaraṇa known, and to situate it in the entire corpus of Abhinavagupta’s works. But they still leave the desideratum of a comprehensive analysis and exegesis of this extraordinary text. The present work is an attempt at an interpretation, and I can only subscribe to the words of R. Gnoli, justifying his study and translation:

What has attracted me in this work was not only its difficulty, due to internal and external causes, that is to say, the abstrusiveness of the arguments which are sometimes only hinted at, and which seem to expect in the reader a deep knowledge of the school. . . . The world is full of difficult texts which it is better to let them rest in the

⁷⁰ The Doctrine of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra.
⁷¹ The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra.
⁷² See Bibliography.
⁷³ See Bibliography.
archives, for the curiosity and enjoyment of a few and waiting for better times to come. But the truth is that many pages of this commentary are, in my opinion, among the most beautiful and interesting of the philosophical literature in Sanskrit, written in a language which is occasionally redundant, but always lively and powerful, which reveals the immediacy of the experience and the depth of an original thought attempting to find a way among the limitations of language, sometimes with difficulty.\textsuperscript{74} (emphasis mine)

In fact, Gnoli's Introduction is the only attempt so far\textsuperscript{75} for an understanding of the entire text, apart from the thematic studies by A. Padoux and P. Muller-Ortega (the latter conditioned by the \textit{Laghuvṛtti}). Hence there is the need for a detailed study and interpretation, going into the major themes and sub-themes of both, Tantra and \textit{Vivarāṇa}, with the hope to throw light on the depth of thought and experience expressed therein. In this too, I follow the suggestion of R. Gnoli:

I realised that certain obscurities remained. But I am confident . . . that this effort of mine can at least be useful to those who, after me, will devote themselves to the study of this text, and that this volume, with all its imperfections, will however remain a point of reference for more exhaustive and perfect future studies.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{The Authorship of the \textit{Laghuvṛtti}}

The short commentary on the \textit{Parātriśikā}, the \textit{Laghuvṛtti}, also called \textit{Anuttaratattvavimārṣini}, has been ascribed to Abhinavagupta by the colophon. The author says that he follows the interpretation by Utpala. This attribution has been accepted by all the scholars who have written on Abhinavagupta, and who have translated and studied the text: K.C. Pandey, A. Padoux, R. Gnoli, P. Muller-Ortega.\textsuperscript{77} However, they could not help but notice some important variants in the text of the Tantra, and marked differences in the style of the commentary and in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Tr. from the Italian, pp. XII-XIV of his Introduzione.
\item \textsuperscript{75} Within the limits of 22 pages.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Introduzione, p. xxxiv, translated from Italian.
\item \textsuperscript{77} See Bibliography for their translations.
\end{itemize}
certain interpretations. This is not the place to go into a detailed comparison of the two versions and of the two commentaries. One example of a variant in the text may suffice, which occurs in the very first verse: Instead of sadyah (immediately), as in the text commented upon in the Vivaraṇa, the Laghuvytti text has svatāḥ (of its own, spontaneously). And Abhinavagupta gives much importance to the word sadyah in the Vivaraṇa. A. Sanderson is the first scholar who has raised a doubt as to the authorship of the Laghuvytti and its place of origin. Based on several arguments he has located the text as of south Indian origin.

Since the arguments advanced for placing the text in south India are the same, I may be allowed to quote his reference to another text, the Īśvaraprātyabhijñāvimarśinīvyākhyā:

That the Īśvaraprātyabhijñāvimarśinīvyākhyā is south-Indian is strongly suggested by its citing sources that though rooted in the traditions of Kashmirian Śaiva non-dualism (1) were not known in Kashmir before modern times, (2) have been transmitted only in south-Indian manuscripts, and (3) have received commentaries from and been cited only by authors who are south-Indian . . . . A case in point is the Paratrisikalaghuvṛtti . . . . This is attributed to Abhinavagupta by its colophon, and that attribution has been accepted without question by modern scholars. But there are good reasons to conclude that the attribution is spurious. In addition to the three criteria for doubt just stated it (4) shows a redaction of the Parātriśikā (Parātriśikā) that deviates from that adopted by Abhinavagupta in the Parātriśikavivaraṇa, a much longer commentary on this text that is certainly his, (5) deviates from the views and approach of that commentary, and (6) lacks the hallmarks of Abhinavagupta’s style and, in my estimate, his intellectual brilliance.

78. Cf. A. Padoux, La Parātriśikālaghuvṛtti de Abhinavagupta, p. 9, about the weaknesses of the text also pp. 15-16.

79. See Appendix.

80. Cf. also V. Raghavan, Abhinavagupta and His Works, p. 17. where he is listing three MSS, all from south India (Madras, Tanjore, Trivandrum). Not a single Śāradā Ms has been found so far.


82. Cf. also his remarks in “The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir”, p. 379.
The fact that the only manuscript on whose basis the text was published in the KSTS was brought by Swami Lakshman Joo from south India (Madras?) in 1936 is a further proof for the convincing arguments of Professor Sanderson.83

B.N. Pandita, in his Kāśmīra Śaivadarśanabrāhīkoshaḥ (Encyclopaedia of Kāśmīra Śaivism) has independently come to the same conclusion.84 He gives eight reasons why this work cannot be by the great Ācārya Abhinavagupta, some being the same as Sanderson’s arguments (different readings of the Tantra, style, lack of depth, etc.). The only difference is that he did not have the reasons for giving a south Indian origin of the text.

Apart from other differences, it should be surprising that the two main hermeneutical schemes of the Vivaraṇa are totally absent from the Laghuvṛtti, namely the four levels of vāc, and the doctrine of sarvāṁ sarvātmakam.

The Spread of Anuttara Trika / Parākrama

Without going into historical details it is necessary at least to refer to the influence of the Parātrīṣīkā, the “root text” (A. Sanderson) of the Parākrama, in other parts of India and on the whole development of Śakti worship to this day. In spite of its highly esoteric nature and its origin in Kashmir, the Tantra, its central Deity Parā and Her seminal mantra has pervaded large parts of the spiritual landscape of the subcontinent.

It is worth noting the fact that Kṣemarāja, the foremost disciple of Abhinavagupta, composed a very brief and simplified version of the Parātrīṣīkā in his Parapravesīkā, “Entrance into the Parā (meditation/realisation of),” which shows that the intention was to popularise the Tantra and to make its secret doctrine accessible to practitioners who were not able to study and absorb the difficult Vivaraṇa, intended for advanced disciples. In this abbreviation he gives a condensed explanation of the thirty-six tattvas and quotes one verse of the Parātrīṣīkā: yathā nyagrodhabhājasthāḥ . . . (v. 25), introducing the central mantra: hṛdayabhyāja, “the seed of the heart” (SAUH). He stresses the import of the Tantra which leads to

83. See Introduction to the KSTS edition of the Laghuvṛtti.

84. kenapyarvacinena paṇḍitena viracita kāpi śīka ya tenācāryābhinavaguptakṛṣṭeti prakhyāpita māhātmayavanardhanārthamasyaḥ . . . (Parātrīṣīkālaghuvṛttīḥ), 2005, pp. 375-76.
jīvanmukti by knowledge of and absorption in the mantra, without the necessity of ritual initiation, while living a life in the world.85

It is precisely by the mantra (SAUH) that the meditation of Parā can be recognised, beyond ritual and iconic worship. And “It is this system, known variously as the Anuttara, Ekāvīra or Parākrama, which appears to have been the most enduring and influential.”86 Madhurāja, the ascetic disciple of Abhinavagupta from Madurai in the far south, ascribes his enlightenment to the Parākrama: he has mastered the universe, being overwhelmed (ā-krānta) by the tradition of Parā due to which he has realised the imperishable non-duality of the Lord.87 Since he has attained enlightenment from his guru, Abhinavagupta, it is also clear that he received from him the initiation into the (mantra of) Parā. While enumerating the different schools of which Abhinavagupta was a master, he mentions ekāvīra as the last, i.e. the culmination of his knowledge.88 Madhurāja’s disciple Varadarāja/Kṛṣṇadāsa says of him that he has “attained sudden penetration into the totality of the thirty-six tattvas through the Parākrama.”89

No wonder that the tradition travelled to the south, where Cidambaram was already a centre of Mahārtha or Krama and Śivādvaita.90 Not only in the Tamil country, Parākrama was received in Maharashtra, where the influence of non-dualist Śaivism was already known, as in the highly mystical work of Jñāneśvara

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85. Iḍrṣan hṛdayaibijān tattvato yo veda samāviśati ca sa paramārthato diṅśitaḥ prānān dhārayan laukikavadd vartamāna jīvanmukta eva bhavati / conclusion.
86. A. Sanderson, “The Visualization of the Deities of the Trika”, p. 80.
87. saktitrayaikasaraḥ parākrāntaviśvadicakre I
madhurāje mayi jīvati anaśvaram nānāmā śvarādvaitam II — KSTS edn. v. 40, p. 6.
88. Cf. Gurunāthaparāmarśa 18 (v. 20 in V. Raghavan’s edition):
   siddhānta-bhairava-yāmala-kaula-trīka-ekāvīrānām I
   abhinavaguptāḥ śrīmān ācāryapada sthito jayati II
   In Sanderson’s translation: “The glorious Abhinavagupta reigns victorious, for he is the ultimate human authority for all who know the Siddhānta, the Vāma, the Bhairava, the Yāmala, the Kaula, the Trika or/and the Ekāvīra.” (art. cit. p. 80, note 191).
89. Śivasūtra Vārītika 212-14, tr. by A. Sanderson, art. cit. p. 80.
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(Jñāndeva), *Anubhavamṛta* (or *Anubhavāmṛta*), “The Experience of Immortal Nectar”\(^91\) in Maharashtra in the thirteenth century. The great Sanskrit scholars who developed the Śākta tradition of goddess Lalitā, Umānandanātha (author of *Nityotsava*), Aparājitānanandāra (author of *Saubhāgyodaya*) and the famous Bhāskarārya Makhin of Banaras (author of the *Lalitāsahasranāmabhāṣya*), etc. were also Maharashtrians. The Parākrama thus merged with the cult of Lalitā Tripurasundarī, “the most influential and widespread of the Tāntric traditions in medieval and modern India,”\(^92\) which became more dominant in the south.\(^93\)

A connection with the tradition of Parā and her mantra was also discovered in Orissa.\(^94\) In a Paippalāda Atharvavedic ritual manual, mostly concerned with magic, one section is dedicated to *Muktimahāmantra* and *parājapavidhi*, the rule for reciting the mantra of Parā which has the sole purpose of leading to liberation. Here the mantra is not in coded form but expressed directly.\(^95\) I refer to A. Sanderson’s detailed presentation of the texts and their analysis.\(^96\)

My purpose in this introduction is not to enter into a historical discussion on the relation between the Parākrama of the *Parātrīśikā* and the Śrīvidyā tradition. What we have to note here is the fact that the Anuttara Trika or Parākrama has not remained limited to Kashmir, but has pervaded the subcontinent, from west to east and mainly to the south, where the Śrīvidyā tradition has taken over the worship and meditation of Parā.

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91. Sri Jnandev’s Anubhavamrutt, *The Immortal Experience of Being*, tr. from Marathi by Dilip Chitre, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1996. In his introduction the translator recognises the indebtedness of Jñāndev to (so-called) “Kashmir Śaivism” (cf. pp. 7-12).


96. Sanderson raises the two points: (1) whether the mantra (SAUH) has been received from the Kashmirian version of the Tantra or from south India, and (2) that the Atharvavedic manuals describe a ritual and yogic procedure to practise the mantra which is not found in Kashmir and in the *Vivarana*. However, the root text remains the PT and the revelation it contains of the “seed of the heart”, the mantra SAUH.
My Approach

The conditions and prerequisites attached to reading the text and practising it (adhisra) apply in greater measure if one has to comment on it. Apart from the qualities mentioned for the adhisra one has to fulfil two qualifications: (a) to understand the tradition from within, without which no understanding in the real sense would be possible; and (b) to see the text from a hermeneutical distance which allows new insights. Every commentary is also a contribution to continuing the tradition: sam-pra-dā means precisely to pass it on, which is not a static but a dynamic process.

Apart from the obstacles — inner and outer — presenting themselves at the time of composing a text (which will be discussed in the context of the maṅgala-ślokas), there is another difficulty. Abhinavagupta states it beautifully at the beginning of his Isvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛtivimarśini. Before undertaking such a stupendous task as of composing a commentary:

Initially one should suppress identification with the body and the other levels of the individual self — this is the "bowing down" [that characterises homage] — and so enter the state of immersion (samāveśah) in which one realises the supremacy of the nature of Parameśvara. . . . During this [immersion] the universe too is one with this true self, being nothing in its ultimate reality but undivided and autonomous consciousness. So [while the state continues] what can impede whom, and where? Thereafter, when one is producing the text, one has to focus on the individual self, since otherwise one would be incapable of composing the treatise, which can be accomplished only if it is brought down to the level of articulate speech. But [then] the hinderers have no power [to impede one], because one’s inner force, which [now] blazes [more] intensely under the influence of the greater power of the impression of that state of immersion, has inspired one to abandon one’s [earlier] faith in the state of differentiation.97

In other words, one has first to rise to the level of insight and inspiration (pratibhā) which alone can make one capable of understanding the text and to elucidate its meaning, but then one has to descend to the level of vaikhari (the "gross" word),

and hence from universal consciousness to individual consciousness. “Descending” is sometimes as difficult as “ascending,” but what remains is the “impression of the state of absorption, union or immersion,” *samāveśa saṃskāra*. It is that impression which not only protects from further hindrances, but which assures an approach to the text which is in congruence with its purport.

In this sense I am laying my cards on the table by acknowledging my double *adhikāra*: One is my initiation into Trika and Pratyabhijña by its last Master, Swami Lakshman Joo of Kashmir, a unique personal union of saint and scholar, who was also the teacher of all important scholars on non-dual Śaivism of Kashmir; the second is my training in European Indology. Even then it is unavoidable that there are knots in the text that I have not been able to solve.

The choice before me was to write a scholarly commentary which would be meaningful and accessible only to specialists, or to try to open up the text for the understanding of readers interested in the philosophy and spirituality of the tradition of non-dualist Kashmir Śaivism. Although there is no absolute separation between the two ways of presenting a text, I have chosen the second option which tries to give a key to this difficult text which should also lead to the *cit-camatkāra*, or the wonder and joy of consciousness, inherent in every conscious being.

I may add a biographical as well as geographical personal note: The south Indian commentary on the *Pariśīkā*, the *Tātparyaṭīkā*, praises Śiva as dwelling in four sacred places, which are the four centres for the tradition of the Trika or Anuttara Trika. Apart from Kashmir, its place of origin, these are given as Kāśī (=

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98. Lilian Silburn, Jaideva Singh, André Padoux, Alexis Sanderson, Mark Dyczkowski, and others besides the Kashmiri scholars. Cf. the revealing article by Prof. A. Sanderson in *Samvidullāsah*.

99. I find an ideal model for such an enterprise in the philosopher Pierre Hadot, a great specialist on Plotinus, who has presented him in a way which makes the reading an exercise in joyful spiritual understanding: Pierre Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard* (*Plotinus* or the simplicity of the look), Paris (Gallimard), 1997.

100. Also called *Parātrīśikā-tātparyaṭīpikā* (ed. Shri Krishnananda Sagara, Varanasi, 1987). This is a verse summary of the *Laghuvṛtti*, both being of south-Indian origin. Verse 3 reads:

\[
śrīmatkailāsa-kāśmīra-kāśī-vyāghrapuri-sthitam
\]

\[
trikārtha-darśinām vande devam somāṁsabhūṣaṇam
\]
Varanasi), Kailāsa (in Tibet) and Cidambaram (in Tamil Nadu). These four sacred centres happen to be among the most important places in my life in India and in my spiritual pilgrimage and search for understanding the Indian tradition. In Kashmir I have found access to the living tradition by being accepted as disciple of Swami Lakshman Joo, and experiencing the depth and beauty of this spirituality in his person and teaching. Kāśī is my home since forty years. Kailāsa was the most important pilgrimage in my life which I could undertake in 1998. And Cidambaram, the south-Indian centre of Trika, has been an inspiring place of research, teaching and enjoying its ritual and artistic traditions. I believe that spirituality is not separated from geography.

In the end I may repeat the words of Abhinavagupta by substituting his name for Somānanda, when he says at the end of his work:

\[
\text{tatttvanirmalasthi tivibhiigihrdaye svayam pravi$tamiva} \\
\text{srī abhinavaguptamatam vimarśya mayā nibaddhamidam} \]

I have written this work after reflecting and meditating on the thought of Abhinavagupta that has spontaneously entered my heart which shares the same pure state of truth.

**Text Editions and Translations Used**

Preparing a critical edition of the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* (*PTV*) was not possible within the scope and time limit of this project, but it is planned for the future, on the basis of the Mss obtained and printed editions (see Bibliography). For the purpose of this study I am primarily following the text edition and translation by Jaideva Singh. In case of important variants or doubts I refer to R. Gnoli’s edition and translation, as well as N.K. Gurtoo’s Hindi translation. I therefore quote the page

104. *PTV* concluding verse 18, changing Somānanda to Abhinavagupta.
numbers of Jaideva Singh’s edition and translation.105 Where I change or modify his translation, it is indicated as such. Wherever I felt it necessary I made my own translation. The first edition in the “Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies” is so faulty that I do not use it, since it has already been corrected by the two, respectively three editions mentioned.

The text published by Jaideva Singh is not a critical edition in the sense of giving variants from Mss, but it is based on the corrections by Swami Lakshman Joo. These, in turn, are based on the corrections by his teacher Pandit Maheshvar Razdan (or Rājānaka Mahēśvara), one of the leading pandits of the Research Department of the Kashmir State, which brought out the “Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies.” He had access to the Mss of the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa in the Research Department which he used for his corrections. In his turn, Swami Lakshman Joo was in possession of some Śaradā Mss which he used, in addition, to prepare the corrected version which he taught to Jaideva Singh and Nilkanth Gurtoo.106 These Mss are now in possession of the “Ishvar Ashram Trust” in New Delhi, but copies were not made available for comparing or editing.

The references to the Sanskrit text (Skt. with page numbers) are given from the edition of Jaideva Singh.

The purpose of the extensive quotations is that the reader need not go to the book (Jaideva Singh’s translation) for the references.

I am aware of the limitations of this approach because of the difficulties of the text.

105. It is by and large correct but in many cases, specially in the latter part, he makes additions which are not in the text. I therefore preferred to give a more literal translation.

106. Oral information received from Prabha Devi who attended all the teachings of the PTV by Swami Lakshman Joo.
The Entrance Gates
Maṅgalaślokas
(Benedictory Verses)

The structure of the text can be compared with a temple structure, and approaching a sacred text to approaching a temple. The first act of the pilgrim or devotee is to remove his or her shoes, not merely as a sign of respect, but of baring oneself of egoistic thoughts in order to encounter the Deity with a free mind. While approaching a sacred text, this act implies a hermeneutic *epoche*, an act of openness and surrender. The author of a commentary enters his text through the entrance gates or *gopurams* of the benedictory verses or *maṅgalaślokas*.

To carry this metaphor further, the devotee passes through various gates and courtyards or *prākāras*, before entering the main temple, worshiping deities inside shrines, and finally entering the *garbhagrha* or sanctum. Before offering worship in the innermost sanctum, he admires the outer spire or *sīkhaṇḍa*. We may compare the text with a temple constructed around the same time, the Brhadīśvara at Tanjore, whose spire comprises storeys representing the 36 *tattvas* of Śaiva cosmology. This corresponds to the cosmology contained in the Tantra, both implying the universal radiation of the innermost Deity: in the temple the immense *śivalinga*, proportionate to the entire structure. In the Tantra the deity enshrined in the centre is present in the form of the *bijamantra*, hence also called *hṛdayabija*, “seed of the heart.”

This metaphor also shows the parallel between the external worship in Śaiva Siddhānta, and the purely internal worship in Trika, where “it is the *mantras* rather than the iconic forms which may be associated with them that are the essential embodiments of the deities in Tantric worship. There are cults of aniconic *mantras* but not of icons which are not *mantras*."

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The traditional way of entering a sacred text is through the benedictory verses or *maṅgalaślokas*, which, according to Kāvyasāstra, have the functions of seeking blessing from one’s chosen divinity (*āśirvāda*), offering salutation or adoration to the divinity (*namaskāra*), and/or providing a hint at the content of the text (*vastunirdeśa*). The function of these verses is said to remove the obstacles that are likely to present themselves both in composing the text and in studying it and realising its content. The main obstacles being distractions, these verses express and invite to a meditation, focusing the mind on the chief objective of the text.

The first *maṅgalaśloka* is so significant for Abhinavagupta’s Tāntric works that he has used it at the beginning of each of his texts on Trika: the *Tantrāloka*, *Tantrasāra* (shorter version of the first), and the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*. Chronologically, according to Sanderson, the *Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa* would have been composed after the *Mālinīvijayavārttika*, and before the *Tantrāloka*, but considering the choice of words this first *maṅgala* appears most fitting for the *Parātrīśikā* — especially the prominent position given to the heart (*ḥṛdaya*) and to the Absolute (*anuttara*), central themes of the Tantra and its exegesis by Abhinavagupta.

**Verse 1**

\[vimalakalāśrayābhinaervasṭimahā janant\]
\[bharitatanuṣ ca pañcamukhaḥaguptarucir janakah\]
\[tadubhayayāmalasphuritabhāvavisargamayaṁ\]
\[ḥṛdayam anuttarāṃṭakulam mama samsphuratat \| 1 \|\]

May my heart shine forth, embodying the bliss of the ultimate, (for it is) one with the state of absolute potential made manifest in the fusion of these two, the “Mother” grounded in pure representation, radiant in ever new genesis, and the “father,” all-enfolding (Bhairava), who maintains the light (of consciousness) through his five faces (formed from the emissions reduced through the fusion of these two, my mother Vimalā, whose greatest joy was in my birth, and my father (Nara)Siṃhagupta, (when both were) all-embracing (in their union)).

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4. In *Sāmarasya*. If no name of a translator is mentioned, the translation is mine, p. 89.
Before coming to an interpretation, we may see some other translations and analyse the verse literally. Jaideva Singh translates as follows (leaving out the brackets):

May my heart, whose very nature is manifestation bursting into view by the union of both (viz. Śiva and Śakti), which is the very emblem of supreme immortality be fully flourished. — First interpretation

In the second interpretation he renders:

May my heart which is full of the supreme quintessence of reality, and which is the product of the exuberance of emotion due to the mating of both (i.e. my father and mother) expand in supreme consciousness. The mother is one whose name is constituted by the letters Vimalā and whose delight consisted in giving birth to Abhinava. The father is one whose glory is known by the appellation Simhagupta and who is complete in himself. — pp. 1-2

We can see the difficulty in combining the two meanings in a single translation. J. Hanneder has simplified it in a single translation, which of course is in need of an interpretation.

The mother is resplendent (mahas) with the ever new creation that rests on the immaculate power, and the father, whose form is full, has hidden his desire in his five faces. May my heart which is the emission of vibrancy from the couple and [therefore] full of the supreme nectar shine.5

R. Gnoli gives a poetic version in his Italian translation of the Tantraloka:

Naturato dell’emissione vibrata splendente a causa dell’unione dei due — il padre, dal corpo pieno e dalla luce adornata di cinque volti, e la madre, gloriosa della creazione novissima basata sulla parte piu pura di luna — deh vibri, deh splenda, immortale famiglia senza superiore, il mio cuore!6

5. J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation, p. 59.
6. Luce dei Tantra, p. 3.
In my German translation of the *Tantrasāra* I had also to use two versions in order to bring out the double meaning:

Möge mein Herz, das die Ganzheit des transzendenten, unsterblichen Nektars in sich enthält, bestehend aus der Schöpfkraft, die der Vereinigung der beiden (Śiva und Śakti) entspringt, sich voll öffnen.

(Die beiden:) Die Mutter (Śakti) ist der Ursprung der makellosen Energie, erfüllt mit der (immer) neuen Schöpfung; der Vater (Śiva), der in sich vollkommen ist, offenbart sich in fünf Gesichtern.\(^7\)

Since A. Sanderson has published an exhaustive commentary on the opening verses of the *Tantrasāra*, it is difficult to add any new interpretation to this condensed verse, which is all the more important to understand, since Abhinavagupta has given it such a prominent place in his major works. We may first dissolve it into its components, before coming to Sanderson’s interpretation.

*Vimala-kalā-āśraya*: the support of the pure energy (of the moon), *kalā* means here *amākalā*, the 17th phase of the moon, which, in Tāntric symbolism, is the transcendent phase beyond the 16 *kalās* representing fullness.

*Vimalā* is also the name of Abhinavagupta’s mother.

*abhinava-sṛṣṭi-mahā*: the joy in the new creation — with the double meaning, the joy in the birth of Abhinava (related to the mother).

*janant*: the Śakti as the universal Mother, or the mother of Abhinava.

*bharita-tanus*: whose body, i.e. whose nature is full, complete.

*pañcamukha-gupta-rucir*: whose glory (or desire) is hidden in his five faces.

*Pañcamukha* refers to the five energies: *cid-ānanda-icchā-jñāna-kriyā* (consciousness-bliss-will-knowledge-activity), which both hide and reveal the glory of Śiva. The five faces also refer to Sadāśiva.

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Pāncamukha has another meaning, i.e. simha (lion), and together with gupta it refers to the name of Abhinavagupta’s father (Nara)Simhagupta.

Janakaḥ: Father, as noted by Sanderson, Śiva is never addressed as father in this tradition, and the double meaning referring to Abhinavagupta’s parents is strongly hinted at by the use of this common expression.

tad-ubhayasyāmala: the union of these two (the Śakti or universal Mother, and Śiva/Bhairava), at the human level the union of the parents of Abhinavagupta.

Sphurita-bhāva-visargamayam: which consists in creativity in a state of vibrancy. The root sphur occurs twice in the verse, “to shine, to sparkle, to vibrate, to be manifest,” etc.; here sphurita is an adjective, but the verb coming at the end provides a strong accent on the pulsating, radiant, unfolding vibrancy: sanispuratāt. It implies the joyful dynamism of manifestation (vikāsa).

One of the central terms which hints at the entire following text of the Parātrīśikā is visarga, emission, with the implied meaning in grammar, where the two dots stand for the unfolding of the single bindu into Śiva and Śakti, the beginning of creation. Visarga, creativity, takes place at the core of reality, and it is a threefold emission: cosmic, bodily, and in language.

-mayam: consisting of, full of creativity.

Hṛdayam: the subject of the sentence comes in the last line as the key to the whole verse: it is the Heart which is to unfold and to be illumined or to shine forth. Here the central theme of the Heart is stated which will be developed in the Tantra and Vivaraṇa at different levels. The Heart is certainly more central to the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa than to the other texts where the same maṅgala occurs. Is it possible that Abhinavagupta composed this verse primarily for the Parātrīśikā?

Anuttara-amṛta-kulam: here we have again the central concepts of Trika and Kula — anuttara, although appearing as an adjective (in this compound) of hṛdaya, is the foremost theme of the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa, and it occurs in the three maṅgala verses in three different meanings.

This compound qualifying hṛdaya can be translated as: the totality (kulam) of the immortal nectar (amṛta) of the Absolute (anuttara).
If *kula* is taken to mean body, then the heart would be qualified by "a body born of the nectar of the Absolute."

*mama*: "mine" — not as the individual heart of the author, but "belonging to the universal I" (see Sanderson’s comment).

*samsphuratat*: may it flourish, shine, unfold, manifest.

The prefix *saṁ* is significant, because it relates to the two (*yāmala*), the Mother or *Śakti*, and the Father or *Śiva*, whose coming together in creativity brings about the desired enlightenment and/or creation.

Jayaratha, in his commentary on the *Tantrāloka* gives three distinct meanings of this verse (on TĀ I.1): one according to Trika, the second according to Krama, and the third related to the birth of the author from the union of his parents, Vimalā and Narasimhagupta, his own name occurring in the first line in its double meaning: Abhinava. Sanderson disagrees with Jayaratha, and he maintains that the verse basically contains only one statement, with one explicit and another implicit meaning.8 "The principal meaning is an invocation of that reality embodied in the fusion of Bhairava and the goddess" (p. 139). The prime intention of the verse is a "prayer for enlightenment" (Sanderson, p. 90): "May my heart expand as the totality of the bliss of the Absolute" (another translation of *ḥṛdayam anuttarāmṛtakulam mama samsphuratat*).

"In accomplishing this preparative function it also encapsulates the teaching that is to follow. For the fusion of the deities that it invokes is the Trika’s ultimate reality; and it characterises this fusion in terms that provide a brief but potent definition of that ultimate, namely, that it is, as we shall see, the undifferentiated essence of consciousness containing all reality, both inner and outer, in a state of absolute potential. Indeed, it is precisely because the fusion of the deities is this ultimate that the verse could be believed to have the desired effect. For it expresses our author’s immersing himself in his true identity and thereby achieving for a moment the state of enlightenment which alone can inspire and sustain a work that will expound the nature of that state and the means by which it may be realised. For the more sublime that goal of a pious endeavour the greater the resistance of the hindering powers; and when that goal is to bestow enlightenment

through the recognition of ultimate reality, nothing less than the impression left by the direct experience of that reality can protect against distraction by the contrary impulses that will obscure it in the course of the conceptualisation into which the author must descend for the benefit of his readers.” (Sanderson, p. 90).

“My heart” (mama hrdayam) could be understood as an individual prayer of the author, but Jayaratha (in his commentary on the same verse) immediately identifies it with ātman, i.e. the self and heart of all beings. “Benedictory verses are always altruistic in intention,” and the “my” has to be understood in an inclusive sense (cf. Sanderson, p. 92). “My heart,” then, is not Abhinavagupta’s heart as opposed to that of others who are yet to be enlightened but rather the core of his being which is the core of all beings. Or we may say that “my heart,” mama hrdayam, is intended to mean “the heart of the ‘I’,” that is the innermost awareness that animates all manifestation…. (Therefore it would mean) “May my heart shine forth in its fullness (for us all).” For within Abhinavagupta’s Śaivism “we” can only mean the plurality of “I’s projected by and in the one ‘I’.” (Sanderson, p. 93).

The second reference to the biographical meaning of Abhinavagupta’s birth from the union of his parents has to be seen in the context of the Kaula ritual. His parents fulfilled the condition of Kaula union “being that both should be immersed in awareness of themselves as Śiva and his consort (Śakti)” (Sanderson, p. 99). The child born from such a union is called yoginībhū, “born from a yoginī,” which applies to Abhinavagupta, and “the body of one conceived in such a union is the receptacle of enlightenment even before birth” (ibid., p. 100). It is this identity of the author which makes him eminently qualified for composing a text which aims at enlightening others, his disciples and readers.

Another analysis of the first maṅgala is possible and meaningful as well in relation to the Parāśikā: The first line (pāda) describes the Mother, and it contains the adjective abhinava. The second line relates to the Father and contains the word -gupta. It is in the third line that the union of both occurs, and ubhaya may also refer to the combination of abhinava and gupta, thus the word-play establishes the name of the author, even though this is not his primary concern. If abhinava is related to the Mother, She is the Parāśakti who constantly manifests and gives birth to the creation (srṣṭi), and gupta is the Father, i.e. Bhairava, because he is engaged in sarīhāra (absorption, dissolution) and in hiding his self (tirodhāna). This is again expressed in
Abhinavagupta’s exegesis of the sūtra: etad guhyam mahāguhyam (v. 2), which he analyses as “this secret (mystery), this great non-secret,” where the first refers to Bhairava, the second to the manifested Śakti.

The third line contains the word with which the Tantra ends: yāmalam: ityetad rudrayāmalam (v. 37), “this (i.e. the whole revelation of the Tantra) is the union of Rudra and Rudrā.” This pair or union is also hinted at by the term visarga (mayam) in the third line, implying the two dots representing Śiva and Śakti.

Spiritually or from the point of view of yoga, the Heart can only flourish or be illumined if that union (yāmala) takes place in the very body (kulam) of the author or yogī: the two energies prāṇa and apāna entering the middle path (madhyanādi) and becoming one.

**Verse 2**

\[
\text{yasyāṁ antarvisvam etad vibhāti}
\]
\[
\text{bāhyābhāsam bhāsamānam visṛṣṭau ।}
\]
\[
\text{kṣobhe kṣīne ‘nuttarāyāṁ sthitau tām}
\]
\[
\text{vande devīṁ svātmasamśvittim ekām ॥ ॥}
\]

I bow to that One Goddess in the form of Self-consciousness, in whom this universe that appears as an external objective existence in the state of manifestation, shines, on the disappearance of agitation, in the state of the Unsurpassable Reality.

If the first verse was a prayer for enlightenment, the second and third express adoration, homage (namaskāra), to the Goddess — not a Deity distanced from one’s self, but, in the spirit of Advaita, She who is the very Self-consciousness. She is both, containing the entire external manifestation in Herself (bāhyābhāsa) as well as the innermost Consciousness (svātmasamśvitti). The stress put on to ekā clearly indicates the tradition of Anuttara Trika, worshipping the One Goddess, Parā. This is not only an expression of veneration, but Abhinavagupta immediately clarifies also the condition which makes it possible for everyone to enter the state of the Unsurpassable, Absolute Reality: as soon as the agitation or confusion ceases (kṣobhe kṣīne). This reminds one of the frequently quoted verse of the Spanda Kārikā:
yadā kṣobhah pralīyeta tadā syāt paramam padam,

When the agitation disappears, the highest state appears.

— SpKĀ I.9

The root bhā occurs thrice, and abhāsa in Trika has no association with the idea of illusory appearance, it is rather the entire manifestation which shines within the Supreme Consciousness Herself.

The word anuttara occurs in all the three opening verses, and it hints at the content of the Tantra (hence vastunirdeśa), but in this verse it qualifies sthiti: not a concept but a state of being. The aim of the text is not an intellectual understanding of anuttara (which is anyhow impossible, as Abhinavagupta’s commentary on the word with 16 meanings will show), it is to arrive at a state “which has nothing beyond it.” And this happens, following the Spanda Kārikā and the present verse, the moment agitation, confusion ceases. The purpose of a spiritual text consists also in removing that mental agitation causing an obstacle to insight.

Verse 3

naraśaktishivātmakāṁ trikānāṁ
hṛdaye yā vinidhāya bhāsayet
dharmāmi parām anuttarām
nijabhāsāṁ pratibhācamatkṛtim

Homage to the Supreme Goddess Absolute,
the wonder of intuitive insight,
self-radiant,
manifesting Herself
and holding in Her Heart
the trinity: Man, Energy and Śiva.

This one verse contains the entire Trika philosophy in a nutshell, and at the same time it establishes the intimate relationship that exists in this system between the aesthetic and the mystical dimensions of experience. The language is simple, as compared to the first maṅgala verse, but here every word is loaded with deep meaning. Here, too, as in the previous verse, the root bhā occurs three times, closely linking the two verses. The “object” of veneration is here again the feminine Absolute: parām anuttarām, “the supreme, unsurpassable (Goddess).” In the Trika
triad she is the central of the three goddesses, above Parāparā and Aparā, but in the Parā Trika tradition to which the Parātriśikā belongs, she alone is worshipped, having assumed in herself the lower aspects, as well as the entire Trika triad: Nara-Sakti-Śiva. This is an extraordinary statement which needs to be explained. A parallel passage from the Tantraloka throws light on this:

The ability of the Lord to embody himself as the universe without drawing on anything outside (his own nature) is the supreme Goddess that (our masters) call “creativity” (pratibhām), “the feminine ultimate” (anuttarām). It is the supreme power of universality (kaulikī śakti). . . .

Jayaratha in his commentary explains anuttarām as “She who is full of the wonder of excessive freedom and sovereignty” (niratisayiśvarya-camatkāramayīm, p. 426).

As Abhinavagupta says pointedly, she not only has a heart, but she is the Heart. Now, the Heart, hrdaya, is a central concept in the entire Parātriśikā and Vivaraṇa. A classical definition given by Kṣemarāja (in his commentary on the Śivasūtras, I.15) runs as follows: “The heart is the light of Consciousness because/in so far as it is the foundation of the entire universe.” I have to reserve a “hermeneutics of the heart” for later.

Her identification with pratibhā and camatkṛti reveals again the experiential aspect of this feminine Absolute, because wonder or surprise is not a static quality, but it is her nature as ever fresh and overwhelming experience. The Śivasūtras contain the Sūtra: vismaya yogabhūmikāḥ, “The stages of Yoga are full of wonder” (I.12). Camatkāra and vismaya are closely related, although the second is more often found in the context of spiritual experience. Relating these two terms (pratibhā and camatkāra) to the aesthetic or rasa-experience is not difficult, since the source of both, the aesthetic and the mystical, is the same Śakti, who not only brings about inspiration in the poet and the mystic alike, but who Herself is that power of creativity.

Leaving aside any further interpretation of the third verse, we will briefly look


at the remaining two verses. Coming down from the level of the Absolute to the human level (Nara of the Trika), the author pays his homage to his gurus.

**Verse 4**

\[
jayatyanar ghamahimā vipāsitapāsuvrajaḥ 1
śrīmānadhyaguruḥ sambhuḥ śrīkaṇṭhaḥ paramēśvaraḥ 14 11
\]

Hail to the primordial guru Śambhu, Śrīkaṇṭha, Paramēśvara, of intomparable greatness, who cleaves asunder the bondage of the multitude of bound souls.

This verse establishes the link with the tradition and the line of teachers, starting from Śiva, the original guru, who manifested himself as Śrīkaṇṭha at the beginning of the sampradāya, and then praising his own masters in this line of Trika and Kula: Śambhunātha and Parameśvara (Maheśvara). Both, Sanderson and Gnoli, take Śambhu here only in the sense of Śiva, but Jaideva Singh discovers a double meaning, referring to Śiva as well as to his guru Śambhunātha. The singular *jayati* seems to support Sanderson’s and Gnoli’s translations, but the implicit suggestion may not be advisedly ignored.

The question now is: who was or who were the gurus of Abhinavagupta in this tradition? Sanderson shows that he pays his obeisance in each of his works to the gurus from whom he has learnt the respective text or tradition.\(^\text{11}\) He has also shown that Parameśvara and Maheśvara are the same, but again with the double meaning of Śiva and the guru, in the case of the Anuttara Trika.\(^\text{12}\) But since the Tantra also propounds Kula, and that the *kaulikasiddhi* and *kauliki Śakti* are of central importance, it would be surprising if he made no reference to his most venerated guru Śambhunātha, his master in Kula, to whom he is indebted for his enlightenment and his understanding of the intricacies of the Kula texts. At the beginning of the *Tantrāloka* he pays obeisance to him in these words:

Glorious is the one Śambhunātha, together with his companion Bhagavatī, who is able to draw us out from this world. The path of

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12. See his arguments in *Sāmarasya*, p. 123, note 85.
the Śastras (scriptures) which is deep (and difficult) has been clarified to me by the rays of the teaching of Śambhu(nātha). — TĀ I.13

Here, too, Śambhu stands for Śambhunātha, hence it would not be difficult to see the name of the guru in the maṅgala verse above. A similar ambiguity or double meaning occurs at the end of the concluding verses of the VivaratJa:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{paramesvaraḥ prapannoddharaṇaḥ prāpṛtyuktaguruḥ SHRDAYAYAH} & \\
\text{śrīmāndevah śambhurmāmiyati niyuktavāṃstattvo} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

— v. 17, p. 105

The Lord has set in motion the heart of the guru with compassion for lifting up those who have taken refuge (at his feet). That glorious guru Śambhu(nātha) has set me on the path of truth.

Jaideva Singh has omitted Śambhu in his translation, which gives the clue to Śambhunātha, while Gurtoo has understood it in this sense.13 The author cannot have possibly meant Somānanda in this context, and who is mentioned in the following verse, since he was not his direct guru, and our author acknowledges him mainly as the author of the commentary (Vivṛti).

We cannot go here into the five types of relationships (sambandha) between masters and disciples, from the Divine to the human.14

Coming down from the Divine to the human guru and to himself, passing on this tradition to his disciples, Abhinavagupta states clearly the purpose of composing this commentary in the fifth introductory verse.

**Verse 5**

\[
\begin{align*}
nijāśisyavibodhāya prabuddhāsmaranaṇāya ca & \\
mayābhinavaguptyena śramaḥ yam kriyate maṇāk & \\
\end{align*}
\]

For enlightening my own disciples and for reminding those already enlightened,


I, Abhinavagupta, am making a little exertion (in writing this commentary).\(^{15}\)

The purpose of this commentary is enlightenment of his disciples and readers. According to the *Spanda Kārikā*, there are three grades of enlightenment: *aprabuddha* (unenlightened), *prabuddha* (enlightened), and *suprabuddha*, (perfectly enlightened) (cf. *Spanda Kārikā* I.17 and Kṣemarāja’s commentary). The difference between the two latter stages is explained by Kṣemarāja that the partially enlightened one has the awareness of his real identity with Śiva only at the beginning and end of each state, whereas the fully enlightened one “is completely free from even the residual traces of unenlightenment . . . (and he is one) whose inner nature always shines as identical with Śiva” (ibid., tr. J. Singh, p. 87). This explains that even the (partially) enlightened one needs to be reminded of his true state by studying the scriptures (*sadāgama*), instruction from a true master (*sadguru*), and true reflection (*sattarka*). In the verse under discussion, Abhinavagupta is this *sadguru* who explains the Āgama. In the concluding verses of the *Vivarāṇa* he becomes even more personal, and he gives the names and qualities of his disciples who urged him to write this commentary: he specially mentions Karṇa, then his own brother Manoratha Gupta, and Rāmadeva.\(^{16}\) This verse at the same time makes it clear that the following text is only for advanced disciples/readers.

\(^{15}\) *Manak*: a little, to a certain extent, could also mean (as understood by Gnoli) “even if it is not perfect.”

\(^{16}\) See Introduction and Conclusion I.
Śakti Devī, Chatrari, Chamba (Himachal Pradesh), dated 700 CE.
The Supreme Dialogue

The fact that the Āgama — any Āgama — is revealed in the form of a dialogue, mostly between the Devī and Śiva/Bhairava, becomes a starting point for Abhinavagupta to develop a whole theory and theology of dialogue, at all levels. If the Śruti is apauruṣeya, without an author, the Āgama has not only a divine Author, but it is also revealed in a dialogical form of question-answer, implying a relationship (sambandha). This reflects, before any non-dualistic interpretation, the insight into language as dialogue, as relationship — at the divine as well as human level.¹

Therefore Abhinavagupta’s hermeneutic starts from the apparently straightforward introduction to the Tantra:

srīdevī uvāca
The glorious Goddess said.²

He subjects these two words to a thorough analysis. In his summary verses before the answer of Bhairava he calls Devī: “question” (praśna): ityucyate devī yanmayapraśnakāriṇī (p. 22). She asks about the nature of the Supreme power who she is Herself. She not only utters a question soliciting the answer by Bhairava, she herself is the question initiating the dialogue.

Now the enquiry about the nature of parāśakti who expands in the form of the universe is said to be praśna or question. The Devī who is that very Śakti is the initiator of the question about Her (i.e. parāśakti).

The consideration of the nature of this expansion is said to be the

most excellent organ of speech (para-vaktra) and that consists of both question and answer. — p. 63

Abhinavagupta provides a semantic analysis of Devī (nirvacana), giving seven meanings derived from the root div:

Hence “divinity” (devatā) applies especially to Bhagavān Bhairava. Devī is (reasonably) applied to Bhagavatī also, for she is His very Śakti. This interpretation of Devī is supported by the Science of Grammar which declares that the root “div” is used in the sense of “sport, the desire to overcome or surpass all, behaviour, irradiation, adoration, and movement.” — p. 11

The Devī, meant here, is Parā, the Supreme Goddess in the Anuttara Trika, who is at the same time Parā Vāk, the transcendent Word. So the first question for the commentator is: Who is She who asks the question? followed by the discussion on the relationship in and through which the Tantra is revealed.

It is significant that Abhinavagupta defines the Devī at the beginning in the context of the five acts of Śiva: srṣṭi, sthitī, saṁhāra, tirodhāna and anugraha (emission, maintenance, absorption, concealing, and grace). The final purpose of all five acts is the last one: Grace, and (although anugraha is not grammatically feminine) it is Śakti who herself is grace, and who is inseparable from Śiva. Since we move in the realm of Trika or triad, the third element immediately comes in, though not named as such (Nara). But since Śakti is “full of the thought of bestowing grace on the world” (lokānugrahamārśamāyī, p. 2), the Nara aspect of Trika is dynamically comprehended as loka. Though all the five acts are an expression of the dynamism of the Divine, they aim at the last act, that of grace. This statement on the dynamic Trika is prominently placed at the beginning of the Vivaraṇa, because the final purpose of the revelation is directed at bestowing grace, i.e. liberation, to the world.

Abhinavagupta then immediately places the entire revelation in the form of the supreme dialogue in the scheme of the four levels of the Word: Vāc. Because what is revealed is the highest, transcendent Word, that at the same time is one with the Supreme Goddess of Trika: Parā. But it is only in a descent from her supreme level that revelation can take place. In her primordial stage She is non-differentiated and is rooted in the pure Consciousness consisting in the highest
mantra (i.e. aham), altogether free from any limitations of space and time (prathamatarāṇī paramahāmantramāṇāh adevākālakalitāyāh samvidī nirūḍhā, p. 2, 19). At this stage she abides without differentiation of question and answer.

Then he unfolds the stages of descent of the highest Word into paśyantī (the Visionary), madhyamā (the Intermediary, Mental), down to vaikharī (the Expressed), and this scheme remains at the back of the entire Vivarāṇa and gives it philosophical, theological and linguistic coherence. The Parātrīśikā Vivarāṇa is one of the most systematic texts of Abhinavagupta on the stages of vāc, reaching from the cosmological, theological, linguistic to the psychological or phenomenological fields. Therefore he not only makes a philosophical statement at the beginning of the commentary, but he demonstrates it with examples from experiential data such as memory which arises at the stage of paśyantī, prior to any distinction of word and referent. It is at the stage of madhyamā where an inner, i.e. mental distinction occurs between the word and its referent (vācyā vācakayoh bhedamāmarśya), and at the stage of vaikharī, the expressed, this distinction becomes externalised. His reference to experience is important, because it is experience that alone can ascend from below and arise to reach the higher stages or modes of being:

When this regular, fixed relation of the word and its referent (vyavasthāyām) is proved in one’s own experience, it will be found that what is the stage of parā vāc is the power of non-māyīya word and is of the nature of the highest truth. It is unconventional (asāṅkhetika), natural (akṛtaka), having as its essence the stamp of the highest truth, and is inspired by the truth of the energy of the mantra of I-consciousness, the principle of which will be described in the sequels.

— pp. 8-9

He hastens to add that Parā is present and pervades all the other levels:

“. . . beginning with paśyantī which is the initial creative state of the energy of the highest mantra, up to vaikharī in which manifestation of difference of all the existents has proceeded fully, this parāvāk, full of the wondrous delight of her own self, resting within her own self which is all Light, continues pulsating (sphurati). That pulsation is I-consciousness whose highest truth is uninterrupted continuity.

— p. 9

Therefore, Supreme Consciousness even while appearing as paśyantī
and madhyama actually experiences herself as the Supreme Consciousness. It is this Supreme Consciousness (parā samvid) that is said to be “Devi” (Goddess). — ibid.

Once the Devī has been identified with parā samvid, the further questions arise: First of all, how is She ignorant of her own nature and has to ask Bhairava about her own identity? And the second point is a grammatical one which has far-reaching consequences in an Advaitic theology: how come that the perfect tense uvāca is used for the Devī who is Consciousness herself, hence ever-present, and how can this Goddess-Consciousness be referred to as a third person?

R. Torella, in his article “Devi uvāca, or the Theology of the Perfect Tense,” has analysed this question first from the grammatical, then from the philosophical-theological point of view.

I feel inclined to summarise his argument: According to Sanskrit grammar, the perfect tense refers to the past, to something remote from the “today” (anadyatana), and to an action removed from direct experience (parokṣa). How can these features be applied to the Goddess-Consciousness and to a revelation which is ever present?

Abhinavagupta relates this pastness to a descent of the Devī from her transcendent level as parāvāk to the levels of the Word where alone revelation can take place:

When the glorious parāvāk becoming paśyantī and madhyama (i.e. in the stage of paśyantī and madhyama) thus recollects herself, “I myself as Parāvāk Devī said thus,” then (i.e. that state of recollection), shining forth (ullasat) in that form (i.e. as parāvāk), she regards her own parā stage as past in accordance with the fact of difference brought about by māya, because in comparison to herself that stage (of paśyantī) is the commencement of māya, and because of her travelling through the passage of inner senses (in the case of madhyama) and outer senses (in the case of vaikharī), whose life consists in manifesting difference, she regards the parā stage as past (parokṣatayā). — pp. 11-12

Then Abhinavagupta goes into the question of “today” — which day is meant when the perfect takes place “not today”? He goes into the relativity of time, since

a day of Brahmā is incommensurable with a human day, etc. "Thus, how can the concept of ‘today’ or the present which is unsettled and fictitious apply to unfictitious consciousness (which is beyond time)?" (p. 12).

In the *Vijñāna Bhairava* the word *adya*, today, is related to the Goddess on two occasions: at the beginning of the Tantra, when she asks Bhairava about her own nature, and she states that even after having "heard" or studied the Tantras, even today she is not satisfied. And the same *adya* occurs at the very end, when she has received the revelation and the practical instructions from Bhairava, and she finds her fulfilment and complete satisfaction (v. 162). Both "times" are out of time, and hence "today" is the only appropriate "time" for the Goddess-Consciousness.

The pastness which Abhinavagupta relates to the descent of the Word from her primal state as Parā is compared to a psychological phenomenon, that a person speaks in sleep without knowing, and on waking up has a faint recollection and utters something like: "In an insane condition or in the condition of being asleep, I, so they say, uttered moaning sound" (p. 12). Such an expression also reveals a state of astonishment (*camatkāra*). But he immediately differentiates this expression relating to a past experience in the present from the state of parā, in which "there is total absence of any object whatsoever" (p. 12). What this comparison seeks to point out is a faint recollection of *pasyantī* and *madhyamā* of their parā stage, which is "past" only in the sense of being almost forgotten in the course of descent, although parā is ever present also in the three other stages (just as the subject of the dream state and the waking state is the same). R. Torella states the argument thus:

The term *parokṣa* is explained twice and with two different meanings, always with reference to parā. The first time it refers to her being inaccessible to an objectifying knowledge; the second time it points to the general absence of the very notion of "knowable object" on the parā level, thus making the question of *parokṣa/pratyakṣa* meaningless.

Abhinavagupta does not say it explicitly but he seems to expect the recipient of his teaching to realise by himself that all this argument is essentially only a variation on the theme of recognition, evoked through the solution of a grammatical problem. Just as the first person of the perfect presupposes, so-to-speak, a splitting of the
subject followed by a new integration and reconstitution of the original unity, so the Goddess starts from the state of paśyanti-madhymā and finally re-affirms herself as the all-encompassing parā, or, in other words, as the questioner (Devī) and ends as the answerer (Bhairava).⁴

But the second problem in the context of Advaita is the third person of Devī uvāca. Abhinavagupta again appeals to the grammatical rule that uvāca can as well be applied to the first person: “I said.” Hence the meaning changes to “I, who am the Goddess, said,” avoiding the third person objectivity related to Nara.⁵

In so doing, Abhinavagupta aims to avail himself of the observations that the grammatical tradition, from Kātyāyana onwards, has elaborated on the issue of the first person of the perfect. Such a kind of sophisticated operation — to translate grammatical paradigms into theological ones, and vice versa — is not new to him. He moves with elegance and suppleness between two factually different dimensions, nourishing one through the other, thus pointing, through the liberty of his exegesis, to the unpredictability of the paths of supreme Consciousness.

— Torella, Devī uvāca, p. 132

Abhinavagupta then sums up the two restored meanings of pastness and first person:

According to this principle, parāvāk who fulfils the sense of the past in all its aspects, viz. sāmānyā bhūta (luṅ, i.e. aorist), anadyatana (laṅ, i.e. imperfect) and parokṣa (lit, i.e. past perfect) reflects thus in the first person of the parokṣa (past): “I the self-same Parāvāk Devī unseparated from Śiva (vācyat) and the Śāstra (vācakat) or from the word and its referent thus said.” This is the sense of the use of the past tense.

— tr., p. 12

If it is the same “I” who asks the question and who answers in the form of Bhairava, does the author not land in a monistic tautology? Must there not be a subtle difference between the questioner and the answerer? What is the dynamism

⁴. R. Torella, Devī uvāca, p. 134.
⁵. See chapter five.
implied, apart from the already mentioned descent of the Devi from her *para* state to the levels of *pasyantī*, etc.?

Torella has rightly related the difference of the two levels to the “dynamics of the recognition of one’s own identity with the Lord,” *pratyabhijñā*.

The perfect tense in the first person is therefore the ideal model to express a distinction and a coincidence of planes at the same time, that is, the empirical subject’s existing and acting in ordinary reality and, at the same time, his being eternally rooted in supreme Consciousness. — *Devi uvāca*, p. 134

The whole situation of dialogue between Devi and Bhairava is related to the degrees of *guru-śiṣya* relationship in the revelation of the Āgamas, since the Goddess assumes the role of disciple out of her nature of grace.

**Guru-śiṣya Sambandha**

Abhinavagupta quotes the classical verse from the *Svacchanda Tantra* in this context:

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guruṣiṣyāpade sthitā svayam deva sadāśivah 1
pūrvottara padairvākyaistantram samavatārayat 2

— VIII. 31
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The God Sadasiva himself assuming the position of both teacher and disciple revealed the Tantra by means of former and latter sentences, i.e. by means of question and answer.6

Kṣemarāja, while commenting on this passage, explains “God” (*deva*) as

Lord Śiva who possesses the power of the Supreme Word (*paravāk-śaktimayaḥ*), who, as Sadasiva, assumes the respective level (*bhūmika*) of questioner and answerer. “The position of teacher and disciple” is explained by the phrase: “in the realm of creative insight” (*pratibhāhhuvi*).

Abhinavagupta has given an interesting paraphrase of the *Svacchanda* verse in his *Tantraloka*: “Consciousness itself,” he says, “thus becomes question and answer, in the position of master and disciple. The difference in their bodies is

insubstantial.” And Jayaratha comments:

Is not the difference between master and disciple a matter of direct perception? Where is the place for the nature (and unity) of consciousness? (He answers to this objection). This (difference) is insubstantial or unreal. For consciousness, out of the immensity of its own freedom, makes these different bodies to appear within itself. — on TĀ 1.256

In the course of the revelation and descent of the scriptures there are different kinds of relationships (sambandha), in a descent from the divine to the level of human masters and disciples.8

The Svacchanda Tantra refers to the relationship of Sadāśiva and Īśvara, as guru and disciple at the divine level, where Sadāśiva represents the aspect of knowledge (jñāna), and Īśvara, the aspect of activity (kriya). This corresponds to the “great relationship” (mahān sambandha).

In the Parātrīṣikā Abhinavagupta finds the supreme relationship of Devi and Bhairava because it is at the level of dynamic non-duality.

antarbhāvitāniḥśeṣaprasaram bhairavāṁ vapuḥ
prativaktṣvarūpeṇa sarvadaiva viṣṇubhate
etau prasarasamhāravākālakālitaḥ yataṁ
 tadekarūpamevedam tattvāṁ praśnottarātmakam
 tadēvaṁ parasambhandhamanuttaratayānvitam
 saḍārthārasarvasvaṁ guravāṁ prāṇyarūpayan

In Bhairava the magnitude of the expansion of the universe is inwardly enfolded, and He abides as the eternal responder. Since the dual process of expansion and retraction occurs in timelessness, hence this question-answer is the truth of uniform nature. This is the supreme relationship, associated with anuttara.

My revered guru (Śambhunātha) has already expounded it as the entire essence of Trika Śāstra.10

7. TĀ 1.256.
10. Cf. Jaideva Singh’s translation, p. 64.
He again refers to the ultimate meaning of "question" in the context of the Advaitic dialogue:

The divine Supreme Consciousness-Power not different from Bhairava on the point of expansion according to Her essential nature, is said to be supreme icchāśakti (voluntary power). Her actual expansion as jñānaśakti (cognitive power) assumes the parāparā or paśyantī form and as kriyāśakti (conative power) the aparā or madhyama form, etc.

Now, the inquiry about the nature of parāśakti who expands in the form of the universe is said to be praśna or question. The Devī who is that very Śakti is the initiator of the question about her (i.e. parāśakti).

The consideration of the nature of this expansion is said to be the most excellent organ of speech (para-vaktra) and that consists of both question and answer. — p. 63

Thus the questions related to Devī uvāca in the context of Advaita have been resolved by Abhinavagupta at various levels — grammatical and theological-spiritual, since the entire Tantra following the question of the Devī has only one purpose: jīvanmukti or liberation-in-life, and it is in the interface and dynamism of the supreme relationship of Devī and Bhairava, or of question-answer at the ultimate level, that the human disciple can discover his or her own identity.

Once it is established that Devī in the first person asked the question, "therefore there is the actual experience of the energy of the highest mantra of the I-consciousness of the Divine in jñānaśakti" (p. 14).

The entire passage shows that, although there is ultimately only one (Divine) Subject, it still permits relationship, which is the supreme relationship between the power of grace (anugrahaśakti) and the power of creativity (visarga, on the side of Śiva).

11. parā bhagavadĪ saṁvitprasarantī svarūpataḥ ।
   parecchasaktityuktā bhairavasyāvibhedinī ॥
   tasyaḥ prasaradharmitvaṁ jñānaśaktyādirūpataḥ ।
   parāparāparāparapasyantyādi vapurbhṛtiḥ ॥
   tadevaṁ prasarakārasvarāparāparimārśanam ।
   praśna ityucyate devī yanmaya praśnakāringī ॥ — p. 22, II.7-12.
This is that imperceptible face (i.e. Śakti) of Bhairava full of the feel of manifestation, the essence of which is the unsurpassable I-consciousness, full of the stirring joy (kṣobha) issuing from the union (saṃghaṭṭa) with Śiva who is symbolised by ā, and Śakti who is symbolised by ā, which is the source of the appearance and extension of manifestation according to the Trika system of philosophy and Yoga, and which is the original (maulikaṁ), ever abiding state (dhruvapadam) and the life of all living beings. Therefore, it is not proper to associate the Divine with a particular station, etc., for in the absence of any limitation in His case, designating a particular place for Him is entirely unjustifiable (p. 15, tr. modified).

Before moving on to the second section (starting from verse 5 of the Tantra) Abhinavagupta gives a kind of summary of the question and relates it to Trika. The question of the Devī in one and a half verses starting with anuttaram relates to Śiva. The second part of her question (v. 2) starting with: hṛdayasthā tu ya śaktiḥ relates to Śakti. Then the question arises about the third element of Trika, Nara (atra yadi eṣā trikārthābhīpraṇeyena vyākhyā tat naravisayapraśnaprasangah, p. 32). This seems to be an introduction to the second part: pratibimba or uttara, which comprehends every aspect of Nara. But the alternative is that the two questions concern Yāmala, i.e. “Śiva and Śakti whose connection is known as yāmala, so that a separate question about each could be justified.” (p. 82). This question will be taken up again in the context of the grammatical persons (chapter five).
Anuttara
The Unsurpassable and Its Meanings

The sixteen interpretations of Anuttara are, maybe, one of the most extraordinary examples of exegetical ingenuity of the Sanskrit textual tradition. What Abhinavagupta seeks to exclude is any one-sided understanding of the Absolute, since that would be a contradiction of the very term. In terms of theology we may call this attempt apophatism, i.e. the Divine Reality can only be described in negative terms, because any positive (kataphatic) statement would limit it to our understanding. But even the apophatic dimension is only one side of the total reality of the Absolute.

At the outset, before going into Abhinavagupta’s detailed analysis, two

1. A. Sanderson, in: Sāmarasya, note 123: “Perhaps the most striking example of this is the exegesis of the Parātrīśika in Abhinavagupta’s PTV (especially p. 193, l. 1–p. 197, l. 7 [KED, pp. 19-32]) giving sixteen semantic analyses of the word anuttaram, and p. 262, l. 16–p. 269, l. 11 (KED, pp. 223-42), giving nine interpretations of v. 9 and sixteen meanings to the words tṛtīyān brahma in that verse. By the disciplines of text-analysis I mean grammatical analysis (vyutpatti) and semantic analysis (nirvacanam). Both provide the exegete with considerable room for manoeuvre. He needs to show only that the meaning he attributes to a sentence does not infringe the rules of grammar. It is not necessary to consider how far the expression of that meaning through those words conforms to normal usage, word-order and the like. It is enough that the meaning is not grammatically impossible. Semantic analysis is even more flexible. It enables an exegete to insert the meaning he seeks by deriving a word artificially from the meaning of verbal roots that resemble the sounds or syllables that compose it (aṅkaraṅvarṇasaṃāṇyāt); see Kahrs 1998, p. 37, quoting Yāska: aṅkaraṅvarṇasaṃāṇyān nirbhṛtyāt “One may analyse on the basis of similarities of syllables or sounds.” Abhinavagupta echoes these words in PTV, p. 268, ll. 23-24 (KED, p. 241): tathā ca vedavyākaraṇe pārameśvareṣu “ca śāstreṣu (conj.: śāstreṣu Gno, KED) mantraṅkāsādhiṣabdeṣu aṅkaraṅvarṇasaṃāṇyān nirvacanam upapannam “In the explanation of the Veda and in [explaining] such words as mantraḥ and dīkṣā in the Śaiva scriptures it is proper to analyse meaning on the basis of similarity of sounds or syllables.”
grammatical features have to be retained: (a) Anuttara is a negative term coined with the an( an) privativum; (b) what is negated is in the comparative form, tara. In an important article Jan Gonda has examined the question “Why are ahimsa and similar concepts often expressed in a negative form?” The principle he applies to mostly Vedic concepts is also relevant in the case of Anuttara, besides other concepts in Trika formed with a privativum, such as: anargala, avikalpa (=nirvikalpa), anapeksha, anakhya (inexpressible, unspeakable), akalpita (not made, hence spontaneous), besides the central advaita/advaya, abheda.

Another term for the Absolute which will engage us later in the context of kula/kaula is akula (free from or beyond the totality or the universe). Apart from Gonda’s arguments, one finds that in India the most important values or concepts are more often expressed in negative terms, mostly by a privativum or nir. Anuttara is such a paradigm. A question close to this is raised — by Abhinavagupta himself — why is the comparative used rather than the superlative in relation to the Absolute? (pp. 26-27 tr.). P. Muller-Ortega remarks:

While we might have expected a superlative adjective to be employed to express the notion of ultimacy, the insistent dynamism of the comparative, higher (uttara), preserves the supremacy of the anuttara over any possible challenges in a way that the superlative, highest (uttama), would not have done.

Abhinavagupta is not only expounding a theology of the Absolute, but also addressing the practical, spiritual ways of realising it. In the development of the sixteen interpretations he proceeds from the (grammatically and philosophically) more obvious meanings to the more remote or, we might say, artificial ones.

Since this is the central concept, not only in our text and for the present study, as of all metaphysics, we may dwell for a while on these “definitions.”


4. The Triadic Heart of Siva, p. 88.
(1) The first and obvious meaning is a denial in the Absolute of anything “more, additional” (uttara).\(^5\) What could be that “more”? Abhinavagupta relates it to the 36 tattvas or levels of reality, which comprise the entire cosmotheandric universe.\(^6\) Anuttara is that which transcends them, but is not transcended by them. But the word “transcendence” has also to be used with caution, as the following meanings will show. Hence: “The highest, most perfect Consciousness of Bhairava is not like this (i.e. like the tattvas), because of its essence being unrestrained, non-relative, delightful flash of knowership” (p. 20). Even this “positive” description of Anuttara contains two negations: anargala (unrestrained) and anapekṣa (not dependent), both pointing to perfect freedom, the fundamental quality of the Absolute in Trika and Pratyabhijñā: svātantrya. It is not an abstract concept of freedom or autonomy, but it is intimately related to the experience of wonder: camatkāratvāt (p. 7). Camatkāra is the experiential aspect of freedom as newness and as joyful surprise.

(2) The second meaning is also straightforward as far as semantics goes. Here he takes uttara in the sense of “answer,” and hence anuttara is “that state in which there is neither question nor answer” (tathā na vidyate uttaram praśna prativacorūpaṁ yatra, p. 7, l.16). It means, positively, that Anuttara is “that ocean of supreme Consciousness, from which arises infinite insightful knowledge” (p. 21) (yata eva mahāsaṁvit-sindhoṣ uallasadananta pratibhāparyanta-dhāmna . . . , p. 7). There is no need of any question, since “that Reality is ever present,” ever effulgent, or ever revealed (satatoditam), another important qualification of supreme Consciousness.

(3) With the third interpretation starts a series of relativising explanations — in the sense that they upset the common understanding of religious and spiritual, even social values. All Indian soteriologies — including the Buddhist and Jaina systems — assume that there is a state of bondage, of

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5. na vidyate uttaram adhikāṁ yataḥ, p. 7.

6. I prefer the expression “cosmotheandric,” used and interpreted frequently by R. Panikkar, e.g. in his interpretation of the Vedas (cf. The Vedic Experience). It implies that these elements are related to the cosmos (the five elements), to the human being (the senses, etc.), and to the Divine (Sadāśiva, Īśvara, Śakti, Śiva).
impurity, of incompleteness, which has to be overcome by liberation — *mukti, nirvāṇa* — there is an ocean of *samsāra* which needs to be crossed. All this conception is futile in relation to *Anuttara*.

Semantically, Abhinavagupta takes *uttara* in the sense of *uttarāṇa*, “to cross over,” hence to be liberated. But basically this is a dualistic conception which is bound by the polarity “bondage — liberation.” Spiritually speaking, this “crossing over” involves an ascension: from body to *prāṇa* to *buddhi* to the void.

Then the state of the void which connotes the dissolution of all objectivity, and then on attaining the highest pitch (*atīśayadhārāprāptau*) of the successive diminution of all the *malas* (limitations), the empirical individual is freed on the manifestation of the state of Śiva. All this stupendous ascension is, indeed, futile (for were not the previous stages also the expression of Śiva?).

— p. 21

(4) Again in the context of spiritual ascent, the next meaning is a denial of the rising of the Śakti in the subtle body through the *cakras*. The basic assumption is again the all-pervasive reality of *anuttara* which is not dependent on its subjective experience in the subtle body.

Similarly, rising of the Śakti from the navel to the heart, then to the throat, then to the palate, then to the crown of the head (*brahma* i.e. *saḥsārāra*), then to the Bhairava *bila* (the point above the *saḥsārāra*) in the upward succession is ascension. *Anuttara* signifies that in this Śaiva Āgama, mounting to Bhairava by an upward succession through the six *cakras* is not indispensable.

— p. 21

(5) Taking *uttara* again in the sense of “crossing, overcoming,” *anuttara* denies the necessity to overcome the world and to reach liberation (*mokṣa*) — because in the highest non-dualism even the duality of bondage and liberation is absent.

*uttarāṇamuttaro mokṣaḥ tat evaṁvidhā uttarā yatra na santi*

— Skt., p. 7

In interpretations 6 and 7 *uttara* is taken in the sense of a statement, and even a demonstrative pronoun like “this” (*idam*), when pointing at the
Highest Reality, is a limitation. Any such statement implies exclusion of the opposite: \textit{uttaraṁ ca śabdanāṁ tat sarvathā īḍ̄śam tāḍ̄śam iti vyvacchedam kuryāt} (p. 7-8). Anuttara is that where any limitation or exclusion is absent: \textit{tat yatā bhavati anavacchinnam idam anuttaram} (ibid.). This much may remind of the \textit{neti neti} of the Upaniṣads, but Abhinavagupta goes further than a mere negation. He relates the negation of any statement pointing to Ultimate Reality to spiritual practice and experience:

Therefore, so long as an empirical experient (\textit{māyīyaḥ pramātā}) is desirous of entering anuttara (the Supreme Reality), so long he remains in \textit{vikalpa} (thought-construct) of a particular form. In this context, (it must be borne in mind) that that which is indeterminate (\textit{avikalpitaṁ}) and necessarily inherent in everything (\textit{avinābhāvi}), that is really anuttara (Supreme Consciousness), for without it even a determinate concept cannot appear (\textit{tadvinā kalpitarūparūphuraṇāt}). In fact, in anuttara (tatra), contemplation, concentration, etc. (\textit{bhāvanādeḥ}) are wholly inapplicable. Therefore it (anuttara) has been declared (by Somānanda) to be beyond contemplation, \textit{karaṇa}, etc.

Being an experienced spiritual master, Abhinavagupta adds immediately:

Not that \textit{bhāvanā} is wholly useless (i.e. it can only bring about the purification of mind, but not the realisation of anuttara). \textit{Such anuttara} (i.e. the \textit{nirvikalpa}, thought-free anuttara) abides even in the life of the work-a-day world (for those who have its awareness).

(6) The last sentence: \textit{tat īḍ̄śamanuttaram vyavahārāvṛttiśvapi evameva} (p. 8) is most significant in that it relativises the lofty, transcendent notion of an Absolute removed from the world and from ordinary activity. An Absolute of such description can neither be sought nor reflected upon, because these acts require the help of \textit{vikalpa} which is limited by the individual subject (\textit{māyīyaḥ pramātā}). Hence, instead of landing in an ever greater negation, à la Nāgārjuna, Abhinavagupta catapults the entire argument and arrives on the ground of simple reality: if it is not present here, it cannot be present in any beyond.

7. Emphasis mine.
(7) He illustrates this by a simile contained in one of his stotras, comparing the omnipresence of the Anuttara to the thin rain which is not visible against the sky, but becomes visible against trees, houses and other objects. It is an image for the subtlety and all-pervasiveness of the Divine, which is not accessible to experience:

\[ \text{tadvat parabhairavo 'tisauksmyd} \]
\[ \text{anubhavagocarameti naiva jatu} \]

(8) There are several hierarchies which are being negated in the concept of Anuttara. One is the hierarchy of the means of liberation (upāya), which are graded as the individual way (ānava), the way of Energy (sākta), and the Divine way (sāmbhava). The physical elements are equally arranged in a hierarchy, which order will come to be reversed, as we shall see in the context of the tattvas and of bimba-pratibimba. Even the states of waking, dream, deep sleep, turya and turyātīta along with their subdivisions are hierarchically classified. The conclusion of denying any such hierarchies is this: “This kind of uttaratva (hierarchy) only shows higher and lower and contains the delusion of dualism” (p. 23) (tat īḍāśamauttarādśharya dvaitasāmrmohādhāyi uttaratvam, pp. 8-9).9

(9) This hierarchical sense of inferiority and superiority applies practically in the social realm to the caste system which has no place in Anuttara. That this is not only a theoretical statement but has practical implications in Trika has been shown in the context of adhikāra: there Abhinavagupta ridicules the restrictions of other Śāstras to a particular, especially the brāhmaṇa caste.10

(10) Those meanings refer to the hierarchy of Energies as uttara, and Anuttara being beyond or being free from such hierarchies, such as: paśyantī — madhyamā — vaikarī; Aghorā — Ghorā — Ghoratarā Śaktis; Parā — Parāparā — Aparā Śaktis, which are the

9. R. Gnoli has counted these hierarchies separately as meaning 9 (upāya) and 10 (avasthā), pp. 17-18. Instead he has taken the meanings related to the Śaktis together as number 12. Since Abhinavagupta does not number his definitions, this may be a more logical arrangement.
10. Cf. p. 223 (tr.).
very basis of *Trika*. Their hierarchy is here denied since *Anuttara* is the realm of *Parā* only.

(13) The next meaning is derived from a root *nut/nud*, “to impel,” with *tara*, “crossing,” hence suggesting “going beyond the worldly existence through impulsion by the process of initiation” (p. 23). He gives a concise description of what happens in initiation,\(^1\) to question it immediately in the light of *anuttara*: “Now in this (process of initiation), how is this kind of mockery made of the unsurpassable consciousness that is self-luminous, omnipresent, unmodified, i.e. unrestricted by the limitations of space, time and form? Therefore *anuttara* is that in which a crossing over does not occur by such impulsion” (pp. 23-24).\(^2\) He adduces the *Parātrīśikā* itself as defining the *nirvāṇagāminī dīkṣā* (v. 26) which does not require any elaborate ritual, but only a knowledge in truth of the “seed of the heart” (*ḥṛdayābhyāsa*, v. 25). Relativising *dīkṣā* as a process of transmission is also an implicit criticism of the Siddhānta where *dīkṣā* is indispensable for liberation. Although Abhinavagupta himself describes various forms of *dīkṣā* in his *Tantrāloka*, this denial is again at the level of *Anuttara Trika* (or *anupāya* in the scheme of the *Tantrāloka*).

(14) The next meaning shows that all these analyses are not only negations but also positive definitions (*via eminentiae* in the Latin Scholastic tradition). The entire definition is centred on life, derived from the root *an*, to breathe. “‘Simple life’ means breath, individual self, identified with the body, the psychic organs, etc.” (*ānuḥ ātmā dehāpyaṣṭakādīn, tathā anānam jīvanam* . . ., p. 9). With the suffix *uttara* the state of *sūnyapramatā* (the subject conscious

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1. “The guru (spiritual guide) sets in motion his own consciousness in the consciousness of the disciple. Thus he (the guru) applies an initiation which is intended to bring about liberation (*mokṣa*) by means of the process (*paripāṭa*) of the central point (*vīṣuva*), etc. which is devoid of the movement of *prāṇa* (exhalation) and *apāṇa* (inhalation) breaths which assume the utterance of *ḥaṁsa*, and is the junction of both and by the difference of *sthāna* on the *sakala niśkala* initiation and through the practice of *yojanikā* initiation on the occasion of the last function of the complete oblation.” (p. 23)

2. *tat atra ca itanyasya svaprakāśasya vyāpino deśakālakāra viśeṣitasya kathaṅkārām imā vidambanah? tat evaśīdho nudā prerāṇena taraḥ taraṇaṁ yatra na bhavati tat anuttaram. (p. 9, II. 6-7).*
of only void) is transcended: *tasyaiva uttаратvam sarvatah paramārthatayā ādhikyaṁ yatra bhairavaikamayatvāt*, “his transcendence (of the empirical self) means super-excellence in every mode of being because it is the ultimate reality, and (thus) one with Bhairava” (cf. p. 24).

This raises the question of life and of the multiplicity of living and insentient beings. He states that the insentient beings are dependent on the sentient ones, which are defined as possessing the energies of knowledge and action (*jñāna-kriya*). “These are present in others as well as in oneself. Their difference appears only in the bodies” ([paratrāṇi hi svavat dehādireva pṛthaktyā bhāti, p. 9]).¹³ In the ultimate sense, life appears in all without difference: *yat punah prāṇanam tat abhedaṇaiva svaprakāśam* (ibid.).

This brief passage defining life at different levels and in its ultimate unity is astoundingly revealing. It implies that life in its most real and universal pervasive sense is itself *Anuttara*.

(15) This meaning is basically derived from the letter *a* which symbolises *Anuttara*, and which, together with *ha* symbolising Śakti and *anusvara* constitutes *ahaṁ*, pure I-consciousness, which embraces the entire Sanskrit alphabet.

*Anuttara* may be analysed as *a+nut+tara* meaning the *tara* or flotation of the *nut* or impulsion of *a*. *A* is the Śakti (*kāla*) who is above the range of *māya* (*amāyiya*), who is not found in Śruti-Śastra (i.e. in the Vedic tradition), who is the bliss (*camatkāra*) of the very waveless ocean of consciousness abiding in the natural, supreme Light, who covers both the initial and the final stage of the perfect I-consciousness *a* and *ahaṁ* (the Sanskrit word for “I”), which comprehends the entire cosmos which is the expression of the creative delight of Śakti. *Nut*, i.e. impulsion is the culmination of the expansion (*visargāntatā*) of that (i.e. *kāla*). *Tarah* means the floatation or swimming of that *nut*, i.e. the continuance of that state over everything else. (The sense is that though *anuttara* in its expansion is denoted by Śakti and *nara*, yet it is never separated by these. It pervades up to the very end.) — pp. 24 f.

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¹³ Cf. the philosophical discussion on Self and other, which Abhinavagupta carries out in his *IPV*. Cf. the (unpublished) thesis by Isabelle Ratié, *Le Soi et l’Autre: identité, différence et altérité dans la philosophie de la Pratyabhijñā*, Paris (Sorbonne), 2009 (2 vols.).
The final definition splits the word into *anut-tara*, derived from the root *nut*, to impel. *Anut* is that where "successive action depending on the duality of going and coming in space and time is absent." The other meaning takes *anut* as space, *ākāśa*, and *anuttara* is that which is higher even than *ākāśa* (*tato 'pi sātiṣayamanuttaram*, p. 10). *Ākāśa* is, since the Upaniṣads, the symbol of *Brahman*, but it is also the space in which activity takes place, as well as the medium of sound (according to Sāmkhya cosmology). *Anuttara* is beyond *ākāśa*, because

The activity of I-consciousness is successionless, because of the absence of the relativity of space and time which are characterised by objectivity (in manifestation) and absence of objectivity (in withdrawal), which is full of the delight of its own consciousness. — p. 25

In concluding the argument, why the comparative, instead of the superlative has been used, Abhinavagupta again refers to the dynamic aspect of "graded correlatives" (*uttarakramikapratiyogī* . . . , p. 10), and citing an Āgama, he allows also the possibility of calling the Supreme *anuttamam*. This quotation again brings it down to the level of that which is universally known:

Here it is in order to indicate graded correlatives along with *uttara* that the *tarap* suffix has been used. Even if there were no occasion to express correlatives, the usage of *anuttamam* would also have borne the same sense.

So in another Āgama, it has been said:

There is no one to whom that One Supreme Reality (*ekamanuttamam*) is unknown which, however, is not known even now to the wise who have become perfect in understanding. — p. 27

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*nitye nirāśraye śānye vyāpake kalanojjhite*
*bāhyākāše manañ kṛtvā nirākāśām samāviṣet* II 128

Fixing one's mind on the external space which is eternal, supportless, empty, all-pervading and free from limitation, in this way one will be absorbed in spacelessness.

15. The lexical meanings are again: unsurpassed, incomparable, best, excellent.
This and other similar texts reject any spiritual elitism, that the Ultimate Reality can be known only to siddhas. For that would contradict its all-pervasiveness and non-duality, where even the duality of the enlightened and the unenlightened has to be negated.\textsuperscript{16}

At the end, Abhinavagupta justifies the enumeration of the number sixteen, not with reference to the Veda,\textsuperscript{17} but by a mention of sixteen knots in the \textit{Trikasāra}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Anuttara} is the heart (centre) of all. There is a knot in the heart.
Knowing that knot to be sixteenfold, one should perform one’s actions at ease.
\end{quote}

--- p. 27

A traditional interpretation relates these knots to the sixteen aspects of consciousness: \textit{pramaṭā} (subject), \textit{pramāṇa} (means of knowledge), \textit{prameya} (object), \textit{pramiti} (intuitive knowledge), combined with the four states of \textit{sṛṣṭi} (creation), \textit{sthiti} (continuance), \textit{saṃhāra} (dissolution) and \textit{anākhyā} (the unnameable), each of the former having these four phases.\textsuperscript{18} Generally the \textit{granthī}s are \textit{cakras} within the yogic body, before they are pierced and liberated in the course of the rise of \textit{kundalinī}, but the above quote locates them all in the heart.\textsuperscript{19} Another meaning of \textit{granthī} is found in the \textit{Kubjikāmata}, where the knots stand for the voids.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{16} Cf. \textit{Viśnunā Bhaiṇara} 124: sarvatra bhaiṇara bāvah sāmānyeṣvapi gocarāh

na ca tād-vyatirekena paro 'stityadvayā gatiḥ

The reality of Bhaiṇara is present everywhere, even in common people. He who knows that nothing exists apart from Him, attains the non-dual state.

\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Jan Gonda, “The Number Sixteen”, in: \textit{Change and Continuity in Indian Religion}, pp. 115-30. “The conclusion that the Vedic speculations about the significance of the number 16 were influenced by an observation of, and theories about, the moon would therefore, in my opinion, deserve no less serious consideration that the supposition that in a considerable number of culture traits it is this ‘Vedic significance’ of 16 which survives, that is to say, that the foundations of a number of ritual, psychological or philosophical doctrines based on, or incorporating, the idea that ‘totality’ or the ‘metaphysical whole’ is sixteenfold were laid in Vedic times and in Vedic culture.”

\textsuperscript{18} Explanation given by Swami Lakshman Joo and reproduced by Jaideva Singh, p. 30, note 21.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. \textit{ḥṛdayagranthi} in the \textit{Upaniṣad}. (\textit{Mundaka Upaniṣad} II.2.9) (cf. \textit{PTV}, p. 125).

\textsuperscript{20} Cf. \textit{Kubjikāmata} 7.81cd–86ab, quoted by S. Vasudeva, \textit{The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra}, p. 266, note 47: \textit{lagne granthitrayaṃ devi khagatir nātrasamśayah}, “O Goddess, there will take place motion in the void, (of this) there is no doubt.”
However, the number sixteen and its Vedic-Upaniṣadic antecedents is significant, because the symbolism comes close to the Tāntric symbolism. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad contains the Śoḍaśakalāvidyā (IV.4-9). According to H. Lüders, the fourfold division of the Puruṣa in Puruṣa-Sūkta (Ṛgveda X.90.3, 4) is the basic model for the sixteen aspects of Brahman in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (four times four), and the actual sixteenfold division of Prajāpati in the Yajurveda is the direct antecedent. Prajāpati, who is also identified with the year, is symbolically identified with the moon, and the fifteen phases (kalā) of the moon are his, whereas the sixteenth part is immutable. Just as in Tāntric symbolism, there is also mention of a seventeenth kalā, which transcends time. Thus, on the basis of these Vedic antecedents, the Puruṣa, Prajāpati, and Brahman are connected with the number sixteen to indicate completeness. This completeness is implied in the sixteen explanations of Anuttara by Abhinavagupta.

The theme of Anuttara will continue as the leitmotiv of the entire text, but it was important to follow closely Abhinavagupta’s sixteenfold hermeneutics.

First we propose to assess Abhinavagupta’s hermeneutics of the “word” Anuttara. I consciously would not call it a “concept” or a “term.” “Word” is closer to Vāc, one of the central themes of the Parātrīṣikā Vivaraṇa, and the “symbol” of Anuttara is the phoneme a, as given in meaning 15. Hermeneutics or different forms of nirvacana is the only instrument that the author has to deduce from the rules of grammar and reveal the ultimately inexpressible meaning/meanings of the word. What he achieves by his ingenious method is extraordinary: he avoids

22. Vājasaneyī Samhitā VIII.36.
24. Cf. Śatapatha Brahmana V.2.2.3, and other references given by Lüders, p. 523.
26. P. Muller-Ortega still calls them “folk etymologies,” but this pejorative meaning has been overcome by an understanding of the hermeneutic devices developed by Sanskrit grammarians and commentators. Cf. the excellent study by E. Kahrs (see Bibliography).
and negates all dichotomies: transcendent-immanent (\textit{viśottīrṇa-viśvamaya}), superior-inferior (the denial of all hierarchies), bondage-liberation, etc. are relativised (not abolished). First of all, \textit{Anuttara} is far more comprehensive a word than a philosophical (or theological) “concept,” therefore the hierarchies which are dissolved in its light rest at different levels and in different realms: from the social (caste hierarchy), to the elementary (the order of the \textit{bhūtas}), to the mental/psychic states (\textit{avasthā}: waking, dreaming, etc.), to the order of Divine Energies (different groupings of Śaktis in the Tantras), to the spiritual paths or means of liberation (\textit{upāya}), etc. The very process of spiritual advancement, such as happens in initiation (\textit{dīksā}), and the stages of awakening or opening of the \textit{cakras} in the spiritual ascent, all this becomes meaningless at the level of \textit{Anuttara}.

Relativising all these realms of understanding and experiencing \textit{Anuttara} is itself a process of liberating it from its projections and identifications — and hence liberating the reader/disciple.\textsuperscript{27} And yet, Abhinavagupta does not land in a Nāgārjunian series of negations. Although \textit{Anuttara} is beyond any \textit{vikalpa}, it is yet the most living and present Reality — it is Life itself (meaning 14 derived from \textit{an}, to breathe), and hence it is known to everybody, in spite of being unknowable or difficult to know (\textit{durvījñeya}, cf. \textit{Tantrāloka} II.28).\textsuperscript{28} If \textit{Anuttara} cannot be defined or comprehended, it is actually a state to be experienced: \textit{anuttara-pada} is used by Abhinavagupta in his \textit{Tantrāloka} in the context of all four \textit{upāyas}. One would expect it to correspond primarily to \textit{anupāya}: the pathless path, no-means, and the actual domain of the Absolute. Significantly, as he links the \textit{āhnikas} (chapters) by concluding the previous one with half a verse and completing the verse at the beginning of the next, he uses a similar expression in linking the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} \textit{āhnikas}, describing \textit{anupāya} and \textit{śāmbhava} respectively:

\begin{quote}
\textit{idam anuttaradāhamāviveca kaṁ} \textsuperscript{1} \\
\textit{vigalitaupāyikāṁ kṛtamāhnikāṁ} \textsuperscript{2} \\
\textend{quote}

\textit{TĀ} II.50

This is the end of the chapter which examines the domain (state) of the Unsurpassable without any means.

\textsuperscript{27} Cf. the \textit{Anuttaraśāṭikā}, given in Appendix.

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. \textit{VBh} 124.
And the third āhnika begins thus:

\[
\text{atha paraupāyikam praṇīgadyate}
\]

\[
\text{padam anuttarameva maheśītuḥ}
\]

— III.1

Now the supreme means is being spoken of which is nothing but the unsurpassable state/domain of the Great Lord.

The use of expressions like anuttara-pāda\(^29\) as the goal of all the ways is an indication, as Abhinavagupta states in the first āhnika, that the ways are different but the goal is the same Absolute.\(^30\)

**Anuttara as Bestowing the Perfection of Totality: Kaulikasiddhidam**

In terms of the sixteen meanings Abhinavagupta has explored the hermeneutics of *Anuttara* in itself, without relation to the other important concepts of the first verse, and without its relation to ontological expansion or manifestation. *Anuttaram* in the question of the Devī is that which bestows kaulikasiddhi, i.e. she already knows this power and asks only about the “how”: katham, to achieve it. Therefore Abhinavagupta also takes up the question related to kaulikasiddhi following the hermeneutics of the *Anuttara*.

What is meant by kaulikasiddhi? If the Absolute or Śiva is akula, without manifestation, beyond differentiation, kula is the totality, the “family” or group of energies,\(^31\) or simply Śakti, the cosmos. Kaulika is derived from kula and synonym of kaula.\(^32\) Abhinavagupta is giving four interpretations of kaulikasiddhi, but before going into that we may look at the brief definition he gives in his *Tantraloka* along with Jayaratha’s commentary:

\[29.\] Cf. also *TĀ* IV.278, V.19, 42, 53, 117, 119, 125, 147, 156, 159.

\[30.\] Cf. *TĀ* I.166.

\[31.\] Much has been written about kula and its multiple meanings. Since it denotes the totality, the body, the group and community or family, the semantic field connotes an organic whole integrating all the parts. Cf. *Ṭantrikābhidhānakāśa*, vol. II, pp. 120 ff.

\[32.\] Cf. ibid. under Kaulika, Kaulīki, p. 142.
The Supreme Energy Kaulikī of the unmanifest God (akula) is She who is capable of expanding (unfolding) the totality (kula), and the Lord is inseparably united with Her.

Jayaratha: Here the Supreme Reality which is nothing but the Unsurpassable Light (anuttaraḥ prakāśa eva) consists in the highest reflective awareness (parā parāmarśa)33 which is complete (pāṛṇa), unspeakable (anākhya), and which does not tolerate any separate definition of Śiva, Śakti, etc. It is that (Supreme Reality) which, out of its own perfect freedom, and initially manifests it in the form of Śiva and Śakti.

Although kula and akula are not really defined in this text, it is clear that the Supreme, Unmanifest Absolute desires out of Its own perfect freedom to manifest the universe, and that the Energy behind the unfolding or expansion is precisely kaulikī śakti. “It is possible to participate and to identify with this creative Power of the Divinity, and it is that which is called ‘the perfection of kula’ (kaulikasiddhi), to which the 36 stanzas of the Parātrīśikā are consecrated...”34 The words “participation” and “identification” are significant, because the “how” (katham) of the question of the Devī is not simply theoretical, it is a question leading to identification (hence kaulikasiddhidam).

Although we are not going here into the question of the difference between the Kula and Kaula schools or traditions,35 it is still important to see the high value attached to the Kula as a pervasive spiritual doctrine and practice, as expressed poetically by Abhinavagupta in his Tantrāloka:

Like the fragrance in the flower, the oil in the sesame seed, the

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33. Cf. a discussion on the different meanings and possible translations of parāmarśa in: Isabelle Ratié, Otherness in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy, p. 17, note 51.
living soul in the body and the taste in water, the Kula resides inside all Śāstras as their essence. — TĀ XXXV.34

The word siddhi in the compound kaulikasiddhi does not refer to any limited power (as in the Yogasūtras), but it denotes accomplishment, perfection, fulfilment. It is that perfection which only the Anuttara can bestow.

Thus, in relation to kaulikasiddhi, the Anuttara assumes the dynamism of manifestation of the universe in its macro and microcosmic implications. In other words, the integration of the totality takes place.

Abhinavagupta expands four meanings of kaulikasiddhidam:

(1) "Kula" is gross (sthāla), subtle (sūkṣma), and ulterior (paraṇa) (life-breath), indriya (senses), bhūtādi (the five gross physical elements) both in a collective sense (i.e. in the sense of totality of manifestations), and in the sense of cause-effect. . . .

So kula or totality is so called, because Consciousness itself abides in the various forms of objectivity (yathāvasthānāt) by means of coagulation, and Consciousness itself (voluntarily) assumes bondage by its own Freedom. It is said: "the word kula is used in the sense of coagulation and kindred" (svānstyāne bandhusu ca).

Without Consciousness which is Light itself, no entity which is devoid of the light of manifestation (aprakāṣamānaiṇi vapuh) can come into existence.

Now kaulikī is that which is related to the whole universe including the body; siddhi or achievement is the acquisition of bliss (ānanda) by turning round (parivṛtya) to have a firm hold on that very principle, i.e. the light of the universal consciousness (tathātva-dārdhyaiṇi), in other words, identity with the perfect I-feeling of Śiva, who is the highest consciousness and whose nature is spanda or the eternal throb of delight in manifestation (hṛdayāya-svabhāva-parasaṁvidātmaka-śiva-vimarṣa-tādātmyam). So kaulika-siddhidāni is that which enables one to have such achievement. In other words, by achieving identity with anuttara, the totality of manifestation becomes like that anuttara itself (pp. 31-32).

This passage does not need any comment.

36. Tr. (partly modified) by J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation, p. 32.
(2) The second interpretation relates to the perception of objects "by means of the body, prāṇa and puryaṣṭaka," i.e. the psychic organs. 

Kaulika-siddhidaṁ, therefore, means that which gives, i.e. brings about the definite grasp of objective and subjective phenomena by means of kula, i.e. by means of the body, prāṇa and puryaṣṭaka. Indeed it is the body, mind, etc. which, through the penetration in them of the energy of the eternal a, i.e. "Śiva," and His externalising Śakti, symbolised by ha, the energy that is beyond the sphere of time and that mounts the intermediate stair of prāṇa, etc. which bring about the success in the form of the definite perception of the existing entities. — p. 33

The implication is that the power to grasp an object is not inherent in the body and its organs, but this power (siddhi) is bestowed (dam) by the central I-consciousness combining Śiva (a) and Śakti (ha), i.e. ahaṁ.

(3) The third meaning takes kaulikasiddhidaṁ in the highest sense of liberation-in-life (jīvanmukti), which brings about spontaneously the supernormal powers (siddhis in the limited sense). This is a participation in the ever-risen Śivahood, as shown by the quote from Somānanda's Śivaddrṣṭi:

bhāvanākaraṇābhyaṁ kīṁ śivasya satatoditeḥ — Śivaddrṣṭi, VII.101

Since Śiva is ever present, what is the use of (spiritual practices such as) contemplation or bodily practice?

(4) The fourth interpretation is cosmological and turns the meaning around: here it is not a question of attaining the perfection of liberation, but of the Absolute manifesting in and as the world. 

Kaulika means kule-jāta, i.e. born or sprung in kula. Siddhi means the achievement of the appearance of diversity. . . .

It is anuttara itself of the nature of eminent Light, which has implicitly within itself the expansion of the universe as identical with consciousness, that explicitly evolves diversity through the abundance of the delight of power issuing from its own unsurpassed freedom. — p. 34
In a way this comes back to the first meaning relating to the way the Supreme Consciousness assumes external form: it is by “coagulation or crystallisation,” āśyāna. The image implied is that the liquidity of pure Consciousness becomes solidified. Jayaratha quotes a verse\textsuperscript{37} making this simile explicit:

\begin{quote}
āśyānaṁ cidrasasyaughah sakāratvam upāgatam
jagadrūpataya vande pratyakṣabhairavam vapuh
\end{quote}

I adore the visible body of Bhairava
in the form of the world
who has assumed concrete form
as a coagulation of the liquid mass of Consciousness.

The motive for this assuming of form is nothing but the Divine Freedom: svātantrya.\textsuperscript{39}

**Immediacy: Explanation of Sadyaḥ**

To complete the first part of the sentence of the question of the Devī, the mode of attaining kaulikasiddhi has to be explained: sadyaḥ, “at once, immediately, instantaneously.” Since Anuttara is the agent bestowing kaulikasiddhi, this act of bestowing cannot be subject to time. In other words, in the context of Anuttara Trika illumination itself cannot be bound by an earlier or later, it has to be sudden, instantaneous and total.\textsuperscript{40}

Abhinavagupta does not rely on the etymology which is derived from “today”: adya, as a unit of time (lit. “on the same day”), since it is a conventional and relative concept of time.

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\textsuperscript{37} From the Yogavāśiṣṭha?

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. also Kṣemarāja, Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya, comm. on sūtra 4: tataḥ cidrasāśyāna-rūpaṁsate tatvamabhuvana bhāvatattvapramātayi prathate, “Then he unfolds himself in the totality of manifestation, viz. principles (tattva), worlds (bhuvana), entities (bhāva) and their respective experiencers (pramātras) that are only a solidified form (āśyānarūpa) of cit-essence.” (Jaideva Singh, p. 55).

\textsuperscript{39} PTV : tatha kulam bodhasyaiva āśyānarūpataya yathāvasthānāṁ bodhasvātantryadēva ca asya bandhābhimānāṁ, p.. 11.

\textsuperscript{40} In this respect the PT and the Vijnāna Bhairava both stand for sudden enlightenment.
So, *sadyaḥ* in this context means at the same instant. Sameness here does not connote sameness of the moment, but rather "terminating in Reality" (*tattvaparasyavasāyī*), for it is in this way that the word *sadyaḥ* is to be understood. Therefore if *sadyaḥ* is to be taken in the sense of "at that very moment," then on account of the limitation of the present moment, the past and future moments would be rejected.

It is the totality implied in *kula/kaulika* which is necessarily beyond time:

For the *kula* (total objectivity) that has been described (so far) is the collective whole (*cakra*) of the rays of the divine Sun, viz. Bhairava and is of the essence of Light (in its external aspect). When, however, that (*kula*) acquires *nirroḍha* (rest, stoppage) by identification with the inner supreme Bhairava Consciousness, then it is full of the relish of the ambrosia of supreme bliss, is *anuttara* (transcendent to all aspects and phases), beyond space and time, eternal of the form of *visarga*, and ever-risen.

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**Anuttara and the Interconnectedness of All Things:**

**The Sūtra: uttarasyāpi anuttaram**

To round off the discussion on Anuttara we have to move to Bhairava’s answer which, in a sense, only reiterates the complete question of the Devī. After addressing her⁴¹ he utters a *sūtra*:

*uttarasyāpi anuttaram*

While giving again different interpretations of *uttara* and *anuttara*, Abhinavagupta develops, in this context, the doctrine of the interdependence or interrelatedness of all things: *sarvāṁ sarvātmakam.*⁴² Taking *sarvāṁ*, the totality, the all, and also a

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⁴¹. This address will be subject of chapter 4.

name of Śiva as encompassing the whole of Reality, as the leading word, he connects it by using the following śloka from the *Mahābhārata* (also found in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*):

\[
\begin{align*}
yasmin sarvam yataḥ sarvam \\
yah sarvam sarvataśca yah \\
yāśca sarvamayo nityaṁ \\
tasmāi sarvātmāne namah
\end{align*}
\]

He takes this verse part by part and connects *sarvam* with *Anuttara* in a genial hermeneutic move. First, he takes the negation of *uttara* in the sense of the impossibility of an answer. If *uttara* is the second part of the text which deals with expansion then a possible meaning is that “even the posterior part of the book cannot offer its answer” (p. 76). And ultimately the answer itself leads into silence:

Even of my answer given in the *pasyantī* stage which is the first expansion of *para* this *anuttara* is the highest truth, i.e. this non-answer (*anuttara*) or silence is the highest truth (p. 76).

Later, in the context of the *sūtra*: *uttarasyāpi anuttaram* (v. 3b) at the beginning of the answer of Bhairava, he goes into the dynamics of *anuttara* in relation to *uttara*.

But the all-inclusive meaning is that where:

*Uttara* may also mean the phenomena — desirables, knowables, and actions — promoted by the trident, viz. *icchā-sakti, jñāna-sakti* and *kriya-sakti*. Anuttara is that stage where all the above and *uttara* cease.

— p. 77

\[
\begin{align*}
uttarasya triśūlapreranādīmayasya yat anuttaram \\
viśrāntisthānam
\end{align*}
\]

The inclusive meaning is again related to the earlier discussed *kaulika vidhi*. Here Abhinavagupta gives another interpretation: *kaulika = kula* and *akula, vidhi = mahāśṛṣṭi*. “The Great Creation” refers to the sum-total of all creations, dissolutions,
etc. in which everything is present. It is simply the All: idam sarvam. He states this all-inclusiveness unequivocally:

Now anuttara is that from which proceeds this "great manifestation," i.e. mahāśrṣṭi which enfolds within itself hundreds of crores of unlimited māyā (phenomenal) creations. As has been said, "That from which proceeds everything." So, this universe consisting of cit-pramātā (i.e. śunya pramātā), citta (i.e. puryaṣṭaka pramātā), prāṇa (i.e. prāṇapramātā), deha (i.e. deha-pramātā, i.e. four kinds of experients), pleasure and pain, i.e. subjective experience, senses, i.e. means of experience, the five elements and jar, etc., i.e. subtle and gross objects of experience abide without difference in one, supreme, divine Consciousness as simply forms of consciousness (bodhātmakena rūpena). Though the divine Universal Consciousness never ceases to exist, for it ceasing, there will be the contingency of universal darkness, yet there does not exist difference consisting of reciprocal absence (of object), for all objects are omnifarious in that state. If all things were not situated in that universal Bhairava Consciousness, then even the initial indeterminate perception which is of use in urging the senses towards their objects would not be there. Therefore, the entire multitude of existents exists there, without the appearance of appropriate objectivity (lit. thisness), identically with I-consciousness only, void of all differentiation. There is absolutely no difference there whatsoever. In that universal Bhairava consciousness, the entire manifestation (kaulika vidhi) lies clearly at rest.
He comments on the first phrase of the Mahābhārata śloka in terms of the Spanda doctrine: yasmin sarvam, in which everything exists.

The universal nature of everything, i.e. the 36 tattvas or levels of reality is contained in Śiva as sāmānya spanda: universal vibration:

All this (universe) consisting of thirty-six categories, though created by Śiva who being of supreme Śakti, is of the nature of universal creative pulsation (sāmānya spanda) rests in that consciousness itself in its own form which is predominantly Śakti, i.e. characterised by particular creative pulsation (viśeṣa spanda).

In spite of that differentiation, "really speaking it is only one, viz. anuttara who is the essence of the creative energy, viz. the autonomous I-consciousness." (p. 78) (vastutaḥ punarekameva svatantracinmayamahamityaiśvaryaśakti-sāram anuttaram, p. 29).

Here Abhinavagupta touches one of the central themes of the Parātrīśikā which is contained in the concept or rather symbol of the heart, as given in the answer by Bhairava:

kauliko 'yam vidhirdevi
mama hṛdyomnyavasthitah I 4 ab

We will come to the theme of the heart and of the central I-consciousness separately (ch. 6).

Abhinavagupta then insists on the unobstructed nature of Anuttara, as shown in the verse from the Spanda Kārikā, which agrees with the Mahābhārata verse:

yatram sthitam idam sarvam kāryam yasmat ca nirgatam
  tasyānāvṛtarūpatvān nirodho 'sti kutracit

— Spanda Kārikā I.2

That in which this All is established, and from which it has come forth — since its nature is unobstructed, there cannot be any obstacle at all.

And he comments:

Even if He (Śiva) is supposed to be obstructed by a cover (e.g. māyā)
He still shines by His freedom in the form of that cover itself, and thus the Lord is always of the nature of knowledge and activity.

— p. 79
In relation to the phrases of the *Mahābhārata* verse he states that the relative pronoun *yat* conveys the sense of all the cases, i.e.: *yasmin sarvam*

*yatra, yataḥ, yasmāt, yah*

Here is another argument from grammar for the all-pervasiveness of *Anuttara*, namely that the cases of (Sanskrit) grammar exhaust all possible relationships, in this case the relationship between *Anuttara* and the cosmic manifestation, the *idam sarvam*.

In the first explanation of this sūtra, Abhinavagupta insists on the meaning of the genitive as "without taking into account," "leaving aside," and understands it in the sense, that "even the higher (*uttara*) is identical with *Anuttara*." R. Gnoli has a note which brings out the meaning implied: "*Uttara* is such in as far as it is identified with *Anuttara*, is an aspect of it, and therefore *Anuttara* is such even without taking it into account, whether it is present or not."⁴⁴ *Uttara*, which implies the empirical reality, cannot exist except in its identification with *Anuttara*:

\[ uttaramapi anuttara tādātmyenaiva bhavennānyathā \]

— p. 28

And therefore even the difference (between the levels of reality, i.e. the empirical *uttara*) is resting only on the non-difference (*bheda hi ayaṃuttararūpa nitarameva abheda-bhuvamadhiśayya tathā bhavet*, ibid.).

In the context of this commentary Abhinavagupta quotes two short phrases by Somananda. One is a comment on Bhairava saying: *kathayāmi*, "I am going to tell/reveal this": The subject is *Bhairava* who says "owing to the eagerness of the enquiry; that it is I who, being present as Consciousness in all, declare this."⁴⁵ The second quote is again expressed in the brevity and directness typical of Somananda’s style:

\[ kīṁ bahunā sarvamevaṇuttaram-anuttaratevāt \]  
— p. 32

What is there to say much? Everything is *anuttara*, because of being *Anuttara*.

⁴⁴. Ibid., p. 49-50 note 151, tr. from Italian.
⁴⁵. Gnoli takes the quote to contain only the first sentence: *kathayāmi iti uccārayāmi utkalikāta iti* (p. 30 of J.S. Skt.).
It sounds as though it were simply a tautological statement,\textsuperscript{46} which comes of course at the end of a whole progressive development (which is missing in the case of Somānanda’s commentary). But is not any true philosophical statement a kind of tautology?

This follows the last phrase of the \textit{Mahābhārata} verse:

\begin{quote}
\textit{yasca sarvamayo nityam}
\textit{tasmai sarvātmane namaḥ} \textsuperscript{1} — p. 32
\end{quote}

He who is eternally present in all things, him, the Self of all, do I adore.

Abhinavagupta inserts an ontology in the whole interpretation by another nirvacana analysis of the word \textit{sadyah} (as occurring in the answer of Bhairava), deriving it from \textit{sat}, being: \textit{sat} + \textit{yah}, he who is the Supreme Lord is that Being, identifying \textit{sat} with \textit{akula}, \textit{anuttara}, \textit{dhruva} (p. 30 Skt., p. 80 tr.).

\begin{quote}
\textit{tadevedam sarvam sat} — \textit{kaulikavidhirūpam}
\end{quote}

All this is Being, in the form of the \textit{kaulikavidhi} (the order of creation).

It is an ontological argument to reach the same conclusion: “No object whatever can exist apart from the pure Bhairava who is both Light of Consciousness (\textit{prakāśa}) and its Reflection (\textit{vimarsa}).” (J.S., tr., p. 80; Gnoli, p. 54). We need not go further into this argument, which he sums up in the phrase of the \textit{sloka}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{yah sarvam}
\end{quote}

Who is all.

At the end of the commentary connecting \textit{Anuttara} with \textit{uttara}, with \textit{kaulikavidhi}, and with \textit{sarvam}, he steps down from the high level of his argumentation to the simple explanation by people “without any knowledge of grammar, logic, traditional teaching and personal experience” (p. 32), summarising the development:

By the use of the words \textit{anuttara}, etc. in one and a half verses, the question pertaining to Śiva has been put. In \textit{hrdayasthā tu yā śaktiḥ} the

\textsuperscript{46} Or a circular argument, the \textit{hetu}, \textit{anuttaratvāt} coincides ontologically with the \textit{pakṣa}. Such \textit{hetus} are called \textit{svabhāva hetu}. In any case the statement need not be construed as an \textit{anumāna}. 
question pertains to Śakti. In that part of the book which contains the answer, viz., śṛṇu devi . . . uttarasyāpyanuttaram, the explanation offered is: "Listen about uttara, i.e. the expansion of Śakti, and also about anuttara, i.e. the expansion of Śiva." In this case, if the explanation is from the point of view of Trika, there arises the contingency of a third question regarding nara.

With this summary ends the bimba part of the text, which he calls even granthāntaram, as if it is another text.
Khecarīsamatā
Harmony with the Energy of Consciousness Moving-in-the-Void

The question of the Devī in verse one is aimed at attaining a state of equality, equilibrium, sameness or harmony (samatā) with the Power called khecarī. Here the problem of translation becomes acute, because none of the proffered translations can satisfy.¹ The reason is the condensed nature of the Sanskrit language, and the richness and multi-layered implications of Tantric symbolism. This Tantric symbolism however goes back to the Veda, as Abhinavagupta himself indicates by equating kha (space, void) with Brahman (p. 38 tr.). Although khecarī becomes a specific concept of the Krama School, the Vedic implications of kha have to be taken into account for its interpretation. Kha means the void, the hollow of the axle-wheel which makes the movement of the wheel possible. If it is empty, the movement is smooth, hence su-kha, if it is blocked, there is obstruction, hence duh-kha. Then kha denotes the open space, the sky, as a synonym of vyoman and ākāśa. The microcosmic correspondence is the inner space in the “cave of the heart” (ḥṛdayākāśa), which, according to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad contains the entire cosmos.² Besides, since the Atharvaveda, kha denotes the (seven or nine) openings or “holes” in the body, and hence stands for the sense organs.³ In the context of Tantra khecarī is related to the “wheel of energies” (sakticakra), which is connected

3. Cf. Atharvaveda X.2.6ab: kahi sapta khaṇi vi tatarda śīrṣāni karnāvīmau nāsike caṅsāṇī mukham | “Who bored out the seven apertures in his head — these ears, the nostrils, the eyes, the mouth?” (tr. W.D. Whitney).
with the senses.⁴ We need not go further in this analysis, but all these meanings have to be kept in mind in understanding khecarī: the absolute Void which is identified with Brahman, symbolised by the sky; the inner space in the heart; the sense organs, and the dynamism of the wheel, strengthened by the suffix -cara/-carī, "moving."

Khecarī is then a Śakti, or rather, the highest dynamism of Anuttara. In the Krama system she is part of a sequence (hence krama) of four manifestations of the Power. In the brief definition of the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa:

The meaning of khecarī is as follows. That Śakti is khecarī, who abiding in kha, i.e. brahma which is identical with herself roams about, i.e. functions in various ways (carati). This khecarī in her universal aspect functions (carati) in three ways. She (as gocarī) brings about a knowledge of objects, (as dikcarī) effects movements, such as grasping, relinquishing, etc., (as bhucarī) exists in the form of objective existents. Thus this khecarī exists as gocarī in the form of antahkaraṇa (the inner psychic apparatus), as dikcarī in the form of bahiśkaraṇa (i.e. outer senses), as bhucarī in the form of objective existents, as (the colour) blue, etc., or subjective existents as pleasure, etc.

Similarly, in the individual aspects, the Śaktis that are known successively as vyomacarī in the void (of consciousness) in which the distinction between subject and object has not yet appeared, as gocarī in the form of antahkaraṇa in which there is just appearance of knowledge, as dikcarī in the form of the outer senses suggesting the appearance of diversity in which state there is diversity of the knower from the knowable object, as bhucarī in the form of bhāvas or existents in which there is preponderance of clear diversity in the objects, are in reality, according to the principle enunciated, non-distinct from khecarī which abides in the essential nature i.e. anuttara. Thus that Śakti of the Supreme Lord is only one. — pp. 38-39

In the context of the Parātrīśikā, khecarī is this One Energy containing all other lower aspects of Her manifestations, that are one with Her.

Now the aim of the question of the Devī is to attain samatā with this Power.

Samatā or sāmya has been variously translated as “equality, sameness, homogeneousness, balance, equanimity,” etc. But according to the grammarian Patañjali sāma does not mean “equal” in a quantitative sense. It means rather “proportionate, fitting, harmonious,” and the example given is quite down-to-earth: if in a dish of dāl the amount of salt would be (quantitatively) equal, the dish would be spoilt. Saying that salt should be sama rather implies, “in right proportion,” so as to create a harmonious taste. Similarly, at another level, the ideal of samatā relates to balance, harmony, a sense of oneness which does not deny the difference of the component elements of the given unity. “The word samatā refers to a vision of universal harmony, of “equality” of all beings, and the equal feelings of compassion and impartiality towards all beings, which is neither stoic indifference nor democratic equality.”

But here the goal is harmony with the Power of Consciousness Moving-in-the-Void: khecarī-samatā. While proposing a detailed interpretation, Abhinavagupta employs a phenomenological and psychological method. He analyses the emotions like passion and anger (kāma-krodha) which are nothing but expressions of the same Power, but which can either lead downward to a state of disharmony (vaiṣamya, the opposite of samatā), or which can lead to union with the Divine Power which is the very source of all emotions. Samatā means also that the lower energies (gocarī, dikcarī, bhūcarī) are not to be seen in separation from the central Consciousness-Power, khecarī:

That very khecarī is perceived separately (from the Divine) in the form of desire, anger, etc. However, the samatā or sameness of khecarī means the perception of her full divine nature everywhere (in śabda or sound, rūpa or form and colour, rasa or taste, gandha or smell, sparśa or contact) because of her being of the nature of perfect Bhairava. Even an iota of the ignorance of the nature of the integral anuttara amounts to a contrary state of the mind. [emphasis mine] It is this contrary state that constitutes transmigratory existence (samsāra). — p. 39

This sentence (in emphasis) is crucial:

Samśāra is nothing but the non-recognition of the unfragmented (avikala, whole) nature of Anuttara which leads to imbalance, disharmony (vaiśamyā). Positively it means that in all experiences and sensations, even the apparently negative ones, the awareness of their oneness with Supreme Consciousness should not be lost sight of. It is the analysis of vaiśamyā which throws light on its opposite, samatā.

When owing to the absence of limitation, the aberration (vaiśamyā) of the modes of the mind caused by the non-recognition of the essential nature ceases, the very states of anger, delusion, etc., appear as only an expression of the consciousness of the perfect, revered Lord Bhairava Himself.

Abhinavagupta adduces some of the oft-quoted phrases by Somānanda in his Śivadṛśṭi:

\[
\text{sukhe duḥkhe vimohe ca sthito 'ham paramah Śivaḥ} \]

— VII.105

Whether in pleasure, in suffering, or in delusion, I abide (in all states) as the Supreme Śiva.

And the phrase which explains that even negative states lead to an expansion of consciousness:

\[
\text{duḥkhe 'pi pravikāsena sthairyārthe dhṛtisamgamāt} \]

— Ibid., V.9

Even in pain there is expansion (of consciousness) with the purpose of steadfastness (or: patience, tranquillity), due to association with firm endurance.

Most of the spiritual practices (dhāraṇā) of the Vijñāna Bhairava, and implicitly of the Parātrīṣikā, are based on the intensification of any experience or emotion which leads to the expansion of consciousness. The same is also propounded by the Spanda Kārika.  

7. Cf. VBh 118.  
When their real nature is known, then these very mental states (such as anger, delusion, etc.) bring about, by the means referred to (viz. khecarī-samatā) liberation in life itself. — p. 41

Psychological observation and spiritual experience show that any emotion at the point of its arising is still in a state of nirvikalpa, before it is manifested externally:9

This is what is meant by the knowledge of their (i.e. the states of desire, anger, etc.) real nature. These states of anger, etc. at the time of their arising are of the form of nirvikalpa, i.e. they are sheer energy of the divine. — p. 41

Khecarī being the collective energies of the Supreme Lord, she contains all experiences, emotions, which are nothing but the rays of the Sun of Consciousness:

Even the states of anger, etc., exist because of their identity with the wondrous play of the (divine) consciousness, otherwise their very existence would be impossible. The divine sense-goddesses themselves carrying out the various plays (of life) are like the rays of Śiva-sun. The sense-divinities by combining among themselves become of innumerable sorts. — p. 40

Abhinavagupta demonstrates this concretely with the example of sexuality which he analyses psychologically and physiologically, with the two concepts: ojas, vital energy, and vīrya, which has to be applied to both sexes as the sexual power.

Now whatever enters the inner psychic apparatus or the outer senses of all beings, that abides as sentient life-energy (cetanarūpeṇa prāṇatmanā) in the middle channel, i.e. suṣumna whose main characteristic is to enliven all the parts of the body. That life-energy is said to be ojas (vital lustre), that is then diffused as an enlivening factor in the form of common sexual power (vīrya) in all parts of the body. Then when an exciting visual or auditory perception enters the percipient, then on account of its exciting power, it fans the flame of passion in the form of the agitation of the sexual power. — p. 42


10. J. Singh translates vīrya as "seminal energy," which limits it to the male only, whereas both sexes are meant, hence the translation "a sexual power."
All sense-experiences are related to this vital energy, so here too the interconnectedness of all things (sārvam sarvātmakam) is applied:

Since everything is an epitome of all things for all people, even memory or idea of a thing can surely bring about agitation because of the excitement of innumerable kinds of experiences like sound, etc. lying subconsciously in the omnifarious mind.

— p. 42

What applies to the excitement of love equally applies to aesthetic experience, both having ultimately as "source of its pleasure the supreme I-consciousness full of creative pulsation, beyond the range of space and time, of the nature of perfect Bhairava-consciousness, the absolute sovereignty, full of the power of bliss" (p. 43). It is again the intensity of the sense excitement which gives the sensibility for beauty: sahṛdayatā.

Excessive delight is possible only to those whose heart is expanded by sexual energy which has the boundless capacity to strengthen sensibility and which is established in them by repeated association with objects of enjoyment.

— p. 43

adhikacamatkārāvesa eva vīryakṣobhātmā sahṛdayatā nayate . . .

— p. 16, ll. 14-15

Since experiences in the realm of the senses, whether sexual or aesthetical, are not only blissful but can turn into pain or grief, even the intensity of despair (as on the death of a loved one) can suddenly be transformed into joy (p. 44).

All these experiences — blissful or painful — partake in the Śakti who resides as kuṇḍalinī in the body, and who is ever in union with Śiva. What happens in such an intense experience is that the two breaths, inbreath and outbreath, get dissolved in the central vein:

When there is the dissolution of prāṇa and apāna (marudādi) in suṣumnā which, as the central channel, is full of the storage of the energy of all the senses, then one's consciousness gets entry into that stage of

11. Skt. p. 16, ll. 5-7: vīryavikṣobha ca vīryasya svamayatvena abhinasyāpi adeśakālakalitaspandamaya-mahāvimarśarūpameva paripūrṇabhairava-saṃvidātmakam svātantryamānanda śaktimayaḥ sukhaprasavabhūḥ
the great central *suṣumnā* channel where it acquires union with the pulsation of one's Śakti (*nijaśakti-kṣobhatādātmyaṁ*), then all sense of duality dissolves, and there is the perfect I-consciousness generated by the abundance of the perfection of one's own inherent Śakti. Then by one's entry into the union of Śiva and Śakti (*rudrayāmalayogānupraveśena*) which consists in the bliss of their essential nature of manifestation, and by one's complete integration with the expansive flow of the energy of the great mantra of perfect I-consciousness, there is the manifestation of the *akula* or *anuttara* (absolute) Bhairava-nature, which is beyond all differentiation (*nistaraṅga*), unalterable and eternal (*dhruvapadātmana*). — p. 44

Even the bliss of sexual union is actually a participation in the Divine union of Śiva and Śakti and it does not depend on the body. It can be experienced in actual physical union or in memory. In confirmation he quotes the *Parātrīśikā* and *Vijñāna Bhairava*.

What this excursus on the relation between the sexual energy and the *khecari* implies is this: All sense-experiences are ultimately connected with or derived from the all-encompassing Divine Energy, and if they are experienced in a state of harmony or oneness (*samatā*), not of alienation or disturbance (*vaisamya*), they lead to the very state of *khecari-samatā*. Nothing is excluded from that consciousness.

The examples given from the field of emotions and sexuality are important because they link the levels of psychology and physiology with the Ultimate:

Therefore, homogeneousness (*sāmya* or *samatā*) of the *khecari-śakti* constitutes liberation. This homogeneousness (sameness) of the *khecari-śakti* is due to the awareness of the essential nature of the *anuttara* (i.e. the unsurpassable, Absolute Reality) which is constantly present and which arises from the bliss of the recognition of the completion of the union of the divine Śakti with Śiva, and acquires stability by the realisation of the consciousness of bliss of both (*ubhayavimarsānandarūḍhi*). — p. 42

From the entire argument it becomes clear that there are basically only two states of the human being in relation to Divine Consciousness: a state of alienation,
imbalance, disturbance, disharmony (vaiśamya),\textsuperscript{12} which is due to inattention, limitation of the I-consciousness (ānava), and a state of unity, harmony, equality with the khecarī-śakti.

The movement from the one to the other, from the bondage of the limited subject to the total freedom of Divine Consciousness is simply described by the Tantra (verse 1) as: yena vijñātamātreṇa, “by mere recognition of this (Anuttara).”

Leaving aside the different interpretation by Abhinavagupta, the quotation given from Somānanda’s Śivadṛṣṭi may suffice to explain this kind of knowledge:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
ekavāram pramāṇena śāstrādvā guruvākyataḥ  

jñāte śivatve sarvasthe pratipattya dṛḍhātmanā  
karaṇena nāsti kṛtyam kvāpi bhāvanayāpivā
\end{center}
\end{quote}

Having once known the all-pervading Śivahood by a firm conviction through reasoning, scripture and the word of the guru, there is nothing to be done any more by means of spiritual practice involving karaṇa and bhāvana.

A Comparative Note

I have translated samatā/sāmya by “harmony,” unlike other translations such as “equality, sameness, uniformity, etc.” The Greek harmonia has music as its basic metaphor. The great philosopher and mystic Plotinus (CE 204/5-270), who has influenced the entire tradition of Platonism and Christian mysticism, has expressed a state of harmony which comes so close to the concept of khecarī samatā that I am inclined to quote it, since it can throw light on the state that is meant also by Abhinavagupta. In Ennead III.6 he writes, in the context of defining virtue and vice:\textsuperscript{13}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} In Latin the best translation would be dissimilitudo, in metaphysics the worldly realm is described by the scholastics as regnum dissimilitudinis, “the reign of dissimilarity or alienation.”

\end{flushright}
Now if we say that "virtue is harmony" and vice lack of harmony, should we be expressing an opinion that accords with the views of the ancients, and would the statement contribute something of no small value to our investigation? For if the natural harmony of the parts of the soul with each other is virtue, and their disharmony vice, then there would be nothing brought in from outside, or from another source, but each part would enter into the harmony just as it is, or would not enter in, and remain in disharmony, because it was the sort of thing it was; just as dancers dance, and sing in accord with each other... so there, too, in the soul there is a harmony when each part does what is proper to it.

Both Plotinus and Abhinavagupta aim at a non-dualistic understanding of harmony and its opposite, with the ethical implications derived from it.
Abhinavagupta's Hermeneutics of the Absolute

Śiva

pramātā – knower, subject
icchā – energy of will

Sakti

pramāṇa – knowledge
jñāna – energy of knowledge
tvam – you

Nara

Prameya – known, object
kriyā – energy of activity
idam – this

Trika: Triadic Relationships
The Three Grammatical Persons and Trika

It is a well-known fact that for Indian philosophers Sanskrit grammar has played a paradigmatic role and has served not only as a hermeneutic device, but also as the model for understanding reality.1 The "close link between thought and language" and the importance of "linguistic and grammatical speculation . . . (which is) unequalled in any other culture"2 has been studied by many scholars3 and has been often contrasted with the Western model,4 based on mathematics and geometry. "The philosopher's frequent adoption of the grammarian's modus operandi,"5 which applies to most of Indian philosophical literature, has been particularly important in the context of the thinkers and authors of non-dualistic Śaivism of Kashmir.

The metaphysical background for the interrelationship between language and reality is the doctrine of the interconnectedness of all things (sarvātmakatva). "Sarvam sarvātmakam" means that the whole is present in each part, that all is related to all, that "all is made of all. No reality may be said to be separate and self-contained, since everything is pervaded by a single nature, Śivatā (as Somānanda insistantly repeats in the Śivadṛṣṭi) or the Power. Thus there do not really exist

1. Cf. also Betty Heimann, Facets of Indian Thought, esp. ch. XI. Indian Grammar and Style, pp. 154-77.
separations or confines of any kind, there is nothing that remains definitively excluded from this circulation of the dynamism of Consciousness.”

Abhinavagupta finds the ideal paradigm for establishing the reality of the Triad of Trika: Śiva-Sakti-Nara in the grammatical as well as psychological structure of the three persons:

I — you — he/she/it

aham — tvam — tat (idam, saḥ, sā)

The exegetical context is the explanation of the address of Bhairava to the Devī (v.3a): śṛṇu devi . . . . First he goes into the aspect of hearing: “The highest goddess hears everything. Abiding as she does in the form of the power of hearing, she has that sovereign power (svātantrya) which consists in effecting congruous and suitable connection by blending all sounds in a meaningful whole.”

The next starting point for interpretation is the vocative, “O Goddess!,” and hence the fact that Śiva in the first person addresses Devī in the second person, as a “thou.” Here follows both the grammatical and psychological proof for Trika:

Everything in the universe consists of the triad. That, which is only confined to itself (as an object), is insentient and comes chiefly under the category of nara, as for instance, “the jar is lying (on the ground).” The above has reference only to the third person (prathama puruṣa) which is left to be supplied after the first and second person (śeṣāḥ).

In the continuation of this passage Abhinavagupta is aiming at overcoming the dichotomies (we could also say “trichotomies”) usually attached to the three grammatical persons, and he does it by showing the fluidity of the usage of the personal pronouns, as they are interconnected and flow one into the other. However, although the flow can be in any direction, ideally it is from below upwards, from the third, inert, person, to the second and finally to the first person: aham. However, passing through the second person is necessary in both ways: from the third person (object) to the first (subject), and vice versa.

7. Jaideva Singh, tr., p. 68.
The grammatical structure of the vocative provides the occasion for analysing the second person in relation to the first:

That which appears even as “this,” when addressed, becomes completely enveloped with the I-feeling of the addressee. The “this” which is different from the addressee, when addressed as “you,” becomes a form of Śakti. In “you are standing” this is the meaning of the second person, and the principle of addressing, viz. as I am standing, even so “this is standing.” Ordinarily, the I (ahambhāva) of the other person is different from the “I” of the person who is to be addressed, but in the process of addressing, the addressee assimilates the delightful autonomy of the addressed characterised by I-feeling to his own, and considering it as identical with the uninterrupted delight of his own I-feeling starts addressing him. In this light, he is addressing him in the true sense of the second person. This sense in which the addressee and the addressed, though different, become one in the act of addressing is indicative of the parāparā goddess (whose characteristic is identity-in-diversity). — pp. 70-71

The entire argument rests on the importance given to the (absolute, ultimate) “I” in the system of Trika and Pratyabhijñā, developed most vigorously by Utpaladeva, who states in his Ajaḍapramatṛ Siddhi:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{prakāśasyātmaviśrāntirahambhāvo hi kṛtitaḥ II} \\
\text{uktā saiva ca viśrāntīḥ sarvāpeksānirodhataḥ I} \\
\text{svātantryamatha kārtītvam mukhyamīśvaratāpi ca II}
\end{align*}
\]

The resting in the self of the pure Light is called I-consciousness. It is called “repose” because it is free from all dependency and independent of any other agency or lordship. — vv. 22cd-23

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8. Cf. Torella, Introduction to Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā, p. XXIX: “Utpaladeva is one who chose to use this word (i.e. aham), regardless of the associations generally attached to it in Indian thought, being aware of the fact that the risk of reification that has always weighed heavily on the word ātman was even more negative, and that this makes it less suitable for expressing the unpredictable overflowing of the divine personality. The term “I” is implicitly aimed against the two conceptions that are, after all, closest to the Pratyabhijñā and which it most aspires to differentiate itself from: the consciousness devoid of a subject of the Vijñānavāda and the static ātman-Brahman of the Vedānta.”
And he adds in his own *Vṛtti*:

> It (the absolute) is established in consciousness (*sarhvit*), therefore it is a repose in nothing but the own being of consciousness; and this is (precisely) called the "I-feeling" (*ahambhāva*) of the nature of the awareness of the fullness of the "I."

In the *Vīvarāṇa*, Abhinavagupta supports this pre-eminence with reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

> In the freedom of the uninterrupted delight of I-consciousness completely independent of any reference to anything else, expressed in the form "I am standing," it is in every respect (*sarvathā*) the revered *para* (highest) *sakti* that is at work. In that lies the pre-eminence of the first person. As it has been said, "Since I transcend the perishable and also the imperishable, therefore, am I known as the highest *puruṣa*, i.e. as the first person." — *BhG*, XV, 18°

> Here the verb *asmi* (am) has been used with reference to "I," the first person, to indicate its pre-eminence over both the perishable and the imperishable. — p. 71

But the possible misunderstanding in confusing the ultimate "I" with the limited I-consciousness (*mita-pramāty*) has to be removed immediately:

> Here in every case, it is not the limited I identified with the body that is referred to. The limited I (identified with the body) being an object of the senses is obviously incompatible with that (the real, unlimited I). Thus this (i.e. unlimited) I is of the nature of the self-luminous Śiva. Therefore of the (universal, unlimited) Consciousness (*bodha*) which is self-luminous, there is neither any diminution nor augmentation. Both diminution and augmentation being of the

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9. Abhinavagupta’s commentary on this verse in his *Gītarthasamgraha* is revealing in this context.

Cf. also *BhG* XV.15: *sarvasya cahān hṛdi samṛitiṣṭho maitreḥ śnṛtirjanānamapoḥanam ca* ! And Abhinavagupta’s commentary: “I am the heart (*hṛdaya*) of all knowables such as a jar, etc. That heart is of the nature of consciousness of freedom (*svātantrya*), which contains within itself all objects. In that heart, *vimarṣa* takes the form of *aham*. And from that *vimarṣa* emerges knowledge in the form of *mahāsṛṣṭi*, which is that which did not exist before.” (tr. Boris Marjanovic, p. 305).
nature of aprakāśa cannot be an aspect of the Light of Consciousness (lit. cannot enter consciousness). The middle state which is only relative to the state of diminution and augmentation is also nothing. Therefore the notion of I, which is inseparable from the universal consciousness of Śiva (tadbodhavicchedarūpa) and free from all relativity is not applicable to situations of augmentation, diminution, and the middle state between these indicated by thisness, i.e. objectivity and absence of objectivity.

This classification is not only of philosophical importance, it has far-reaching consequences as well in the psychological and social fields. There it is mostly not the true, i.e. spiritual “I” which operates, but the ahamkāra, the artificial (krtrima) ego which clashes with other egos, as long as they have not realised their essential oneness in the universal I (pūrṇahanta). Psychologists know exactly what is meant by the diminution or augmentation of the I as ego: the first leading to depression and loss of self-confidence; and the second leading to maniacal and egocentric behaviour. Both are obviously far removed from the true central I-consciousness or ahambhāva.

But the I-thou is not denied as a real personal relationship. In fact, the first and second persons are so close to each other as grammar has laid it down (not only in Sanskrit but practically in all languages):¹⁰

The notion of “you” i.e. the second person which, though indicative of separateness, is actually similar to that of “I.” “Therefore both you and I are described as genderless” (i.e. they are used for both genders). The application of number, etc., i.e. dual and plural of these words according to the usage depending on the enumeration or difference of the body is appropriate from the point of view of parāparā sakti in the dual and aparā-sakti in the plural. The difference determined by the sakti of the Divine freedom is considered as one in the case of several bodies which can be traced in such usages as “we two, you two, we all, you all.”

Augmentation, etc. being associated with the body cannot be even figuratively

¹⁰ In German the verb sein (to be) is declined as: ich bin — du bist — er ist, where the second person (du) combines the first and the third: bi(n)+ist=bist. (I owe this idea to Arindam Chakravarti).
employed in the case of consciousness, for diminution and augmentation cannot be reasonably applied to consciousness.

But if we speak of interpersonal relationship at the level of I-you, what about the (so-called) third person which is considered to be insentient (jaḍa)?

"Everything is an epitome of all." According to this universal principle, even the insentient third persons (nărātmanto jaḍa api) shedding their insentiency can become entitled to [share in] the use of second and first person (sakti-saivārupabhājo bhavanti), for instance, in "listen, O mountains," the third person has been treated as second person, in "of mountains, I am Meru," the third person has been treated as the third person. The second person which pertains to sakti, can be shedding its sakti character, acquire the aspect of the third person, for instance, in "you whose fear has vanished, are fortitude (lit. the power of fortitude) itself," "you" not being used as a form of address has appropriately acquired the aspect of the third person. Usage like bhavān (you) with particular, subsequent use of words like pādah, guravah (revered one) which are used only in the case of another person, being used as third person which is characteristic of nara is fairly recognised. The second person also which is characteristic of sakti, shedding its particular use acquires the aspect of first person which is characteristic of Śiva, for instance, "O dear friend (female friend), O loved one, thou art I" is an accepted usage. The first person characteristic of Śiva, shedding its aspect of first person which is cit, also betakes to the aspect of the third person characteristic of nara, or second person characteristic of sakti. In the following expressions, "Who am I?" "this one am I," "O I," "Fie to me," "O to me" etc. the uninterrupted autonomy of I is subdued, and it is chiefly the separate "this one" that becomes predominant. In such a case, it is as if separateness characteristic of aparā sakti, in other words, nara or third person that becomes prominent. In "O I," etc., Śiva contacts the throb of parāparā sakti (i.e. enters the sphere of second person). But in such cases, the preceding state acquires the succeeding state without transgressing its previous nature. Thus the third person characteristic of nara can clearly mount to the stage of the second (the Śakti stage) and even to the first

person (i.e. Śiva stage) but the contrary course of mounting cannot be admissible. — pp. 72-73

The entire argument of this passage is based on the usage of language in which the three persons flow and get merged into one another. This implies personal relationships even with things — again a common psychological phenomenon — and it implies objectifying the subjective and subjectifying the objective experience.

Among the many identifications of Kṛṣṇa with the most eminent among any group of things or persons in the Gītā, Abhinavagupta has here given only an example, but in fact the entire procedure of identification with the (Divine) "I" illustrates the same principle of transforming the inert third person into the all-encompassing first person, passing through the second. The "it," "he" or "she" becomes personified as a "you" and is then assumed into the "I," the true subject. In terms of Trika, Nara becomes personalised as Śakti and internalised in Śiva.

The identification of the "I" of Kṛṣṇa with different objects also reveals another aspect, that of symbolisation. The "I" or self is after all only experienced in one’s own interiority, as Abhinavagupta along with many other Indian philosophers stresses. Even in the most abstract of thinkers, e.g. in Vedānta, the self (atman) is expressed by a number of images, most of them taken from the Upaniṣads. Thus the grammatical abstraction is filled with symbols and images of the "I," and these images are again a third person assumed into the first.

In terms of Trika we have seen that the first person is at the level of Śiva, of Parā Śakti; the second person is at the level of Śakti and of Parāparā Śakti, and the third person at the level of Nara and Aparā (see table). Obviously, Śakti and Parāparā are mediating between the third and the first person, both ways.

The grammatical argument for Trika is further strengthened by referring to the numbers: singular for Śiva, dual for Śakti, plural for Nara.

12. Bhagavad-Gītā X.21-38. It is surprising that Abhinavagupta, in his commentary on the Gītā (Gitārthasamgraha) does not use this text for a commentary in the sense of the absolute "I." In the end (on verse 42) he only stresses the implicit non-duality of these statements (cf. tr. p. 236).

Each of this triad, without giving up its nature, becomes of three forms, viz. singular (Śiva-bhāva), dual (Śakti-bhāva) and plural (nara-bhāva). It has been said,

“One thing becomes dual, and after becoming dual, it becomes plural.” Of one and the same thing, when it is only one, then it connotes the nature of Śiva, since there is no other as counterpart. When there is a counterpart, then it is the nature of Śakti. In the case of many denoting difference, there is the nature of nara. Thus we have ghāṭāḥ, one jar denoting oneness, and thus Śiva-bhāva, ghāṭau, two jars, denoting Śakti-bhāva, ghāṭāḥ, many jars, denoting the aspect of nara. In a copulative compound (dvandva samāsa) in which the members, if uncompounded, would be in the same case and connected by the conjunction “and,” we have an example of many things forming a sort of unity, thus denoting Śiva, e.g. ghāṭapapāpāśānāḥ (jar, cloth, stones). In a verb also, e.g. tiṣṭhati (one is standing or sitting) denotes Śiva: tiṣṭhataḥ (two are standing or sitting) denotes Śakti, tiṣṭhanti (many are standing or sitting) denotes nara. In fact, the entire manifestation is the expansion of kriyāśakti brought about by the one alone (i.e. by Śiva). As has been said:

“By reducing the many (i.e. the nara-rūpa and śakti-rūpa to the one (i.e. Śiva-rūpa) who is there who will not be liberated from bondage?”

Therefore, when the third person (nara), the second person (Śakti) and the first person (Śiva) are used together, simultaneously, there is the absorption of the lower in the higher and higher, because it is the higher that contains the truth of the lower, e.g. in sa ca tvāṁ ca tiṣṭhataḥ (he and you are standing), the number of the verb sthā (to stand) is used in the second person which indicates that the third person (nara) has been absorbed in the second (śakti). In sa ca tvāṁ ca āhaṁ ca tiṣṭhāmah (he, you and I are standing), the verb tiṣṭhāmah which is the plural number of the verb in the first person has been used even for the third and the second person which is indicative of the fact that the third and second person are absorbed in the first.

The pre-eminence of oneness over multiplicity, and of pure subjectivity over objectivity, reflects the non-dual nature of the Trika system.

If language is a mirror of (metaphysical) reality, it cannot be confined to Sanskrit
alone, and Abhinavagupta is quite conscious of it in making the observation as under:

It is only this state of complete understanding, the essence of the residual traces of the innate, perfect I-consciousness which is followed by the grammarians in their descriptive rules. Similarly, even in local dialects, e.g. the language (e.g. Pāli) used by the Buddhists or used in Āndhra or Dravidian region, this manner alone of speech and meaning (lit. expressed by words) which originally follows the instinctive feeling of the heart, conveys by its delightful impression this form (viz. the form of nara, Śakti and Śiva) or understanding.

Abhinavagupta summarises his insight into the importance of language by quoting himself (a fragment not traced in his published works), in the incomplete version of the KSTS edition:

... na hṛdayāṅgagāmāmiṇī gīth

reconstructed by Swami Lakshman Joo to:

na sā gīryā na hṛdayāṅgagāmāmiṇi¹⁴

and translated by Jaideva Singh as:

That is no speech which does not reach the heart directly.

— p. 74

He then sums up the entire argument in terms of Trika:

So in every way, this kind of comprehension is innate. As has been said: "Without the form of nara, Śakti and Śiva (tair), there is neither word, nor meaning, nor mental movement."

In Malinītviṣiyatāntara also, it has been said:

As the one Śakti of Śiva (sāmbhoḥ śaktirekaiva śāṅkart) abides, presiding over the entire class (of words, in first, second and third person), even so has she been related unto you. — III, 34

In Tantrasamuccaya also, it is said:

¹⁴. As contained in the text ed. by J. Singh, p. 27. Gnoli translates the first version by: "La parola rivela il cuore" (the word reveals the heart), p. 49.
This universe is established always and is in every way involved in third person (nara), second person (Sakti) and first person (Siva) both in the dealings of worms and the all-knowing.

Thus this universe consisting of the bearer of third, second and first person designations (nara-sakti-sivatmakam) has been explained according to the teaching of the traditional clear comprehension. This all-inclusive order of experience (sarvaṁsahā pratiḥapattikramah) consisting of the third, second and first persons has been manifested by the free will of the highest Lord. — p. 74

On the strength of the argument from grammar Abhinavagupta succeeds in showing the interdependence of the three categories of Trika, but also their ultimate identity in the pervasive nature of the Divine Subject. He concludes with his characteristic self-irony, trying to stop himself from any further elaboration:

So enough of elaboration of a topic which can appeal to the hearts of only a few people who have received the teaching from a guru, who are of refined taste, who are well-read (lit. who have heard from the learned people a great deal), and who have been purified by the descent of the Supreme grace. So, "listen, O goddess" has been explained. — p. 74

We find a wonderful theistic confirmation of the validity of the argument of the three persons and corresponding personal pronouns in Kšemarāja’s commentary on Utpaladeva’s Śivastotrāvalī (III.14):

\begin{align*}
\text{uttamaḥ puruṣo 'nyo 'sti} \\
\text{yuṣmatccheśaviśeṣitah} \\
\text{tvam mahāpuruṣastvēko} \\
\text{niḥśeśapuruṣāśrayah} \\
\end{align*}

The "first person" is distinguished from the "second person" and from the "third person" as well. You alone are the Great Person, the refuge of all persons. — Tr. Bailly

Commentary: It is well-known that Hari (Viśṇu) is the Supreme Person (puruṣottama): He is characterised as second person (and the other grammatical persons) — by "you" — in the case of (all) the subjects who are the superintending (persons) of the non-
differentiated essence of all knowledge, being attained through the essential nature of another superintending self — this is well-defined.

Thus the Āgama also says: "He is called Viśṇu by the Vaiśṇavas."

"You are the Great Person, because of your being the support (substratum) of all persons, from Sakala up to Sadāśiva." By the word "other" he implies a different meaning. "One" means "non-dual." This is one meaning of the verse.

On the other hand, according to the grammatical method, that which is the first person in the sense of asmad, he is characterised as second and third person, i.e. he becomes differentiated. He (i.e. Mahāpuruṣa) is special because, reflecting on the isolated first person, due to its inclination, it has the sense of the second person. That which is the support (substratum) of all persons is the state of repose.

Having reflected on the objectivity of everything, and resting only in subjectivity, as when one wants to say: "he cooks, you cook and I cook," one expresses it by saying: "we cook" one should notice that in such a (grammatical) usage, this is the intended meaning. For you are the support (substratum) of all persons, i.e. the first, second and third persons, being of the nature of unconditioned consciousness underlying all conditioned persons.

Therefore, when there is the reflective awareness "that is seen by me, that was seen by me," "this," "that," the two elements though divided into perceiving subject and perceived object are manifested within the (true) cogniser (pramātṛ, subject).

— Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kārikā I.4.8 (tr. Torella)

Therefore (you alone are) Mahāpuruṣa, the Great Lord, because, like Mahādeva, the word mahat is applied to you only.

Besides using the same argument as Abhinavagupta does, namely, that the collective plural of the first, second and third person takes the form of the first person plural, thus indicating the pre-eminence of the first person, what is significant in the passage above is the statement about the Mahāpuruṣa being uttama puruṣa and

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15. I.e. all the subjects, from the limited individual up to the level of Sadāśiva in the scale of the tattvas.
being the substratum of all persons. This is so because He alone is unconditioned consciousness, whereas all other persons are conditioned.

The whole theme has of course been elaborated by Utpaladeva in his Īśvarapratyābhijñā Kārikā and Vṛtti, and by Abhinavagupta in his commentaries, but this much may suffice to show the grammatical argument for establishing (a) the universality of Trika, and (b) the Divine, absolute “I” being pure Consciousness underlying all persons and their relationships.

The psychological, social and spiritual implications of these arguments for the distinctness as well as the interconnectedness of the three persons, based on grammatical usage, are far-reaching, because no person, no living being and even no inert thing is isolated, since their true relationship is located in the Divine I, the Consciousness underlying everything. Nothing is excluded, neither plurality nor the internal ontology of each person. Thus the closer a person comes spiritually to the central I-consciousness, abandoning the limited ego, the more he or she is connected and interconnected with the whole of reality: sarvam sarvatmakam.16

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<tr>
<th>Trika</th>
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<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Parā</td>
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<td>singular</td>
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<td>Śakti</td>
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<td>Nara</td>
<td>Aparā</td>
<td>idam/sah/sā</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 A different, more historical and sociological approach to the notion of person and personhood has been elaborated by A. Sanderson in his article: “Purity and power among the Brahmins of Kashmir”, in: The Category of the Person, eds. M. Carrithers, S. Collins, S. Lukes, Cambridge University Press 1985, pp. 190-216.
The Heart and the Resting Place of I-Consciousness

The Heart (ḥṛd, ḥṛdaya) is a central symbol of both Tantra and Vivaraṇa. Calling it a symbol indicates the multi-layered meanings which make it more pervasive than any other "concept" of the text, and in a sense, of the Trika and Parā traditions. Two of Abhinavagupta's maṅgalāślokas (v. 1 and 3) have already shown the depth of meaning (chapter one). The brief definition which Abhinavagupta gives in commenting on the word ḥṛdayasthā (sakti) in verse 2 of the question of the Devī shows the many layers of meaning. Here he analyses the adjective to Śakti in three parts: ḥṛt — aya — sthā:

Ḥṛt is the supreme foundation of the nature of consciousness of all objective experiences like blue, etc. and subjective experiences like pleasure, etc. and also of the empirical experients conditioned by the body, prāṇa and buddhi. Aya (plural of aya) means knowledge of manifold, varied objects like jar, cloth, etc. brought about by its own freedom. Sthā means this scintillating sakti abiding in them. So ḥṛdayasthā means the radiating Energy abiding in the knowledge of varied objects brought about by the supreme conscious base of all objective and subjective experiences and experients by its own freedom.

The very dynamism of this explanation shows the inclusiveness and vastness of this conception of the Heart. Before going into a more detailed explanation with reference to other relevant texts, we may give a survey of the occurrences of ḥṛd/

1. In agreement with P. Muller-Ortega who has devoted a monograph on the Heart, with reference to the Laghuvarṭti.
hrdaya in the Tantra itself:

Verse 2: hrdayastha, referring to the Śakti (as given above)
Verse 4: mama hrdayomni . . . Bhairava’s answer: “in the space/ether of my heart.”
Verse 10: hrdayairn bhairavatmanah: the heart of the nature of Bhairava
Verse 11: hrdayam devadevasya: the heart of the God of gods = the mantra called hrdayabija = SAUH
Verse 25: hrdayabijastham . . . The mantra SAUH
Verse 27: hrdaya: with reference to, nyāsa performed on the parts of the body, hence the bodily location
Verse 35: hrtpadmāntargatam dhyāyet: one should meditate on the inner space in the lotus of the heart.

Thus in the Tantra we find already several levels of meaning which Abhinavagupta is explaining in the commentary.

The Heart is introduced both by the question of the Devī in verse 2 and by the answer of Bhairava in verse 4. She introduces her question by addressing the Lord in very personal terms, in the sūtra:

etad guhyam mahāguhyam kathayasva mama prabho

Abhinavagupta analyses mahāguhyam in two ways:

Tell me this secret, this great mystery, my Lord.
or:
Tell me this secret, this great unhidden one . . . , splitting in mahā-a-guhyam.

These two meanings again show the double nature of the revelation of the Tantra which is both hidden and also obvious, open for all.
This is a secret mystery, because of its not being evident, for though it abides in guhā (cavern) or māyā in which the essential nature remains unknown, it is not evident. Moreover, it is largely unhidden, for it is known to everyone as the source of delight. (In its ultimate analysis), it is the goddess suddha-vidyā herself who abides undivided in the different states of knower (subject), knowledge, and knowable (object). The three-cornered one, however, becomes in the state of māyā, percipient of differentiation which is excessively reflected therein. Maya also, being the source of the emanation of the universe, is actually divine knowledge (suddha-vidyā or śiva-vidyā) itself. Therefore, according to the principle enunciated, this suddha-vidyā or divine knowledge, when not known in this aspect, is called mahāguhā (the great cavern), because of her being three-cornered in the form of knower, etc. (that appear as different) on account of her exalted state of non-differentiation being concealed from view. In the Trika Śāstra, she alone (viz. suddha-vidyā māyā) is, actually, the object of worship as the three-cornered divinity.

— pp. 53-54

Although Abhinavagupta equates hrdaya with māyā, yet in the Upaniṣads guhā is a synonym for heart. In the benedictory verse to his Paramārthasāra, Abhinavagupta invokes the Supreme (param) which is one and has entered many caverns, i.e. hearts: ekam nivistam bahudha guhasu. But here he takes māyā in the sense of suddha-vidyā (the first tattva of the “pure” order in ascent) and as the source of manifestation (mahāguhāyām suddhavidyamayyām mahā-sṛṣṭirūpāyām jagajjanmabhūmau sva-camatkārārūpena bhavati, p. 18). In a typical nirvacana word-play he takes mahā as the reversal of aham, hence m-ha-a.

Now in this great cavern of māyā, whose heart is full of pure divine wisdom (suddha-vidyā), which is the vast creative movement, the origin of the emergence of the entire universe, the return movement in the form of maha-a that occurs by its own inherent dynamism of delight is, indeed, a great secret. By means of this secret it is intended to indicate that there is a return movement from objective manifestation indicated by ma (nara) and ha (sakti) towards the essential nature (of the Self), which ends in the repose of Self-consciousness, signifying thereby divine Freedom or in other words

2. Cf. Taittiriya Upaniṣad II.1.1; Kaṭha Upaniṣad I.14, II.20, III.1, etc., Mūndaka Upaniṣad II.1.10; III.1.7; Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad II.10, III.20; etc.

uninterrupted Bhairava-consciousness indicated by a. Of manifestation, the delightful form of the energy of the natural, innate mantra known as para vak (the Supreme divine utterance) is I (aham).

If aham, the central I-consciousness, is the abode of rest of all manifestation, ma-ha-a symbolises the return movement to the source of creation. He quotes Utpaladeva’s Ajaḍapramāṭī Siddhi:

The repose of all manifested phenomena in the Self is said to be I-consciousness (APS 22), i.e. the real I-feeling is that in which in the process of withdrawal, all external objects like jar, clothes, etc. being withdrawn from their manifoldness come to rest or final repose in their essential, uninterrupted anuttara aspect. This anuttara aspect is the real I-feeling (ahambhilva).

The entire symbolism of the aham is contained in this brief commentary:

In the process of expansion, the changeless, unsurpassable, eternal, reposeful venerable Bhairava, is of the form a which is the natural, primal sound, the life of the entire range of letter-energies (sakalakalājāla-jīvanabhūtah). He in the process of expansion assumes the ha form (the symbol of Śakti), for expansion (visarga) is of the form of ha, i.e. Kuṇḍalinī Śakti, and then he expands into a dot (bindu) symbolising objective phenomena (nara rūpena) and indicative of the identity of the entire expansion of Śakti (i.e. the entire manifestation) with Bhairava.

Aham and ma-ha-a contain the three elements of Trika, which means the totality, and they represent the two movements of manifestation and withdrawal.

Coming to the interpretation of mama hṛdaya-vyomni in the answer of Bhairava, he defines hṛdaya as  

mameti yat etat hṛdayam sarvabhāvānāṁ sthānam pratiṣṭhādhāma

That which is my heart is the locus, foundational effulgent abode of all existing things.

All things exist because of having their foundation in consciousness:

First interpretation: In mamahṛdayavyoma, hṛdaya means the receptacle of innumerable objects like blue, etc.; vyoma means that where the universe of
particular objects (mamakarätmakarè viśvam) is viśta, i.e. held wholly in an implicit manner in that ether which is devoid of all difference (śunyaśrāpām).

Second interpretation: Mama means “of the consciousness which expresses itself both in difference (apara-saṃvitti) and non-difference itself both in difference (para-saṃvitti)” ; hṛdayam means the final resting place, i.e. I — aham. — p. 78

That the Supreme Goddess, Parā, Anuttarā, is herself the Heart is clearly stated in the Tantrāloka, linking up all the previously discussed concepts. In the translation by A. Sanderson:

So this universe is a reflection in the Lord, in the perfectly reflective void of Bhairava’s consciousness, [and arises] under the influence of nothing outside [that consciousness]. This ability of the Lord to embody himself as the universe without drawing on anything outside [his own nature] is the supreme goddess that [our masters] call “creativity” (pratibhāṁ), “the feminine ultimate” (anuttarām). It is the supreme Power of Universality (kaulikī śaktiḥ), the ability of this (asya) deity (devasya) [Bhairava] {embodied in the sound a (akulasya)} to manifest the universe (kulaprathanaśālinī) [though] {transcending it (akulasya)}, the power with which the Lord is ever one (aviyukto yāya prabhuh). The power of Bliss (ānandaśaktiḥ) [=ā] is the combination (yāmalaiṁ rūpam) of these two, the “passionate embrace” (samghaṭṭah) out of which the universe is emitted [into consciousness]. This is the [ultimate] reality beyond both the universe-transcending and the universal (parāparāt paraṁ tattvam). It is “the Goddess” (devī), “the Essence” (sāram) and “the Heart.”

It is the highest (paraḥ), omnipotent (prabhuh) state of absolute potential (visargah).

— Tantrāloka III.67-69 (In: Sāmarasya, p. 98)

And Sanderson summarises:

The heart that Abhinavagupta invokes as the source of inspiration and the goal to be realised is, then, the state of absolute potential (visargah) in which the three powers of will, cognition, and action, and the three modes of plurality, synthesis, and non-duality, are fused in blissful, all-embracing consciousness.

— Ibid., p. 98

The symbol of the heart cannot be separated from the ultimate or supreme I-consciousness, which is the power of the mantra: mantra-vīrya = aham. In the context of the mantra in āñavopāya or the “individual means” in the Tantrāloka, Abhinavagupta calls it “the great Heart.”
The spontaneous "resonance" (dhvani) of this (consciousness) due to its nature of (universal) self-awareness (parāmarśa) is ever arisen — and this is called the "supreme, great Heart" (paramāṁ hṛdayaṁ mahat).

— TĀ IV.181b-182a

Jayaratha: This "resonance" arising spontaneously is of the nature of the Supreme Word (parāvāgrāpā) — it is the (cosmic and inner) sound (nāda) consisting of I-consciousness.

This self-awareness (svavimarśa) which resides in the Heart in which the universe is completely dissolved is experienced at the beginning and at the end of any act of perceiving objects and it is designated as "universal vibration (of Consciousness)" (sāmānyaspanda) in the Śāstras. It is of the nature of an upsurge in one's own Self.

— Comm. on IV.182b-183

Abhinavagupta does not let any occasion go without hinting at the experiential aspect, without which the description would be merely theoretical. Thus he hints at the occasions when this svavimarśa or parāmarśa can be experienced: at the moments when a sensation arises, or when it ends. The practical examples to fix the awareness on these moments are given in the Vijnana Bhairava, e.g. the well-known verse 118, where even the moments at the start and ending of sneezing can become occasions for enlightenment. At these moments the sāmānyaspanda underlying every experience can be contacted.

Then follows the "definition" of spanda, the very dynamism of universal Consciousness:

This (spanda) is a slight movement, sphurāṇa, scintillating, not dependent on any other. It is a wave in the ocean of Consciousness, and Consciousness cannot be without (waves).

It is the nature of the ocean to be either waveless (calm) or with waves and other movements.

(Thus) this (Heart or Self-awareness) is the essence (sāra), because this insentient universe has Consciousness as its essence (citsāraṁ jadam jagat), it depends on it, because (Consciousness) is its foundation, and its essence is the "great Heart" (tatsāraṁ hṛdayaṁ mahat).

— TĀ IV.184-186a

What this dense passage indicates clearly is the inherent dynamism of the universal Heart, which is identical with self-awareness, with universal vibration, and hence
with the consciousness-nature of the whole of Reality. As we have noted in other passages, although other important concepts are used, the whole description leads up to the heart — as if it evoked more than such words as essence (sāra), consciousness (samvit, cit), and others do. This confirms again the symbol-character of the Heart: it is dynamic, pulsating, resounding, and yet still, it is the core (sāra), being the unifying “locus” of consciousness.

At the very end of his Vivaraṇa, Abhinavagupta sums up with a definition of the “supreme heart”:

\[
\text{yatṛantarakhilam bhāti yacca sarvatra bhāsate} \\
\text{sphurattaiva hi sā hyēkā hṛdayam paramam budhāḥ} \quad — \text{p. 99}
\]

That in which the whole universe shines and which shines (itself) everywhere, that scintillating Light is verily the One, Supreme Heart (say) the wise.

After giving the strange example of the copulation of a male and a female ass (taken from a Tantra), Abhinavagupta comes to mention the state of union experienced in the rising of kuṇḍalinī in the suṣumṇā:

\[
tathobhayamahānanda sauṣumṇahṛdayāntare \\
spandamānamupāśita hṛdayam sṛṣṭilakṣaṇam \quad — \text{p. 99}
\]

In the heart = in suṣumṇā, there is the great bliss experienced by (the union of) both (expansion and contraction), meditate on that heart full of vibration, characterised by creation.

\[
dhāyansmaranpravimśan kurvanvā yatra kutracit \\
viśrāntimetī yasmāca prollassedhṛdayam tu tat \quad — \text{p. 99}
\]

Whether meditating, remembering, reflecting or acting in any way, that in which everything comes to rest and from where it arises, that is the Heart.

Jayaratha identifies the spontaneously sounding dhvani with the Supreme Word, which is at the same time the inner sound of the nature of I-awareness: ḫhaḥ khalu parāvārūpāḥ svarasadīto dhvaniḥ — ahamparāmarṣatmā nādaḥ (TĀ vol. III, p. 827).
As the following passage shows, "the great Heart" is again identified with the heart-mantra SAUH (TĀ IV.186b-189a). We shall come to that theme in the context of the core mantra (chapter nine).

But the symbol of the Heart is so powerful that it often comes at the end of a whole development as a matter of crowning, and in a way self-explanatory, expression. This is already the case with Utpaladeva's oft-quoted Kārikās in his Īśvarapratyabhijñā Karika.

Consciousness has as its essential nature reflective awareness (pratyavamarṣa); it is the supreme Word (parāvāk) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty (aiśvaryam) of the supreme Self.

Vṛtti: — This is the First Word (ādyā vāc), in which the expressible is undifferentiated, without beginning or end in that it is constituted by perpetual consciousness, autonomous. This is pure freedom, independent of any other reality, which has the name of "sovereignty." — 13 —

It is the luminous vibrating (sphūrattā), the absolute being (mahāsattā), unmodified by space and time; it is that which is said to be the heart (ḥṛdayam) of the supreme Lord, in so far as it is his essence.

Vṛtti: — It is, by nature, luminous vibrating, it is the subject of this luminous vibrating; it is not to be understood as the counterpart of non-being (abhāvapratiyogini) [but] it also pervades non-being; it is existing, being, the subject of the action of being; permanent, because untouched by space and time. It is the power of the activity of consciousness, whose essence is reflective awareness. It constitutes the foundation of the self of the supreme Lord, who is all things; the various āgamas call it the "heart." — 14 —

— tr. R. Torella

The Supreme or the Divine Heart does not exclude the other levels of the heart as the seat of human emotions, as Abhinavagupta expresses in a beautiful verse:

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5. The Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā of Utpaladeva with the Author's Vṛtti, pp. 120-22.
That which moves in the prior, intervening, and posterior state of the apprehension of all the objects of sense, which is universal (nikhilatmakam), which is endowed with the splendour of the highest Šakti (parasaktibhāsi), that indeed is the divine creative consciousness (pratibham). To one who is absorbed in that consciousness (tasyāṁ pralīnavapuṣaḥ), how can depression (glānīḥ) brought about by the lack of this divine consciousness ever occur?

The ignorant man does not observe the magnitude of the delightful enjoyment of the most precious wealth (paradhana-sukhāsvāda) lying in the body, prāṇa, etc. and feels overwhelming depression in his heart. If the Supreme Goddess who feels particular relish in bringing into being the entire universe enters his heart, then O! She sportively functions as the full and final oblation (in reducing to ashes the depression that had been plaguing him).

The important meaning of hrdaya in the context of the core mantra or hrdaya-bīja will be treated separately (chapter 9).

I am not expanding on this topic, since P. Muller-Ortega has already collected the most important meanings and texts in his monograph The Triadic Heart of Śiva.7

The Possessive Pronoun: Mama

No possible doubt escapes Abhinavagupta’s exegetical ingenuity. The simple, but very personal expression of the Devī: mama prabho, becomes the starting-point for a detailed analysis of the possessive pronoun. First of all, he splits kathayasva and interprets sva combined with mama as “my own Self” (addressed to the Lord). In ordinary parlance “the word ‘mine’ indicates an object related to a subject” (p. 65). But this relationship “rests in the essential nature of the Self,” as confirmed by Utpaladeva in his Ajāḍapramāṭṭ Siddhi (p. 15). What is indicated by this and other quotations is the universalisation of the possessive pronoun: Mama means viśvam, i.e. the universe ... (p. 56). Here he goes into the subtleties of spiritual experience,

6. yatprātibham nikhilavaisayikāvabodha-pūrṇa-parāntaracarain niikhilatmakam tat 1
tasyāṁ pralīnavapuṣaḥ paraśaktibhāsi glānirghaṣeta kimbhūtvāvāsopakpeta ī
sārtraprāṇadau paradhamasukhāsvādāpataλalanālokya svasminśrṣati hṛdaye glānimasmām 1
praviṣṭā cedantarnikhilajagatisūṣisārasatā para devi hanta praviḷasati pūrṇahutiśravī 1 — p. 37

7. See Bibliography.
where yogīs of different schools, such as Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Buddhism, experience a state of samādhi in which the idea of “mine” disappears. But as soon as they come out of samādhi, the previous impression of their individuality reappears.

The ordinary and limiting idea of “mine” and “not mine” is expressed beautifully by Utpaladeva in his Śivastotrávali:

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etanmama na tvidamitī
  rāgadvēśa śādinigadādṛdhamūle
nātha bhavanmayataikya-
  pratyayaparaśuh patatvantah \| — VII.2
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“This is mine, this is not mine” -
All such feelings like attachment, aversion,
Let the axe of the insight into oneness with You, O Lord,
Fall at their root (and remove them).

In a verse from his own stotra, Abhinavagupta sums up the entire complexity of what “possession” or “non-possession” means:

That thought, viz. “Nothing is mine” by which the senseless creatures are reduced to wretchedness incessantly, that very thought, viz. “Nothing is mine” means to me “I am everything.” Thus I have attained a lofty position. — p. 578

The lack of possession in the case of worldly beings is a curse of misery, but for the enlightened one it is the condition for his universality.

Abhinavagupta comes back to the interpretation of mama in the context of Bhairava’s expression: mama hṛdvyomni, “in the space of my Heart” (v. 4), where it is again the universality of the Heart, of the space/ether, and of the “my” which is stressed: “Vyoma means that where the universe of particular objects is ‘held’ . . .” (p. 29, Skt. p. 78 tr.). Mama actually means that any objective experience belongs to the subject: mameti yat etat hṛdayam sarvabhāvanāṁ sthānam
pratiṣṭhādhāma . . . nīlādi rūpamiti pramātireva (p. 29).

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8. See Appendix for the own stotras quoted by Abhinavagupta.
What these different explanations of the possessive pronoun show is the following: In normal parlance, the possessive indicates limitation to the individual possessor, and non-possession is understood as a lack or poverty. In the case of yogis who are on the way to overcoming their individuality and possessiveness, this happens only when they are in a state of samādhi. But in the context of Anuttara, of the Supreme Heart, even the possessive is an indication of the oneness with the ultimate I-consciousness, hence the movement is from mama to aham, and from aham to ma-ha-a.
The Two Sections

Abhinavagupta devotes one third of his entire Commentary to only four verses, and the rest to 32 verses. The first part is centred on Anuttara and its entire metaphysical implications, the second part around kaulikavidhi, “the order of creation,” which issues forth from Anuttara. According to one of the possible interpretations of Anuttara, the first part could be said to lead ultimately into silence, because no “answer” can be adequate in relation to the Absolute. The second part, being focused on uttara, on the other hand, goes into the entire field of Speech, Language and Mantra. Though he does not explicitly state it, yet the first part could be said to belong to the realm of parā and pāśyantī, the transcendent and unexpressed states of the Word, and the second to the realm of madhyama and vaikharī in all their dimensions.

The transition between the two parts is revealing. Here Abhinavagupta first justifies his interpretation over earlier, misleading commentaries (p. 83 tr.). He makes it clear that there is no duality of anuttara and uttara involved, since even the second part dealing with manifestation and with Language, is also nothing but Anuttara. He reiterates the threefold methodology for understanding reality:

It has been said that it is the anuttara even of the posterior part of the book. It is for the explanation of all this that the Lord Bhairava proposes to devote the posterior part of the book with a desire for decisive ascertainment in detail for the sake of those pupils who have become adroit by acquiring the understanding of the
knowledge of reality which is the essence (niśkarṣaṇa) of the well-reasoned explanation of the guru (yukti), teaching of the traditional scripture (āgama) and personal experience (svasaṁvedana). — p. 83

Yukti, Āgama and svasaṁvedana could also be translated as true reasoning (like sattarka), revelation and own experience, these three complementing and strengthening each other.

He also states perspicuously that for advanced disciples the first part and the four verses explained therein are sufficient for attaining jīvanmukti and for entering the state of Anuttara.¹

Therefore, I proclaim with upraised arm that those who have been purified by firm conviction may rest contented with so much only. Now the other part of the book is begun for a thorough deliberation of the kaulika state inherent in the spotless mirror of anuttara who is the supreme Bhairava. — p. 84

The two parts are also called the bimba and pratibimba sections, because the second part contains the entire theory of reflection, the universe being a reflection in the Supreme Consciousness, besides the reflectivity of language and the cosmotheandric levels of reality (tattvas) developed in the second part.

Before moving on to the second part starting from verse 5, we must establish again the link between the first four verses of the Tantra containing the question and the beginning of the answer. As noted earlier, the Devī states the essential content of the Tantra in her very question. Similar to the opening of the Vijnāna Bhairava, the difference lies in the theoretical knowledge and its realisation in practice, which alone can give full satisfaction (trpti).² The rest of Tantra and Commentary is dedicated to unfolding the practice of mantra and ritual-transcending contemplation, which leads to the fulfilment of all desires (v. 36) and to omniscience. The satisfaction sought by the Devī is attained in the union of Rudra and Rudrā (v. 37). By participation in this very union the yogī or disciple reaches “the attainment of the transcendental state which means resting in one’s essential self — this is the state of Bhairava” (p. 269) (viśrāntirūpākulasattāsadane, p. 102).

¹ Cf. anuttarapada in the Tantrāloka in the context of the upāyas, quoted earlier.
The concepts of *tr̥pti* (satisfaction) and *visṛānti* (repose) are close in meaning, both indicating a state of fullness and fulfilment.\(^3\) The one who, through the practice of the *mantra*, becomes identified with Śiva (*Parameśvara*) is also called *tr̥ptaḥ* (v. 24), fully satisfied.

In his *Mālinīvijayavārttika* Abhinavagupta uses the image of the bee, i.e. his mind, which finds pleasure in the fragrance of the lotus (*utpala*) of his grandmaster, Utpaladeva (I.7). There he uses the expression:

\[\text{yena-anuttarasasambhogatṛptā me matīṣatpadi} - \text{I. 9}\]

Through whom the bee of my mind gets full satisfaction by the bliss of the Absolute.

Only the *Anuttara* can bestow this satisfaction. A description of this state of contentment is related to the overcoming (literally “devouring”) of time; as found in the *Śrīdāmara Tantra*:

This has been said by Śiva (*parameśa*) in the *Śrīdāmara Tantra*: “After immobilising one’s circle of rays and tasting the supreme nectar he should dwell in bliss within the present that is not divided from both past and future.”


Abhinavagupta summarises this in the dual *grāsātṛptī* (I.157), i.e. the devouring of time which dissolves all contraction (*sāṅkoca*) and thereby leads to satisfaction.

The second part of the Tantra (vv. 5-9) is clearly marked by beginning with the word *atha*, “now,” which is the beginning of all philosophical *sūtras* and which refers to a continuity with a previous text or revelation. Abhinavagupta encounters the problem that with this word, and with the entire development of creation (*sṛṣṭi*) as well as phonematic manifestation (*varṇaparāmarśa*) the element of time comes in which, at the level of *Anuttara*, was said to be absent (*akālakalita*, “not limited by time” is an epithet of *Anuttara*). Therefore his first concern is to counter any possible misunderstanding of a temporal order: *krama* (as in vv. 6 and 8).

The unit of verses 5 to 9 of the Tantra summarises the manifestation of the phonematic universe, i.e. the procession of the phonemes of the Sanskrit alphabet

\(^3\) Cf. A. Chakrabarti, “The Heart of Repose, the Repose of the Heart”, in: *Sāmarasya*.\]
corresponding to the levels of the *tattvas*, variously rendered as “elements,” “categories,” “principles” or “levels of reality” (S. Vasudeva). I prefer to translate it as “cosmotheandric element” (or “reality”), because they comprise the cosmic elements (the five *mahābhūtas* and the five *tanmātras* or subtle elements), the human constituents like the five senses, mind, intellect and the ego, and various ascending levels of manifestation up to the Divine: Sadāśiva, Īśvara, Śakti, Śiva. We shall of course come to the homologies and correspondences of the *tattvas* with the elements of language that are the phonemes.

Before getting into technicalities of the *tattvas* and of language, the alphabet, etc. Abhinavagupta’s philosophical concern is to establish the non-dualism of the *Anuuttara* and its creation or manifestation. He does this both, by philosophical argument as well as by appealing to spiritual experience.

But before entering into this technical theme it will be helpful to quote Abhinavagupta’s summary of the passage of connection which he gives in a single long sentence, not, as usual, in verse form:

So, the goddess, the highest power of creative word (*parāvāk*) is of the form of all the letters, beginning with *a* and ending with *kṣa*, expands by enfolding within herself the venerable *parāparā* form, etc. inherent in *paśyantī*, etc. that are about to arise by her free will, has the essence of the creative delight which is identical with the consciousness of diverse manifestation consisting of all the elements, worlds and objects that have been undisputably brought about by being included in her progressive expansion, is of the nature of the highest Reality consisting of astonishing facts brought to light by the presence of Lord Bhairava, is the Supreme Creative Power that reveals within her pure mirror of Self endless manifestations, maintenance and absorption. — p. 96

In this passage both the inclusiveness of the Supreme Goddess Word (*parāvāk*) and the levels of descent within the same Divine Reality are clearly expressed. The non-duality of the *Anuuttara* and its creation is the Goddess *Parāvāk*. The implied

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4. *tadgarbhākāravaśāvivādaḥgaṭīta-sakalabhūta-bhuvanabhāvādipra-pañcápрабodhaikya-camatkārasāraḥ parameśvarabhairavabhāttāraṇāvirbhāvaprathitattathāvidhād-bhutabhūta-paramārtha-svarūpā.* (p. 38, l.18-20)
symbolism is that of the creativity of the Supreme Goddess — twice the expression *garbhrkṛta/garbhrkāra* occurs with the image of the womb: She holds the entire creation in her cosmic womb. The only "cause" for bringing about the various stages of manifestation is Her very own freedom, autonomy (*svaśāvatāntara*). Being the Supreme Word, She is descending into the stages of *pāsyantarī, madhyamanā* and *vaikharī*, containing all the elements of language, the phonemes, etc. Simultaneously She brings about the worlds, objects and external manifestation. Being Herself *mahāśāṣṭi*, i.e. the totality of creation, She encompasses all the repeated phases of *srāti, sthiti, saṁhāra*, past, present and future. But again, to avoid any dualistic interpretation, Abhinavagupta immediately adds that all these are only reflections in the pure mirror of Her consciousness, thus introducing the philosophical theme of *vimā-pratvimā* which underscores the whole of the second part. Thus in this passage the entire theme of the manifestation of both the universe and language is encapsulated. The entire creation is nothing but a revelation of the Supreme Lord (parameśvarabhairavabhāṭṭāraka), inseparably one with His creative power.

We may now come back to the themes marking the transition to the part concerned with *kaulika-srāti*, the total manifestation.

As mentioned earlier, the first problem Abhinavagupta has to resolve, if he is to maintain the non-duality of the Absolute, is the problem of time. This surfaces in the very first word of verse 5: *atha*, and in the expression *kālā-yogena* of the same verse. *Atha* normally refers to a preceding matter and a succession. The only succession which he admits here is the difference between the teaching and the taught (*upadesyaupadesabhāvalakṣāṇo bhedaḥ*, p. 34), which is, however, revealed out of the freedom of the supreme Lord, and hence not subject to time.

He quotes the interpretation by Somānanda who makes a *nirvacana* of *atha* by identifying *a* with Śiva and *tha* with Śakti (p. 90). Since *tha* and *ha* have the same pervasiveness (*samavyāpti*), and *ha* also stands for Śakti, *atha* (now) refers to the initial surge (*prathamollāsa*) of any manifestation or experience. Interestingly, Abhinavagupta differs on the issue from his predecessor who, he admits, had access to other Āgamas which contain such an explanation. He expresses a subtle criticism of Somānanda when he refers to the power with which mantras are written in symbolic scripts (*dhālibhedaḥina ca kalpitasāmayika lipi . . .*, p. 35), on the basis of
some Āgamas unknown to Abhinavagupta. This reference is also interesting in the sense that Abhinavagupta does not give any importance to scripts in relation to mantras, but primarily to sound (nāda). By offering his obeisance to Somānanda by whose teaching he has been purified (tat-sāsana-pavitrita), he differs from him on an important ground: he finds that such explanations going into imaginary interpretation, though based on some Āgamas, move too far away from a universally acceptable understanding of the text. His concern for universality, which we shall find in other contexts, is also visible.

Subtle difference of meaning of the mantra depending on imaginary and symbolic interpretation of the letters of a word may be of use to some, but cannot be of use to pupils of all countries and all times. Therefore I have not described it in detail. Such an interpretation is of no use to those who have the benefit of personal experience and the rational explanation of the teachers. — p. 91

This is a digression from the main argument, but it throws light on different approaches to Tāntric exegesis.

Then he comes to the main theme contained in verses 5 to 9, i.e. the manifestation of the phonemes and of the corresponding tattvas.

The first word after atha in verse 5 is ādya. Instead of taking it in the usual sense “beginning with a“ Abhinavagupta again avoids the temporal connotations of ādya and gives it a deeper meaning:

The meaning again would be a which is the first of the vowels. In this context the word ādya has not been used merely in the sense of “foremost of an order,” nor in the sense of “proximity,” etc., but rather that whose existence continues in a, etc., i.e. in a and all other letters (a ādau bhavaḥ iti ādyah). So it is being decisively propounded here that a is the stage of the highest sound (paravāgabhimih) in which alone of these letters there is the non-conventional, eternal, natural form consisting only of consciousness. — p. 91

He has thus taken ādi/ādya in the sense of primordial, a being symbolic of Anuttara constitutes the ontological basis of all other letters and hence of all languages and
is identical with *parāvāk* and pure consciousness.\(^5\) In the translation by A. Padoux:

The plane of the supreme Word (*parāvāg bhūmi*) of these phonemes is the one described [here], where these [phonemes] exist in the form of pure consciousness, uncreated, eternal. In such a condition of pure consciousness there are no separate forms of existence (*sarvasa rātmakatā*): all is perpetually and actually produced (*satatodita*). This Supreme Goddess, [the Word] supremely venerable, whilst remaining in this state of unequalled non-duality, takes into herself the [planes of] *paśyantī*, and so forth, which are the expansion of the venerable [goddesses] *Parāparā* and [Aparā], and is thus the womb of their infinite varieties. . . . Do consider this divine primordial consciousness (*sāñvid*), free from all traces of the impurity of contraction (*saṅkoca*), which is called illuminating intuition (*pratibhā*).

— *Vāc*, p. 181\(^6\)

This is again a crucial and condensed passage, taking the phonemes as represented by *a* at the Supreme level of the Word: *parāvāgbhūmi*. It is the stage where all other forms of language, in all their variety, are contained within that supreme level. The descent into *paśyantī*, etc. corresponds to the levels of *parāparā*, the intermediate stage of the “transcendent-cum-immanent” Energy, and *aparā*, the “lower, immanent” level on which speech assumes internal (*madhyama*) and external (*vaikhari*) forms. Thus the infinite variety of both, speech and objective manifestation, is again “contained in her womb”:

\[
\ldots \text{parāparabhaṭṭārikā sphārarūpā antahkṛtya tattadananta-vaicitryagarbhamayī}
\]

— p. 35

The basic assumption is the doctrine that “everything is contained within everything,” or “all is contained in a single part”: *sarvāṃ sarvātmakam*.

This identity of the primal and supreme Word with Consciousness leads to the topic of *pratibhā*. This rich and complex concept needs to be looked into separately.

---

5. Cf. *Bhagavad-Gītā* X.34: *aṅkā namakāro ‘smi*, “Of letters I am the letter A.” Interestingly, in his commentary on this entire passage Abhinavagupta remains silent. One reason may be, as A. Sanderson considers his *Gītārthaśāṅgraha* an early and immature work.

Pratibhā: Illuminating Insight

Pratibhā is a concept which connects and unites the areas of language and epistemology, poetic and aesthetic inspiration, mystical illumination, and the Ultimate Reality, the Goddess Parā. How all these areas of meaning are related is again a marvel of the genius of Abhinavagupta, having taken this term from such sources as Bhartṛhari’s Vākyapadīya and Utpaladeva’s Īśvarapratyabhijñā Kāraṇa. Various translations have been proposed, depending on the context: intuitive insight, illumination, creative consciousness, “intuition illuminatrice,” poetic inspiration, “a flash of light, a revelation . . . characterised by immediacy and freshness.” What is important to note is the meaning of pratibhā on both sides: on the side of the Absolute (Parā, Anuttarā), and the side of the yogī or aesthete who intuits and shares a flash of understanding and enlightenment. This double meaning makes pratibhā a key concept to Abhinavagupta’s approach to aesthetics and mystical experience.

To present the background of the concept as known to Abhinavagupta, we may look at two definitions: one in the context of poetics, the other from the philosophy of Recognition.

(1) rasānugunāśabdārthacintāstimitacetasāḥ
kṣanāṁ svarūpasparśothā prajñāiva pratibhā kaveḥ || 117 ||
sā hi cakṣurbhagavatastṛtyamita gīyate ||
yena sāksātkarotyeṣa bhāvāṁstrailokyavarttināḥ || 118 ||

Pratibhā is that intellectual function of the poet whose mind is concentrated on thinking about words and meanings that are appropriate to rasas. It arises for a moment from the contact of the poet’s mind with the essential nature (of Consciousness).

It is that which makes the things that exist in all the three worlds

---
8. Gopinath Kaviraj, The Doctrine of Pratibhā in Indian Philosophy.
9. Cf. the 3rd maṅgalasloka, identifying the Supreme Goddess with pratibhā and caṇatākti.
10. The expression svarūpasparśa is very close to the Trika philosophy. Cf. E. Führinger, The Touch of Śakti.
seem as if they were right before our very eyes, and (hence) it is known as the third eye of Śiva.

— Mahimabhaṭṭa, Vyaktiviveka II.117-18

(2) yā caiśā pratibhā tattatpadārtha-kramarūṣitā ।
akramāṇanta cidrūpah pramātā sa maheśvarah ॥

— Utpaladeva, Īśvarapratyabhijña Kārikā I.7.1

And this intuitive light (pratibhā), influenced by the succession of all the various objects is the knowing subject, which is consciousness devoid of succession and limit, Maheśvara. — tr. R. Torella, p. 136

First we have to see why Abhinavagupta almost gives an excursus on pratibhā at this juncture of his commentary, when he justifies the non-duality of the Absolute and its manifestation in language and in the universe, and before entering into the whole discourse on the phonematic emanation and its correspondence to the tattvas. He is eager not to get lost in the multiplicity and specificity of language and of objective reality. Pratibhā is the key which opens all the doors of the elements of language and of reality. And it is not just a conceptual key, for this the concept of saṁvid, Consciousness, or parāvāk would have sufficed. It is precisely pratibhā which has the implicit connotation of illuminating insight, and therefore, the element of spiritual practice and experience is essential for an understanding of the following text. Abhinavagupta seems to say, unless there is pratibhā (in the disciple/reader) the entire following discourse would be unintelligible.

Therefore, his injunction:

\[
\text{parāmṛṣya ca prathamāṁ pratibhābhidhāṁ saṁkacakala-}
\text{ṅkakālasyalēṣāsāyāṁ bhagavatīṁ saṁvidāṁ, — pp. 35-36}
\]

Go on meditating/reflecting on the Divine Consciousness, called the initial illuminating insight, free from even a trace of the impurity of contraction.

The similes used for pratibhā-jñāna show that it is an instantaneous and encompassing vision: śikharastha-jñāna is compared to the view one has from the top of a mountain,

---

12. rūṣitā could also be translated as “covered.”
where everything is seen in one glance and without succession. The other simile is to see the tail of a peacock and to perceive all the colours and forms of its feathers as in one glance (cf. p. 93 tr., Skt. p. 36).

Abhinavagupta establishes the viability of the concept of pratibhā both by argumentation and by reference to spiritual experience. The basic argument is that pratibhā is the same as nirvikalpa saṁvid, Consciousness free from thought-constructs,13 which is the basis of all perception, thought, and hence language.14 This pure Consciousness is experienced at and in the intervals between particular perceptions or thoughts.

This consciousness which the Āgamas celebrate under the name of insight (pratibhā), unfolding (unmeṣa), and so forth, abides in the interval between two dualistic cognitions, when one ceases and the other appears. It is undifferentiated [or devoid of thought-construct: avikalpakam]. It precedes as such all differentiated thought-constructs such as the notion of blue, and so forth, which are mutually exclusive [since linked to duality]. As such, it is inseparable from the infinite diversity of appearances [constituting the world]. That there is such an interval between two cognitions cannot be denied, because [cognitions] cannot but be different; and this interval is made of pure consciousness. . . .

— PTV, p. 36 Skt., tr. A. Padoux, Vāc, pp. 181-82

This interstitial void and nirvikalpa state is an essential approach to pure Consciousness both in theory and in practice. The Vijñāna Bhairava offers concrete examples of dhāranās which permit entry in such a state.

In a context which is closely related to the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa, namely the phonematic consciousness (varṇasaṁvid) Abhinavagupta develops the theme of pratibhā in its various aspects in his Tantrāloka, also, as in our maṅgalaśloka 2, in relation to camatkāra: wonder, blissful surprise. It is apposite to quote the definition of pratibhā in context:

13. R. Torella translates nirvikalpaka as “exempt from mental elaborations,” in: The Iśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā, p. 90 (Kārikā I.2.1-2 with Vṛtti). It could also be translated as “non-discursive.”
The subject whose own understanding is awakened (svapramābodho), thanks to the elimination of obstacles, becomes capable to produce phonemes, sentences, etc. out of himself.

To the degree that the uncreated reality excels, to the same degree the wonder of delight increases.

The different degrees of intuitive insight are in relation to the gradual merging of the conventional (linguistic) signs in the fullness of the original phonemes free from māyā (amāyīya).

Those who are established in the intuitive insight (pratibhā) characterised by the power of these first letters, they certainly attain poetic and rhetoric gifts.

But he who rests in pure Consciousness in its highest form, devoid of any conventional limitations [of language], what is it that he does not know? What is it that he is not able to do? — TĀ, XI, 75-80

We will consider later the important distinction Abhinavagupta makes between the original phonemes (ādyavarna) which are not subject to māyā, and conventional language (saṅketa) belonging to the realm of māyā.

To round off the excursus on pratibhā, Abhinavagupta gives a summary in verse form:

That which moves in the prior, intervening, and posterior state of the apprehension of all the objects of sense, which is universal, which is endowed with the splendour of the highest Śakti, that indeed is the divine creative consciousness (pratibham). To one who is absorbed in that consciousness, how can depression brought about by the lack of this divine consciousness ever occur? — p. 95

Pratibhā, Grace, and Spiritual Practice

Pratibhā, being of the nature of sudden insight, flashing intuition and unconditioned consciousness naturally comes close to grace (śaktipāta), which is also sudden, unconditional and bestowing illumination. Therefore the question arises whether any spiritual practice is necessary or meaningful to attain such a state. Abhinavagupta responds in a very balanced manner, safeguarding on the one side

---

15. Cf. Jayaratha's Commentary on XI.77b-78a.
the total freedom of Absolute Consciousness to manifest itself/Herself, and on the other avoiding a simple quietistic passivity. In the present context he states:

\[
tathāvadhānātiśayarūḍhaṁ sahasaiṁ sarvajñatābhūmira-
\]

\[
saṅkucitaparamārthā ākṛtrimatadrūpā adhiṣaṁyate eva,
\]

\[
parānugrahapavitritairabhyaṁ sakramaśānānigharṣanispoṁita. . .
\]

Parābhāṭṭārikā (the goddess parā) who is none other than the stage of omniscience, the highest truth without any limitation and natural is suddenly resorted to by those who are established in intensive awareness of that state and those whose impurities in the form of uncertainty, doubt or other synonymous terms owing to non-belief in that have been completely ground down by grinding on the grindstone of continuous spiritual discipline. Even in the case of those who are assailed by doubt, the omniscient stage of consciousness appears, on certain occasions when they are able to view Reality, in a slightly limited form, though not in its full, natural form.

The image he uses of the grinding stone of spiritual practice shows that effort is not excluded for attaining insight and even omniscience (the final result of the practice of the Tantra, verses 36-37). Intensity of awareness is a necessary condition in the school of sudden enlightenment to which our text belongs. Another condition is freedom from contraction of consciousness (asaṅkucita). But even for those who are not purified and established in intensive awareness, there are occasions to experience pratibhā at certain moments. The Vījnāna Bhairava gives examples of such situations, which may be temporary, but which nevertheless share in the state of nirvikalpa.¹⁶

In another context, that of the analysis of language, and of the correspondence with the tattvas, Abhinavagupta responds in an ironical way to the idea that grace or the Divine will is sufficient, and no effort is required in order to achieve understanding or insight:

If it is said that God’s will is perfect, it is not open to discussion, then enough of useless efforts like reading and concentrating on

¹⁶. Cf. VBh 71 (joy of meeting), 75 (waking and sleep), 89 (pain), 111 (exhaustion), 115 (deep well), 118 (several examples), etc.
books, exposition, discussion, etc. This heavy burden should certainly be abandoned. One should then sit quietly. God's will alone would save one who is to be saved. It is His merciful will that makes one depend on such thought.

By no means should people remain stretching their legs and lying with ease, indulging in enjoyment, without deliberating for themselves, nor should people sit idle, averse to the constant application of the competent intellect for the subtlest deliberation, brought about by the intenser and intenser grace of the Lord which appears in accordance with one's sadhana (spiritual praxis). Therefore the question raised by me has to be examined in all respects. I am not going to give it up in this way. — pp. 105-08

This clarification is all the more important, since the purpose of the entire revelation, as stated in the beginning, is bestowing grace, and the tradition belongs to what Sanderson calls, a “subitist” approach to Divine Consciousness.17

We find a similar argument in the Iśvarapratyabhijñā Vivṛti Vimarśinī (vol. III, p. 94). There Abhinavagupta defends the importance of logical reasoning (pramāṇa, the subject of IPK II.3) against the quietistic attitude:

(If somebody says) that the Āgama (authority of revelation) is a verbalisation (sabdānām) accepted by him by the will of God alone, what then is the use of logicians? (He replies, O) What bad logicians you are! God alone manifests himself, reflects and makes reflect.18 In that case, why not remain silent? What is then the use of writing books, teachings and learning? Surely, in that case one should remain as one is, as Paramēśvara himself would remain inactive. . . .19 (He replies:) But it is he himself who, by his own will, is known as the author, as the disciple to be enlightened as well as the one enlightened. (Śivadṛṣṭi III. 74-75)

Nirvikalpa Saṁvid — The Basis of Thought and Language

Abhinavagupta employs different forms of reasoning to establish that all

18. Relating to prakāśa and vimarśa.
19. The argument continues by quoting Śivadṛṣṭi, III.72-76.
differentiated perceptions, thoughts, and hence language are based on the undifferentiated pure Consciousness: nirvikalpa samvid. The appearance of differentiation is not possible without an underlying undifferentiated state, because the vikalpas have no independence to manifest (vikalpānāṁ ca avikalpāṁ vinā nodayaḥ, asvātantryāt, pp. 36-37).

It is only nirvikalpa samvid which makes the use of language possible, which depends on the recollection of conventions, and: “How can the recollection of conventional (linguistic) signs be possible without the experience of indeterminate consciousness?” (p. 94, Skt.). We need not go further into these arguments which surface again in different contexts, because this is a fundamental position of the samvidadvayavāda, the doctrine of the non-dualism of Consciousness. What is interesting is the homology, if not identity, that Abhinavagupta discovers with the Buddhist concept of ālayavijñāna, the substratum-consciousness: tathā ca vivekakusālair-ālayavijñānanam-evamevaupagatam, p. 37). The Buddhists are here described as vivekakusāla, “those who are adept in discrimination.”

At the end of the entire introductory part of the second section the author contrasts the joyful state of insight (pratibham) with its opposite, the state of depression,20 caused by lack of divine consciousness, and ignorance of one’s true nature. This is necessary for completing the argument.

Abhinavagupta refers to the “impurities” (mala) which obstruct the recognition of the divine Consciousness, and he quotes the well-known phrase of the Mālinīvijayottara Tantra:

malamajñānamichhanti samsārāṅkura-kāraṇam
— I.23

By identifying mala with ignorance he underlines the importance of liberating knowledge over and above ritual, as expressed in the very first question of the Devi: yena vijñātamātreṇa . . . (v. 1).21

20. Glāni: Gnoli translates it by malattia (sickness), but it is definitely a mental or psychosomatic deficiency.

21. Cf. S. Vasudeva, The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra, p. 165: “The three impurities (mala), which in the dualist Siddhānta are conceived of subtle yet tangible substances which can only be physically removed by Śaiva initiation and the subsequent obligatory
In this long introductory part to the interpretation of verses 5-9 Abhinavagupta has clarified the background for what is going to follow, by establishing the almost identity of the concepts of nirvikalpa sarīvīḍī (thought-free consciousness), pratibha (intuitive illumination) and parāvāc (the Supreme level of the Word), as well as unmesa ("awakening," opening, unfolding of consciousness). The origin of these concepts is different, but he shows that they belong to the same level of consciousness, which forms the underlying background of the following development of manifestation.

→ observances, are in the Mālinīvijayottara boldly equated with ignorance (ajñāna). This important passage is frequently cited as scriptural proof for the liberating power of knowledge."

22. Cf. Spanda Kārikā III.8-9, quoted in this context, along with Kṣemarāja’s comm.
Levels of Manifestation
Emanation of Phonemes and Tattvas

Having stated his premises, Abhinavagupta proceeds then to the hermeneutics proper of the verses 5-9. But this requires another clarification of the underlying concepts. The Tantra gives in short the emanation of the universe in the twofold form of language, or the phonemes of the Sanskrit alphabet, and in the levels of the cosmotheandric realities or tattvas.1 If the first part is centred on Anuttara and aham, the universal I-consciousness, the second part expands to the idam, the “this-ness” or objective reality. Again, there is no such duality as aham-idam, or the dichotomy of subjectivity and objectivity, because:

The Lord assumes these states (or: phenomena) which are held in His shining Self by His own light by veiling Himself, that is, to say, He manifests by adopting the state of this-ness (i.e. objectivity) whose nature is insentience. Then again He encompasses all this objectivity with I-feeling.2

According to the Śaivāgamas, the universe and language are co-extensive,3 and

1. I prefer the term cosmotheandric to cosmology, because it encompasses the cosmic, human and divine dimensions, which are contained in the scheme of the tattvas. The term is not new, but it has been revived especially by R. Panikkar, cf. The Cosmotheandric Experience, Indian edn., Delhi, MLBD, 1998.


hence the creation of the elements of the cosmotheandric reality corresponds to the emanation of the phonemes:

Each of these (phonemes, \textit{varṇa}) will then stand for a different moment in the gradual condensation and solidification of the energy of the Word, and will bring successively into existence each of the thirty-six ontic levels, the \textit{tattvas}, of which the entire manifestation consists.\(^4\)

Before going into these correspondences, we will have to define what is a \textit{tattva} in the context of the Āgamas. The definition, always based on a \textit{nirvacana} or semantic interpretation, differs from the meaning it has in Nyāya,\(^5\) which is derived from \textit{tatt+va}, “real-ity.” The Śaiva “etymology” derives it from the verbal root \textit{tan}, to stretch, to expand, to weave, and hence the implication is that of a reality/principle that is pervasive, that expands. The \textit{tattvas} are therefore generic principles (\textit{jāti}), “similar to the common property (\textit{sāmānya}).”\(^6\) Abhinavagupta defines \textit{tattva} in the relevant chapter of the \textit{Tantraloka} as follows:

\begin{quote}
\begin{svminst}
svasminkārye 'tha dharmaughe \\
yadvāpi svasadṛggune \\
āste sāmānyakalpena \\
tananādvyāptī bhāvatah \\
tat tattvam kramāsah prthuḥ \\
pradhānāṁ pumśivādayaḥ \\
dehānāṁ bhuvanānām ca \\
na prasaṅgastato bhavet
\end{svminst}
\end{quote}

That, which, resembling a universal, resides in [1.] its own effect, in [2.] a collection of properties or in [3.] a group of experients etc. similar to itself, is a Tattva, because it is extensive (\textit{tananaḍ}), i.e. because of its pervasion. In order, [Tattvas are such as] earth and matter, soul and Śiva, etc. Thus it does not follow that [this definition applies to] bodies and worlds. — tr. S. Vasudeva, p. 191

---

Thus the *tattvas*, comprising the twenty-five of Sāmkhya and additional eleven are not the realities *per se*, but the pervasive general principles underlying all existent entities. According to the *Sarvajñānottara*, “the *tattvas* are imperceptible and pervasive in the whole world.” Abhinavagupta makes it even more clear when he defines *tattva* as “that which is the cause for the [conscious subject’s] collectivisation of distinct groups, [which] appears as one, undivided. As for example, Earth and Water [respectively in the case] of mountains, trees, cities, etc., and rivers, ponds and ocean.” This elucidation may suffice to avoid any misunderstanding of the term. The grouping of the *tattvas* into units of five corresponds to the *vargas* or classes of consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet.

### Phonemes and Tattvas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Phonemes</th>
<th>ka</th>
<th>kha</th>
<th>ga</th>
<th>gha</th>
<th>na</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Tattvas</em> or the gross elements</td>
<td><em>prthivī</em></td>
<td><em>jala</em></td>
<td><em>agni</em></td>
<td><em>vāyu</em></td>
<td><em>ākāsa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Phonemes</td>
<td>ca</td>
<td>cha</td>
<td>ja</td>
<td>jha</td>
<td>ūna</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Tanmātras</em></td>
<td><em>gandha</em></td>
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<td><em>rūpa</em></td>
<td><em>sparśa</em></td>
<td><em>śabda</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Phonemes</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>tha</td>
<td>da</td>
<td>dhā</td>
<td>ṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organs of action</td>
<td><em>upastha</em></td>
<td><em>pāyu</em></td>
<td><em>pāda</em></td>
<td><em>pāni</em></td>
<td><em>vāk</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Phonemes</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>tha</td>
<td>da</td>
<td>dhā</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organs of sense</td>
<td><em>prāṇa</em></td>
<td><em>rasanā</em></td>
<td><em>caksus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Phonemes</td>
<td>pa</td>
<td>pha</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>bha</td>
<td>ma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The psychic apparatus, the primal matter (<em>prakṛti</em>) and finite experient (<em>puruṣa</em>)</td>
<td><em>manas</em></td>
<td><em>buddhi</em></td>
<td><em>ahamkāra</em></td>
<td><em>prakṛti</em></td>
<td><em>puruṣa</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>

7. Quoted from S. Vasudeva, *The Yoga...*, note 12: *tataṁ etair jagat krśnāṁ... I sūkṣmaghā sarvāṁ nityāḥ sahaḥ sarvāṁjantusu II — Sarvajñānottara* v. 34, p. 197.


Emanation of Phonemes and Tattvas in verses 5-9

Before going into the extensive interpretation of the Vivaraṇa, let us consider the condensed version of the Tantra:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{athādyāstithayāḥ sarve svarā vindvavasānāgāḥ} \mid \\
&tadantāḥ kālayogena somasūryau prakīrtitau \| 5 \| \\
&pṛthivyādīni tattvāṇi puruṣāntāṇi pañcasu \mid \\
&kramātkādiṣu vargēṣu makārāntēṣu suvrate \| 6 \| \\
&vāyvagni-salilendrāṇām dhāraṇāṇām catuṣṭayam \mid \\
&tadārdhvam śādi-vikhyātam purastāt brahmapañcakam \| 7 \| \\
&amūla tatkramāj jñeyā kṣāntā śṛṣṭirudhrāḥ \mid \\
&sarveṣām eva mantrāṇām vidyānām ca yaśasvini \| 8 \| \\
&iyam yoniḥ samākhyaṭā sarvatantreṣu sarvadā \mid \\
\end{align*}
\]

— Parātrīśikā 5-9ab

The end of this group of verses (8-9ab) states the reason for the unfolding of the alphabet and the corresponding tattvas: The kaulikavidhi or the process of achieving the kaulikasiddhi leads to mantra, and mantra consists of, or is, the essence or condensation of the phonemes of language. Therefore,

Starting from \textit{a} to \textit{kṣa},\textsuperscript{10} the order is known as that of emission; it is the source of all mantras and vidyās, as is always proclaimed in all the Tantras. — \textit{PT} 8-9ab

Thus the elements of language are homologised with creation or emanation. The element of Time comes in the very first verse (5), where the vowels (svara) are identified with \textit{tithis}, lunar days or phases. \textit{Tithi} does not only connote the number 15, it is a station or phase, as will be seen later with the symbolism of the individual vowels. From \textit{a} to \textit{anusvāra} (bindu) fifteen vowels are corresponding to 15 \textit{tithis}, with the symbolic implication that in their totality they are moving to a state of fullness (the full moon of knowledge or \textit{bodhacandra})\textsuperscript{11}). In relation to time they are

\textsuperscript{10} Last letter in the Āgamic alphabet.

\textsuperscript{11} Cf. \textit{Tantrasāra} summary verse of introduction. \textit{TS}, p. 5: \textit{ajñānaṁ kila bandhaheturuditaḥ śāstre malam tatśmṛtam ī pūrnajñānakałodaya tadakhiḷam nirñalatāṁ gacchati} “Ignorance is said to be the cause of bondage, it is called impurity in the Śästras. But when the full
Levels of Manifestation: Emanation of Phonemes and Tattvas

connected with the sun and moon (v. 5cd). The entire symbolism of sun, moon and fire will be unfolded later, one meaning being that of the knowable (soma), the means of knowledge (śūrya) and the knower (agni).

Then follow the consonants corresponding to the tattvas, in groups of five (v. 6), from which the entire diversity of manifestation arises. Two groups of phonemes are marked out: the four called dhāraṇās, i.e. the semi-vowels, ya, ra, la, va, the seed-syllables corresponding to wind (ya), fire (ra), water (la) earth (va), and Indra, respectively and the five called pañcabrahma, namely śa, ṣa, sa, ha, kṣa.12 We shall return to this symbolisation in the context of the Vivaraṇa.

The symbolism of the tithis in relation to the vowels does not end here. There is a complex symbolical interrelation between the elements of time as phases of the moon (also called kālā), the movement of breath (prāṇa-apāṇa) and the vowels (svara). Prāṇa is the source of time13 and it is measured by tutis (the space covered by breath measuring two-and-a-half fingers). Since 16 tutis cover one unit of exhalation and inhalation, these are also homologised with the 16 vowels, from a to visargaḥ.

When the sixteenth digit, which has the power to expand (visargakāla) remains apart, i.e. does not expand, it is designated the seventeenth digit. — p. 187

According to the Śrī Vādya Śāstra and other sources the visarga, consisting of two points, is divided into two and becomes bindu, which is then identified with the 17th, unchangeable kālā (amākalā).

The entire interconnection between time, breath, and the vowels, far from being a mere speculation on the numbers (15, 16, 17), based on tithi at the beginning of verse 5, throws light on the utterance of the phonemes (vowels) which is dependent on breath and on time.

→ moon of knowledge rises, it attains perfect purity." The implication is also that the kālās or tithis, the phases of the moon, represent partial or fragmentary knowledge, until full enlightenment occurs, compared to the full moon.

12. Cf. A. Sanderson, History through Textual Criticism, p. 37, note 47: "This terminology is peculiar to Parātrimsikā 7." It has been taken over by the Aḥīrbudhuya Samhitā, 16, 84.
Abhinavagupta replies to an objection:

If it is objected, "How can there be division of one phoneme 'a' (into 16th and 17th kalās), for 'a' which is anuttara is partless?" We reply, "In our system, everything is partless, being non-different from the light of consciousness." Just as, through the unimpeded autonomy of Śiva, even when parts appear, partlessness of Reality is invariable, even so is the case with 'a'. Where is the inconsistency? Thus the propriety of the development of phonemes is maintained, because of the appearance of partlessness in parts. Otherwise (on the occasion of utterance), how can the air whose nature it is to produce impact successively through the dental, labial, guttural, palatal phonemes strike the palate after having struck the throat? If it were to spread simultaneously in all the organs of articulation, then there would ensue simultaneity in the utterance of all the sounds.

— pp. 187-88

A Commentary on 'a'

Abhinavagupta then opens the commentary on verses 5-9 by focusing on the phoneme a (expressed in verse 5 as: atha a-ādyā . . .)

That anuttara itself, which is akula whose nature is a, is all this universal manifestation (kaulikasṛṣṭi).

— p. 89

The phoneme a represents anuttara and akula,¹⁴ the Unsurpassable, beyond manifestation (kula being Śakti, and akula Bhairava). A brief definition by Somānanda¹⁵ says:

*a-bījam suddhaśivarūpam* — p. 20

The seed syllable a is of the pure nature of Śiva.

One could also translate: "is the pure form/symbol of Śiva." A is the original sound (ādyaśvara) and the origin of all sounds, and hence of all manifestation.

A is the stage of the Supreme Word (parāvāgabhūmi) in which alone of

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¹⁴. The first phoneme not only of the Sanskrit alphabet but of most languages, a, is here actually an a privativum, cf. J. Gonda, Why are ahiṃsā and similar concepts often expressed in a negative form? Cf. Tantraloka 3.67.

¹⁵. In his own Vivṛti.
these phonemes there is the non-conventional, eternal, natural form consisting of nothing but Consciousness. In the “body” (vapūs) made of Consciousness the interconnectedness of everything is ever present (sārvasārvarāmakātā satatoditaiva).

— p. 91 modified

Here we find the essential difference which Abhinavagupta makes throughout the text between language as conventional (sāṅketika, consisting of signs, or sāmayika based on convention or agreement), and as immediate, uncontrived, spontaneous (akṛtrima), because belonging to the supreme level of sound. As we shall see, mantras belong to this non-conventional aspect of the Word.

A is thus called “the matrix of the Supreme Sound” (paranādagarbha). After having elucidated all the phonemes and tattvas, Abhinavagupta summarises the point thus: “These 34 categories having been settled according to the procedure of the Śāstra resort to a only, as that is the initial and primal letter.” (p. 102, evametāni caturtrirṣattattvāni prakriyātmanā sthitāni akārameva ādirūpatayā bhajante, p. 41, l. 15).

In the context of the analysis of Anuttara, Abhinavagupta had already stated:

A is the (totality of the) limitating power (kalā) not submitted to mayā, beyond hearing, uncreated, wondering at its own (essence: that of the) waveless sea of consciousness resting in the great light (of the Absolute). It spreads from the first to the last stage (of emanation), being the condition of the fullness of the supreme “I” in its total awareness of the universe (as produced by) the effulgent spreading out of the Energy. — tr. A. Padoux, Vāc, p. 236

When he comes back to commenting on the unfolding of the vowels, Abhinavagupta identifies a with the power of absolute freedom of the Lord:

The power of absolute freedom or autonomy (svātantrya-śakti) of the Lord, is called a. In it the objectivity has not yet begun to develop and it is therefore essentially a reflective awareness whose inner nature is that of a pure interiorised mass of consciousness (antarghanasamvid). — Padoux, Vāc, p. 238

Abhinavagupta’s effort is ever directed to proving the foundation of language in *nirvikalpa sanvid*, consciousness free from mental constructs, and descending from the highest level (*Parā-vāk*), without excluding the manifoldness of both language and reality.

In the nature of consciousness, the omnifariousness of everything (*sarvasarvātmakatā*) is always present. That highest Divinity, viz. *parā* (who is only the dynamic form of *anuttara*), though consisting of the highest stage of non-differentiation is teeming with endless variety, containing within Herself as she does the *parāparā* expansion of *pasyantī*, etc. — p. 91

He not only states a metaphysical truth but no less, as a spiritual master, leads the disciples/readers to its realisation:

Parābhaṭṭārikā who is the stage of omniscience (*sarvajñatābhūmiḥ*), the highest truth without any limitation (*asaṅkucitaparamārthaḥ*) and natural is suddenly resorted to by those who are established in intensive awareness of that state (*tathāvadhānātiśaya rudhaiḥ*), who are purified by utmost grace (*parānugraha-pavitritaiḥ*) and those whose impurities in the form of uncertainty, doubt or other synonymous terms owing to non-belief in that have been completely ground down by grinding on the grindstone of continuous spiritual discipline. — p. 92

Here again, the complementarity of one’s effort and Divine grace is perspicacious. The intuitive insight (*pratibhā*) or awakening of consciousness (*unmesa*) is identical with the unconditioned consciousness.

Therefore it (the *nirvikalpa sanvid* or indeterminate consciousness) abides undivided among the endless determinate percepts. The interval between the two determinate ideas can by no means be denied because of the difference between the two ideas. That interval consists of consciousness only, otherwise (i.e. if consciousness is not present in the interval), on account of the extirpation of the residual traces of consciousness caused by that interval or gap (devoid of consciousness), memory, congruous link, etc. between the consciousness preceding the gap and the consciousness succeeding it would become impossible. — p. 93
The pure awareness of this interstitial gap is precisely the basis for the methods of attaining pure consciousness taught in the *Vijñāna Bhairava*.\(^{19}\)

That pure state of consciousness pervades also the manifold perceptions, including language at its conventional level:

Determinate perceptions do not arise without the indeterminate consciousness [*nirvikalpa smaṇvīd*] because they lack the freedom for emerging by themselves. This freedom belongs only to indeterminate consciousness, for it is only indeterminate consciousness that serves as means for the recollection of the conventional signs, etc. How can the recollection of conventional signs, etc. be possible without the experience of indeterminate consciousness? In such consciousness, according to the previous principle, there is the absence of the limitation of time, etc. Thus the one divine indeterminate consciousness (*pratibhā*) defined by my weighty statement is of this kind, i.e. of unlimited nature, the very Self of all. Not only in the beginning and the end but in the intervening state also, she is the origin of the emergence of the other present, past and future determinate apprehensions. — p. 94

Interestingly enough, Abhinavagupta equates this indeterminate consciousness with the Buddhist Yogācāra notion of *ālayavijñāna* or "substratum consciousness" (p. 93 tr., p. 37 Skt.).\(^{20}\) After arguing in various ways to establish this point, Abhinavagupta sums up the still introductory section of his commentary on *atha ādyas...* (v. 5ff.).\(^{21}\)

There he establishes *paraṇāghbāmi*, also identical with the original phoneme *a*, as the basis for the following "speculation" (in the etymological sense of *speculum*, mirror) on language.

**A Note on Method**

Abhinavagupta uses any occasion to declare his method and approach. While

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19. Quotations from which are not infrequent in the *Vivaraṇa*, cf. pp. 46 (*VBh 60*), 17 (verse 69 and 70), 79 (verse 68).
20. Abhinavagupta uses this concept also in *IPVV 1.5.5* (vol. II, p. 99, l. 7).
21. See ch. 7, p. 130.
criticising Somānanda— with due reverence of course — he states the principle of universality of comprehension.

Further he relates experience and reasoning, having clarified the spiritual conditions (p. 92 quoted above). Although intuition, omniscience, access to the pure, uncontrived state of consciousness is a necessary condition for understanding Reality, he admits that even people with a limited mode of perception can have access to the true understanding in momentary insights (cf. p. 36 ll. 7-8, p. 92). The same intuitive knowledge can be established by reasoning (yukti). Abhinavagupta clearly follows these three steps: Āgama, spiritual experience — depending also on grace — and reasoning (tarka). The basis of his hermeneutics is also the acceptance of the Tantra as Sūtra, with the implication of the manifold layers of meanings (satasahisṇuṇā sūfragrānthasya, p. 35).

The stage is now set for the interpretation of the verses 5-9 and the presentation of the manifestation of phonemes and tattvas. This section starts with tadevaṁ sthite granthārtho nirṇiyate (“it being so, the meaning of the text is being explained,” p. 38, ll. 4-3 from below), basing the following development on the presuppositions stated.

Descent from “I” to “This” — aham — idam

All vowels, from a to visarga, are at the level of Śiva-tattva, and the groups of five consonants (varga) correspond to the respective unit of five tattvas (p. 98) (see Table, p. 143). Since the descent from Śiva to Earth is a movement from (Divine) subjectivity to objectivity, from aham to idam, it not only passes through different stages of predominance of the one over the other, but Abhinavagupta makes it clear that at every stage, even the most externalised and removed from consciousness, it is only

the Lord [who] assumes these states (of rāga, vidyā, kalā, māyā) which
are held in His shining Self by His own light by veiling Himself,

24. anubhava-yuktyanupraviṣṭānāṁ . . ., p. 35.
that is to say, He manifests by adopting the state of thisness (i.e. objectivity) whose nature is insenfiency. Then again He encompasses all this objectivity with I-feeling. — p. 99

Abhinavagupta hastens to emphasise the reality of the idam. Strangely, following the order of the Tantra, the tattvas following after Śiva start from below: prthivī, earth, corresponding to the phoneme ka. The tattvas, instead of being presented in descent or srṣṭikrama, are described in ascending order or sanhāarakrama. Abhinavagupta raises this question further on. But, considering the metaphysical and cosmogonic order from aham to idam, we now follow the descending order. Now in the dynamic movement from the Divine (Śiva, Śakti, Sadāśiva, Īśvara), through the Human (the kañcukas, antahkaranaḥs and indriyas) to the cosmic (from the tanmātras to the mahābhūtas), there is a bridge to be crossed, from Māyā to Śuddha-vidyā or pure knowledge. In the Vivarāṇa Abhinavagupta defends an intermediary tattva between the kañcukas and Śuddha-vidyā, that is, Mahāmāyā (p. 101), also in correspondence to the levels of the pramātās or perceivers.

The Kañcukas or Limiting Powers and their Seed-syllables

A very special place is assigned to the kañcukas, the so-called covering powers, which are here only four in number, namely māyā, kalā, rāga and vidyā, corresponding to the four semi-vowels ya ra la va (also called the bijas or seed-mantras of wind, vāyu, fire, agni, water, jala, and Indra for earth) and they are called dhāraṇās (v. 7). In the order of descent these kañcukas derive directly from māyā and they perform a dual function: they “cover” or “veil” the soul, each one representing one form of limitation as compared to the same power in its unlimited or divine form; on the other hand, they also “provide the indispensable conditions for (the soul’s) sojourn in the world of māyā.” In that sense they are capacities which can move in both directions: towards limitation and bondage if they are united with the three malas or impurities of the soul, or towards ascent to the tattvas above māyā, belonging to the “pure path” (suddhādhvān).


27. R. Torella, in his excellent study, has used the unusual translation “cuirass”.

The kañcukas are, in this case [i.e. in the PTV], described, along with the semi-vowels, as being at the same time the means by which the Divinity manifests the objectivity, and that through which it is transformed into the subject perceiving this objectivity. He (Abhinavagupta), also calls them "supports" (dhāraṇā) because they support [as well] the impure manifestation\(^{29}\) as well as the consciousness which the (limited) subject has of it.\(^{30}\)

It is because of this ambiguous function of the kañcukas that, among all the tattvas, Abhinavagupta gives them a special place in this discussion of the emanation. They, so to say, stand on the borderline between subjectivity and objectivity. In the words of R. Torella:\(^{31}\)

The cuirasses constitute the most internal and concealed structure of individual personality. In establishing their existence, Tāntric tradition — in general, even those grounded on dualistic presuppositions — seems to have been driven by a twofold need: to overcome the dualism and the basic incommunicability of the purely spiritual and the purely material components — puruṣa-prakṛti or puruṣa-buddhi — and to single out a boundary land within the human being where the jada-ajaḍa components almost touch one another, as it were. What Tāntrikas’ thought and action seem most interested in are precisely borderlines, rather than the definite states of being. In particular, the monistic schools of Kashmir will end up by seeing borderlines everywhere or, in other words, infinite potential openings, which make the jada-ajaḍa dichotomy more and more problematic and finally overthrow it altogether. — art. cit., pp. 66-67

An entire spectrum of spiritual psychology is contained in the Śaiva understanding of the kañcukas.\(^{32}\) The fact that the four semi-vowels are called antaḥstha in grammar, "those established within" or between, is also interpreted in relation to the kañcukas.

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29. I.e. the tattvas from māyā down to Earth.
31. R. Torella in his article, The Kañcukas ... goes into great detail and brings out precisely this feature of their being at the "borderline."
32. Cf. the positive functions of the kañcukas in Kṣemarāja’s commentary on Svacchanda Tantra II.42-43.
that they are "interior" to the individual soul, and even imperceptible to itself.\textsuperscript{33} Since these powers characterise the puruṣa or limited soul, and they are "in between," the Laghuvaṃṭti uses the telling image, comparing puruṣa to Trīśāṇku,\textsuperscript{34} hanging between heaven and earth:

These are the four powers that maintain the individual soul resting in the middle like Trīśāṇku, which otherwise would fall into the condition of complete inertia like a rock, or would ascend to the sky of consciousness like the supreme Lord.\textsuperscript{35}

What a powerful image of the human condition!

Coming back to our text, Abhinavagupta gives importance to the designation, dhāraṇā, and to the verb constituting it: dhārayanti, which implies two causatives. "Dhāraṇās are so-called, because they make the individual (aṭṭu) think of the universal powers of Bhairava separately" (p. 39 Skt.). The two causatives refer to the causing agent and the caused (prayojya-prayojaka bhāvadvairāpyāt . . . , p. 39). "All these states (i.e. of the kaṅcukas) are held in one's own self which is of the nature of light, in the highest state of fullness which is identical with Bhairava and universal."\textsuperscript{36} Therefore, "In one's consciousness also, one can bear witness to the fact that it is the (divine) consciousness that appears in all forms."\textsuperscript{37}

The entire argument leads to the second causative of dhārayati with the meaning that it is Śiva himself who is reduced to the status of paśu or individual soul, through the kaṅcukas: rāga, vidyā, kalā, māyā, which become the inciting or causing agents (p. 100).\textsuperscript{38}

In the consideration of the progressive emanation of the tattvas and its phonematic correspondence another doctrine of non-dualist Śaivism has to be taken into account, i.e. the seven subjects or perceivers (pramātā), related to levels of

\textsuperscript{33} R. Torella, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{34} The story of the King Trīśāṇku who remained suspended between heaven and earth is told in the Rāmāyaṇa, Bāla-Kāṇḍa, ch. 57-59, etc.

\textsuperscript{35} Parātriśikā Laghuvaṃṭti, p. 7, ll. 5-7, tr. P. Muller-Ortegr, The Triadic Heart, p. 211.

\textsuperscript{36} Tr. p. 98 modified, Skt. p. 39.

\textsuperscript{37} Tr. p. 99, Skt. p. 39: svasaṁvidi ca saṁvida eva sarvamayatvaphrathanāt.

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. Torella, art. cit., p. 73.
consciousness.\textsuperscript{39} Just as the entire scheme of emanation has two movements, one of expansion (prasāra) and the other of retraction (sarrhāra), or of descent from the plane of Śiva to the Earth, and of ascent in the opposite direction (which is the ultimate purpose of all external manifestations), so the levels of the seven perceivers (pramātā) can be seen from above, in descending order, or from below, in order of ascension.\textsuperscript{40} The correlation between the levels of emanation and the pramātās is clearly that the realities (tattva) exist and are perceived by subjects or cognisers, and these correspond to the respective levels of awareness. Hence Kṣemarāja says:

\begin{center}
\textit{tannānā anurūpa-grāhya-grāhahakabhedāt}
\end{center}

\textemdash \textit{Pratyabhijñā Hṛdaya, Sūtra 3}

That (i.e. the universe) is manifold because of the differentiation of reciprocally adopted objects and subjects.  

\textit{Tr.} Jaideva Singh, p. 52

Since Kṣemarāja gives a concise exposition of the correlation between the seven perceivers and their place in the scheme of the tattvas, it will be useful to cite his auto-commentary on this Sūtra:

**Commentary**

\textit{“Tat} (that) means the universe; nānā means manifold. Why (manifold)? Because of the differentiation between objects and subjects which are anurūpa, i.e. in a state of reciprocal adaptation.”

[The correspondence or reciprocal adaptation of object and subject now follows.]

Just as in the Sadāśiva principle (there is the experience of), the total universe as an object of the nature of parapara, i.e. both identical and different (a stage in which the experience is of the form “I am this”), (in which) the experience is dominated by the Consciousness of I, and (in which the experience of) this-ness is (yet) incipient, even so there is the group of experients, called mantramahēśvaras who are governed by the blessed Lord Sadāśiva, and whose existence in that state is brought about by the will of the highest Lord.

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
Just as in the Īśvara tattva (principle), the entire universe is apprehended (in the form, “I am this”) where both the consciousness of I and that of this are simultaneously distinct, even so is (the consciousness of) the group of individual experients, (known as) mantreśvara, governed by venerable Īśvara.

In the stage of vidyā or śuddha-vidyā, just as there are the experients, called mantras, of different states together with many secondary distinctions, governed by Anantabhaṭṭāraka, even so there is as an object of knowledge one universe whose sole essence consists of differentiations.

Above māyā (and below śuddha-vidyā) are the experients, called Vijñānākālas who are devoid of (the sense of) agency, and who are of the nature of pure awareness. Corresponding to them is their object of knowledge or field of experience which is identical with them in their previous states of existence.

At the stage of māyā (are), the experients of void or pralayakevalins whose field of experience consists of the insensible which is quite appropriate to their state.

(After the pralayaḥkālas) are stationed the sakalas (from māyā up to the earth) who are different from everything and limited, and whose field of experience is as limited and different as themselves.

Śivalhaṭṭāraka, however, who transcends all these (i.e. all the experients from Mantramahēśvara to Sakala), who is constituted only of prakāśa (light) has states or modes which are only of the form of prakāśa (light, i.e. consciousness). Again in blissful Paramāśiva (highest Śiva) who both transcends the universe and is the universe, who is the highest bliss and consists of a mass of prakāśa (light, i.e. consciousness) flashes the entire universe from Śiva down to the earth in identity (with Paramāśiva). Actually (in that state), there is neither any other subject nor object. Rather what is practically meant to be stated is this that in actuality the highest blissful Śiva alone manifests himself in this way in numerous forms of multiplicity.

— Pratyabhījña Hṛdaya, tr. Jaideva Singh, pp. 52-54
### Tattvas and Pramātās

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### The Five Brahmas

Another important group of phonemes consists of the last five consonants, the sibilants termed *pañcabrahma*, the five Brahmas, i.e. śa, sa, sa, ha, kṣa, corresponding in ascending order to the levels of reality: Mahāmāyā — Śuddhavidyā — Iśvara — Sadāśiva — Śakti. This is the transition from the impure to the pure course of *tattvas*, and hence of special significance. Since māyā has been included as a kañcuka, mahāmāyā takes its place, which in the group of *pramātās*, corresponds to the level of pralayākala. It is only beginning with śuddha-vidyā that the perceivers can ascend from mantra to Mantramahaśvara.

Why they are called five Brahmas is explained by a *nirvacana* of the word:

They are known as *Brahma* because the root *bṛha* from which the word *brahma* is derived means “to grow great” and “to make grow.” These categories are called *brahma* firstly because they transcend difference (*bhedasamuttirvāt*) (from the point of view of *bṛhatva* “growing great”) and secondly because they bring about the production of the universe of differentiation.

The five Brahmas traditionally refer to the five faces of Śiva and their respective

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41. This terminology is specific to *PT* v. 7, cf. A. Sanderson, *History through Textual Criticism*, p. 37, note 47.
This assumes importance in the encoding of the core mantra in verse 10 and its commentary (tṛṭṭyāṁ brahma). Whenever he explains brahma in the context of the Tantra, Abhinavagupta emphasises the nirvacana connoting its dynamic, expanding nature and its pervasiveness (vyāpakatva) over the static interpretation in Vedānta, because the spiritual ascent starts from śuddha-vidyā.

Abhinavagupta further defends the ascending order of tattvas from earth up to Śakti, based on other Tantras such as Malinīvijayottara, Svachchanda, etc. (p. 102, p. 41 Skt.).

In his commentary on verses 5-9 Abhinavagupta has left no aspect of language out namely, sound, phonematic creation, correlation between phonemes and spheres of the universe, and initially, mantra. Before we proceed with this description, a digression on the more general theme of sound and language will be useful to connect to practical experience, as Abhinavagupta himself does time and again.

The Universality of Sound: Nāda and Svara

Abhinavagupta does not miss any occasion to bridge the gap between Āgama and ordinary experience, thus establishing the universality of the insights of the Tantra, the contrary of taking recourse to a purely esoteric sphere far removed from the world. In this sphere of language and mantra, his basic insights into sound are revealing. The starting point is always a possible objection, one being the limitation of phonemes or sounds to the fifty mātrkās of the Sanskrit alphabet (cf. p. 178), and connected with it is the question of inarticulate or meaningless sounds. In the background lies the question of mantra and the apparent meaninglessness of certain (mainly bija) mantras (cf. p. 178), an objection which has been raised at his time and even now! To the last question he gives a truly aesthetic and psychological reply:

If it is said that certain phonemes are separate from mātrkā, and being indistinct and meaningless, they are useless, therefore, they should not be accepted, we say that this is not correct. There is usefulness even of an indistinct phoneme, such as the sound of a

42. These faces are: Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva and Aghora. Cf. J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation, pp. 12-16.
muraja (a kind of drum) or of an ocean\textsuperscript{43} inasmuch as it is helpful in bringing about joy or sorrow. — p. 178

Besides, there are inner sounds perceived by yogīs such as the sound of a bell or cymbal, and powerful mantras uttered by yoginīs (p. 178, quotation from Guhyayoginī Tantra). In a nutshell, Abhinavagupta states about the essence of mantra:

\textit{vastutastu āntara evāsau nādātma mantra}

— p. 65, 3\textsuperscript{rd} line from below

In fact, it is the inner sound that is mantra.

\textit{Mahāmantras} which have distinct and meaningful phonemes can be easily used both by you and us. — p. 178

Relating these statements together it is clear that sounds, whether of mantras, natural sources such as the waves of an ocean, or music, have a strong effect on the mind.

He gives the beautiful example of the cooing of birds and the sounds produced by different animals (pp. 178 f.):

When those indistinct phonemes also (i.e. the \textit{asphuṭa varṇa} or indistinct phonemes like those of birds, etc.) acquire the status of words which have perfectly clear meaning like distinct phonemes (\textit{varṇānāmīva}), then according to the principle mentioned, the cooing of birds and even the sounds of kettledrum, etc. become full of meaning. Then as the cooing of birds has some meaning, even so the sound of drum may be indicative of either conquest or defeat. — p. 179

According to Patañjali’s\textsuperscript{44} Yogasūtra, the yogī has the power to understand the sounds of all beings (\textit{sarvabhūta-rutajñāna}, p. 66, l. 3), because he has access to the

\textsuperscript{43}. Cf. also \textit{Lakṣmi Tantra} 57.14-15 where the sound of an ocean, of a river, and a mountain cave is called \textit{avyakta}, unmanifest (corresponding to \textit{asphuṭa} in the \textit{PTV}, indistinct).

\textsuperscript{44}. Yogasūtra 3.17: \textit{śabdārtha-pratīyāṇānām itaretara-adhyāsāt saṁkaras-tatpravībhāga-saṁyamāt sarvabhūtaruta-jñānam}. Interestingly, the \textit{Vyāsabhāṣya} does not give a logical or metaphysical justification for this kind of knowledge, which can be better explained in the context of the four levels of \textit{vāk}.
supreme level of the Word. These examples go to show the connectedness of all sounds, whether as distinct phonemes in the fifty letters of mātrkā, or as indistinct sounds, with the level of parāvāk:

Therefore, though the condensation of the phonemes becomes distinct only in the vaikhārī or gross aspect, yet it abides primarily in the supreme Verbum (parāvāk) which is all inclusive (sarvasarvātmaka).

— p. 176

In one of the decisive statements getting to the essence of the phonemes, of sound, of mantra, Abhinavagupta summarises:

So by this repeatedly thought-out reasoning, entering more and more in the interior, cherish that consciousness which is a mass of awareness and is all-inclusive, and therefore the abode of guttural and labial energies (also), and in which inheres that creative I-consciousness, viz. aham which is the very quintessence of autonomy, which is the venerable phoneme, the highest mantra, and is (always) inherent within.

— p. 177

Therefore one and the same venerable supreme Verbum (ekaiva parābhavattārikā), being all-inclusive, abides as the highest Lord in all, whether stone, tree, animal, man, god, Rudra, pralayākala or vijnānākala (kevalī), Mantra, Mantreśvara, Mantramahēśvara and others. Therefore, Mātrkā whose body consists of letters (and sounds) which reside in various stations as their very soul either in indistinct (asphutra) or imperceptible (avyakta) way as in madhyama or in distinct (sphutra) or perceptible (vyakta) way as in vaikhārī is declared as the efficacious potency of mantra (mantravṛtya).

— p. 177

Another important example for the power and effect of sound is music, of which Abhinavagupta is an acknowledged master. He gives the example of different instruments, different kinds of vīnā and drums (p. 177 last para - 178), producing the same note (sthāyī svara) in different registers.

He plays with the double meaning of svara as (musical) sound and vowel and gives it the highest meaning again by a nirvacana, splitting the word into sva and ra:

So these kalās, i.e. the phonemes a, etc. of anuttara are called svara on account of their revealing the delightful mental state. The
etymological explanation of \textit{svara} is as follows. The root \textit{sv} means (i) those which utter a sound (\textit{śabdāyanti}), i.e. indicate a delightful mental mode (\textit{sūcayanti cittānti}) and (ii) which (in the state of withdrawal) yield their essential nature to Śiva, the highest subject (\textit{svaṁ ca svarūpam ātmānaṁ rānti}), i.e. which dissolve completely in \textit{anuttara}. Thus the word \textit{svarah} means those which transmitting their essential nature to the highest experient (i.e. \textit{anuttara}) offer themselves, i.e. get dissolved in \textit{anuttara} (as vowels) (in the aspect of \textit{sānhāra} or withdrawal) and offer their form as consonants like \textit{ka}, etc., i.e. display (existents) externally (in the aspect of \textit{prasāra} or expansion).

The entire aesthetic or \textit{rasa} experience is evoked by sound, whether spontaneous or musical:

These \textit{svaras} as mere sounds (\textit{nādātmakāh}) are indicative of mental modes like pathos (\textit{karuṇa}), the amatory sentiment (\textit{sṛṅgāra}), contentment (\textit{sānta}), by means of lamentation, pleasing words, laudatory expressions respectively either merely by themselves or by penetrating consonants. They display mental modes even of animals, a-day-old creatures by appearing suddenly, without the slightest trace of any hindrance of conventional sign, etc. and by acquiring the form of exclamatory enunciation (\textit{svarakāvādirūpaṭam aśnuvānaḥ}), since they are so close to direct feeling. Thus \textit{udātta}, etc. have been taught as having the characteristic of expressiveness. They are indicative of mental mode by means of musical notes, such as \textit{ṣadja}, etc.

— p. 188

In the \textit{Tantrāloka} Abhinavagupta distinguishes three types of sound: the gross, the subtle, and the supreme (3.237). The \textit{sthūlapaśyantī} “has the nature of sound which is beautiful with musical notes, without any division in phonemes” (3.237-38). He gives the example of the sound of drums which belongs to the realm of \textit{sthūlamadhyama}, and which is “close to consciousness” (\textit{tadasyaṁ nādarūpāyāṁ sanvītsavidhā vṛttitah}, 3.239). It is these musical sounds which have the power to evoke an aesthetic delight of merging in the source of the sound (3.240-41).

45. Here Abhinavagupta replies implicitly to the question raised even today in the context of aesthetics, whether pure, i.e. instrumental music can evoke specific \textit{rasas}. Cf. P.L. Sharma, \textit{Indian Aesthetics and Musicology}, Varanasi: Amnaya Prakashan, 2000, chapters on “Levels of Aesthetic Experience in Music” and “Rasa Theory and Indian Music” (pp. 93-108).
The Question of the Plurality of Languages

One of the main problems faced by the theory of the alphabet is the difference obtaining in various Tantras, their mantras, and in a more general sense, the different languages with their various meanings. In the context of the three grammatical persons there is already a reference to different languages such as Pali and Dravidian languages, and to the question of understanding (p. 74). In this context Abhinavagupta states the basis of any language and its grammar thus: “It is only this state of complete understanding, the essence of the residual traces of the innate, perfect I-consciousness which is followed by the grammarians in their descriptive rules” (p. 74). And language “originally follows the instructive feeling of the heart” (ibid. vacana kramaśca hārdīmeva pratiśī mūlato ’nusaran tatpratītirasarūpatayā, p. 27).

The basic distinction is between language as convention based on māyā (māyiya, i.e. contrived) where there is a difference between word and meaning, and mantra as non-conventional embodying the reality expressed, where there is identity between word and meaning. First the question arises why different Tantras contain different mantras and Parātrīśikā is unique in some ways (cf. pp. 104-5). In conventional languages which are the creations of human fancy, the same word sometimes indicates varying senses. Not without a sense of humour, Abhinavagupta gives the following example:

For instance the southerners designate “boiled rice” with the word caura, and the inhabitants of Sindha designate “thief” with the same word, and “boiled rice,” they designate with the word krūra. The Kāśmīrīs, however, indicate with that word (i.e. krūra) husked barley, wheat and rice.

The plethora of linguistic conventions does not end there:

If one has to depend on convention only, then will arise the problem of endless conventions coming down from one’s own Śāstra, from another Śāstra, popular conventions, conventions of particular assemblies, conventions coming down from a host of teachers, convention particular for each different person and so on. This problem will also have to be examined.
In the case of any difficulty in reconciling various concepts, Abhinavagupta takes the reader back to the stage of the Supreme Word:

Therefore, thinking carefully on this matter, stay quiet, while I remove the difficulties involved.

This question-answer in its entirety — not partially — resides really in the divine parāvāk (the cosmic Ideation) whose quintessence is autonomy (svātantrya) which is independent of everything, which is unsurpassable and is able to bring what is most difficult to accomplish, and which is not affected even by an iota of dependence on others. — p. 108

He returns to the question of multiplicity and the relation between the conventional, empirical language and the non-conventional, mantric aspect of it where the difference between symbol and symbolised is transcended. It is the same as the difference between vikalpa and nirvikalpa. The following is the course of his arguments:

There is such a method of the entrance into the supreme consciousness everywhere. Whether in jñānaśakti (saṅkalpyamānaḥ) or in kriyāśakti (kriyamānaḥ), every object rests on the superb splendour of the mantra of supreme verbum, viz. the pure, creative I-consciousness (vimarśātma) which is one's essential nature (svarūpaḥbhūta) and which is non-māyīya (non-empirical) and unconventional (asāṅkṣetika). It is that state which is lauded by all the schools of philosophy as indeterminate (nirvikalpa). That splendour of the supreme mantra (paramantramāhaḥ) is present in the earth category, etc. both in unmixed or mixed states in the form of vowels (bīja) and consonants (piṇḍa) in phonemes like ka, etc. Otherwise there would have been no difference between the determinate different pairs of knowledge, such as Meru-mountain and Jujube fruit, water and fire, jar (an external experience) and their indeterminate knowledge. — p. 180

The basis for differentiation lies equally in the supreme level of the Word:

The fact is that mantra (of I-consciousness or parāvāk) which transcends all conventionality is taught as the object of worship by the all-knowing teachers even when they know that the mantra is the source of all the mutually distinctive conventions. It is, indeed, in that non-
conventional splendour of the supreme verbum (vānmahasi), i.e. into aham (I) that all empirical (māyiya) conventional symbols so terminate that they, i.e. the māyiya (empirical) symbols attain identity with that transcendental, non-conventional mantra, viz., aham. The only signification of those empirical (māyiya) conventional symbols consists in the attainment of the experience of the essential nature of the non-conventional, there is no other significance of these symbols. — p. 180

tatha ca yadeva tadasāṃketikā mantravapuh, tadeva anyonya-vicitrarūpam paśyadbhiḥ sarvajñaḥ saṃketopāyam-upādyatayā upadiśyate | tatraiva cāsāṃketike vānmahasi tathā khalu māyiyaḥ saṃketaḥ patanti | yathā ta evānānīyāsāṃketa mantratadātyam pratipadyante tathā svarūpa pratipattireva hi teṣām vācakatābhāvo nānyāḥ kaścit | — pp. 66-67

He thus establishes the relatedness between the conventional language and the supreme level which is the sphere of mantra.

In the context of the description of vowels and consonants symbolised by bīja (seed) and yoni (womb), Abhinavagupta makes a powerful statement about the difference between mystical/mantric language and language as an object of the study of grammarians:

If there is union of bīja (germ) in the form of vowels with the womb in the form of consonants, in other words, if there is the homogeneous union of Śiva and Śakti, then what a pleasant surprise; without any effort, without tilling and sowing will be generated both bhoga (enjoyment) and mokṣa (liberation).

The bīja-varṇa or vowel is adequate in itself and the yoni-varṇa or the consonant is equally so. Therefore, which is the cause and which the effect? Such argument does not disturb us who are making a statement about consciousness which is teeming with infinite variety. Even in worldly dealings dominated by māyā, speech which imparts clarity to the successive letters and words and, being of the nature of light, brings about thinking and has the nature of bringing about a unified sense (ekaparāmarśasvabhāvaiva). By others (the followers of other doctrines and the grammarians) this, i.e. the supreme consciousness (parāsaṃvid) has been proved by laboured deliberation. In this system, it is established effortlessly to those who earnestly take to its teaching. Therefore, we do not insist on one’s going to
the house of a teacher of grammar, the only gain of which will be a little refinement of speech. — pp. 122-23

We shall return to this distinction when considering Matṛkā and Malinī.

In order to prove this point of the descent of Vak from the highest level (parā), through the Visionary (paśyantī) and the Intermediary (madhyamā) down to embodied speech (vaikhāri) Abhinavagupta takes recourse to the example from life, that of a child learning language.46

In a new-born child even when the vocal organs are not yet developed, the subtle form of vaikhāri inheres in madhyamā by which he is able to associate heard word and seen object by means of an inner, subtle, unmanifest implicit proto-language.

It has also to be admitted that the constituent elements of vaikhāri are present in his mind in an implicit form for without these, he could not have been able to have even an implicit form of language and without this he could not have been able to associate the seen object and the heard word.

If it be said that it is madhyamā itself that becomes distinguished by the difference resulting from such development, we may ask how? Let us discuss this point carefully.

The child hears the words and sees the objects and thus develops his acquisition of language. He mentally lays hold on the words heard. The words heard are of the level of vaikhāri (articulate speech).

In regard to these words, he is like one born blind in regard to forms. (He hears the sounds but does not know what they refer to.) Therefore, vaikhāri constituted by speech organs and articulation certainly inheres in madhyamā. — pp. 155-56

If children have the capacity of learning a language, it is thanks to the higher levels of the Word, which means to a consciousness transcending the conventional language.

Even in a child, there is at first the predominance of only cit (pure, unconditioned consciousness). Therefore, even in the present life

46. The topic of children learning language had occupied earlier thinkers, e.g. in Mīmāṃsā, Bhartrhari, etc.
after a previous one, there exists in him a consciousness which transcends conventionality. Otherwise there would be no support for his conventionality to stay. So it is on the basis of the non-conventional that there can be the possibility of the comprehension of the conventional, not otherwise. — p. 181

These considerations lead to the encompassing topic of the four levels of the Word, the major hermeneutic scheme applied to the entire text.

The Four Levels of the Word (Vāk)

The hermeneutical scheme of the four levels of Vāk has such a centrality for the entire understanding of the text that Abhinavagupta unfolds it right at the beginning of the Vivaraṇa. It covers all the aspects, the metaphysical, the development of language at all levels, the descent (and ascent) of consciousness, the cosmogonic, as it is homologised with the tattvas. In the introductory passage, actually defining Devī, the overall thrust of the Vivaraṇa is contained.

The Śakti which is full of the thought of Grace for the entire world is, to begin with, non-different (in the undifferentiated or nirvikalpa state) from paśyantī who is parāmarśamayī, i.e. who is always cognisant of the essential nature of the Divine and who has a hundred powers which are boundless in operation which however will be described later. She (the Supreme vāk) is, in the most initial stage, stationed in the Divine I-consciousness which is the highest mantra and which is not limited by space or time. In that stage (parā-vāk) abides without any distinction of question and answer which will start in paśyantī.

The parāvāk which is non-dual, i.e. identical with the (supreme) consciousness is present in all experiencers always in her integral nature (of knowership and doership) uniformly in all states, i.e. even at the level of paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī. Therefore, paśyantī comprehends in a general indeterminate (nirvikalpa) way whatever

47. yāvat bālasūryāpi janmāntarānusāraye 'pi citsvabhāvasyaśādau sthitai vāsānākṣetikī sattā- anyathānavaśāsānātī t — p. 67, ll. 5-7.

48. I refer to the excellent chapter on this theme in A. Padoux, Vāc, pp. 166-222, therefore, I am not elaborating it except in relation to the Vivaraṇa.

49. Again, it is surprising that the Laghuvyāti does not refer to such a central doctrine and does not apply it to the interpretation of the Tantra.
is desired to be known if it is awakened by due causal conditions just as one who has experienced variegated colours like dark, blue, etc. as in a peacock’s tail and whose experience is determined by many impressions, positive and negative, recalls only that particular colour which is awakened by the proper causal condition of the memory. At the time of initial indeterminate knowledge in paśyantī in which there is no distinction in the word and its referent, there was obviously not any sense of difference between the word and its referent.

Madhyamā, however, which shows the difference between the word and its referent is concerned with its comprehension only in the same location (sāmānādhikaranya), i.e. in the antahkarana or the inner psychic apparatus. In vaikhari, on the other hand, there is a clear difference between the two, i.e. between the word and its referent. When this regular, fixed relation of the word and its referent (vyāvasthayām) is proved in one’s own experience, it will be found that what is the stage of para vāk is the power of non-māyā word and is of the nature of the highest truth. It is unconventional (asāmketika), natural (akṛtaka), having as its essence the stamp of the highest truth, and is inspired by the truth of the energy of the mantra of I-consciousness, the principle of which will be described in the sequels.

She abides in the subsequent conditions of paśyantī, etc. also, for without her there would accrue the condition of non-manifestation, in paśyantī, etc. and thus would arise the contingency of absolute insensateness (jañatā).

In that stage (i.e. in the parāvāk stage), there is absolutely no thought of difference such as “this” (a particular entity or individual), “thus” (a particular form), “here” (particular space), and “now” (particular time). Therefore, beginning with paśyantī which is the initial creative state of the energy of the highest mantra, up to vaikhari in which manifestation of difference of all the existents has proceeded fully, this parāvāk full of the wondrous delight of her own self, resting within her own self which is all Light, continues pulsating (sphurati). That pulsation is I-consciousness whose highest truth is uninterrupted continuity. This matter will be clarified further on.
incipience of difference, in the madhyamā state in which there is an appearance of difference (inwardly in the psychic apparatus), which consists specifically of jñāna (knowledge) and kriyā (activity) respectively — jñāna which is the predominant attribute of Sadasiva and kriyā which is the predominant attribute of Īśvara, the wondrous delight of I-consciousness which encloses within itself the joy of objective existence of innumerable universes is fully operative. Therefore, Supreme Consciousness even while appearing as paśyantī and madhyamā actually experiences Herself as the Supreme Consciousness. It is this Supreme Consciousness (parā sanātana) that is said to be “Devi” (goddess).

— pp. 8-9

We have already encountered many of the themes contained in this passage. Since the entire text is dedicated to Anuttarā Parā, the primordial stage of the Word is much more than a stage, as A. Padoux emphasised:

So this is indeed parāvāc — this supreme essence of Speech divine in nature, wherein are grounded ontologically, logically, and (as we shall see) archetypally, all that expresses and all that is to be expressed — that provides the basis both for the reality of the universe and the validity of its cognisance through speech.

— A. Padoux, Vāc p. 187

The dynamism of this Divine Word in its descending (srṣṭikramena, p. 3) is again and again expressed by verbs such as sphurati (p. 2), “luminous vibrating,” ullāsa, “shining forth, radiating,” etc. It is this very basic dynamism which brings forth the phonemes and the corresponding tattvas:

In the apprehension of the highest consciousness (paramātmanī parāmarśe), all the categories of existence are only of the nature of consciousness (i.e. they are all Śiva). The supreme truth of that apprehension is the expansion of śakti from ka to kṣa. Therefore, in the highest consciousness (parā) there is complete absence of difference. In parāparā, there is non-difference in difference according to the principle of reflection. When the parāparā state which has the form of a garland of letters from ka to kṣa holds as reflection the categories existing in parā which is situated at a level higher than itself, then of the non-māyīya, inaudible (to the gross sense), supreme ka to kṣa letters, the categories (tattvānī) acquire a reversal of order,
i.e. the upper becomes lower and the lower upper. The sense is that this happens through the power of the nature of the original (bimba) which is in the upper level, acquiring a lower level in reflection. So in the statement that "there is prthvī tattva in kṣa" there is no contradiction, from the point of view of that which is to be purified and the purifier. Because of the invariable continuity of the para state, even in that, i.e. even in parāparā state there is the continuous succession of ka and other letters (kādi varnasantānāḥ). — pp. 120-21

We shall come to the theme of bimba-pratibimba later.

That even the most external expression of speech, at the level of vaikharī, "the embodied one," is inherently connected to the supreme level, is explicitly stated by Abhinavagupta.

Therefore, though the condensation of the phonemes becomes distinct only in the vaikharī or gross aspect, yet it abides primarily in the supreme verbum (parāvāk) which is all-inclusive (sarvasarvātmaka).

In that (i.e. in para), even the organs of speech (stāna) such as throat, lips and manner of articulation (karaṇa) are all-inclusive. This is the special point to be noted. Even inwardly one mutters and envisions. This is a matter of distinct experience. Their difference is due to the various organs of utterance, for audition is the very life of the letters.50 — p. 176

The relationship of the tattvas with the stages of the Word was already contained in the first passage cited. In the order of creation (śṛṣṭikrama), Sadāśiva occupies an important position, and the symbolism will be shown in an image. His level corresponds to pasyantī, "the Visionary Word" as the first movement towards manifestation, and it is related to jñāna-sakti of the Lord, sometimes also to his icchā-sakti (cf. p. 9). The next step down, where creativity is more pronounced, is the tattva of Īśvara, corresponding to madhyama, "the Intermediary," and to kriyā-sakti, the power of activity. From suddha-vidyā and māyā downwards the tattvas partake of the nature of vaikharī, "the Embodied Speech."

50. evaṁ ca ghaṇṭabhāvo 'pi vaikharīrūpe yadyapi sphuṭibhavati, tathāpi sarvasarvātmani parāvāg vapuṣi mukhyatayāvatiṣṭhate | . . . , p. 64.
The Universe of Language — The Language of the Universe

Coming back to the emanation of phonemes and cosmotheandric elements, we have to look at some interrelated topics left out so far. One is the relationship of the two alphabet systems: Matyka and Malini, with the corresponding tattvas. Since all vowels, as we have seen, belong to the realm of Śiva, it is only the consonants which are in correspondence with the tattvas.

VOWELS

In his interpretation of this section Abhinavagupta depends on the Malințvijayottara, so also as regards the symbolism of vowels and consonants: 51

Word and its referent can become universal if they are associated together by nature. Vowels which are of the nature of germ (bija) and consonants which are of the nature of their receptacle (yoni) denote Śiva and Śakti respectively and, therefore, the former is denotative and the latter is the denotated. — p. 122

The symbolism of seed and womb has both an organic and a mystical implication: without the combination of both, no creativity takes place, no form is created; but since vowels are identical with Śiva and consonants with Śakti, it is their union which creates meaning (cf. Kālidāsa, vāgarthau iva saṃpryktau pārvatī paramēśvarau — Raghuvamsam 1.1). The creation of language, along with the creation of meaning and the creation of the universe are intertwined, and happens only by the integration of Śiva and Śakti. The mystical aspect is more prominent in the Malinț arrangement, as we shall see.

The basic understanding is that the phonemes of the alphabet — whether of Matyka or Malini — are divine powers or Śaktis: matyka are “little mothers” because they create and engender, and Malini, “the garlanded one” is herself a Goddess.

The vowels have an inherent dynamism, all within the Śiva nature. We have already seen a as the adyavarṇa, the original phoneme standing for Anuttara.

When the question of emanation arises, there is the appearance of a temporal succession, and Abhinavagupta hastens to add:

51. Cf. MVT III.10, 12 quoted p. 122. These themes are fully enunciated in the Tantraloka III, and in short form in Tantrasāra III.
In the vimarśa-śakti of Bhairava, this is no stain either of the appearance of succession or simultaneity. According to the precept referred to previously, viz. that time is only a thought construct, succession should be deliberated upon (kramo vicāraṇīyaḥ) in accordance with the fact that the very nature of the massive creative Self-consciousness (vimarśaikaghana) of the Supreme (parābhāṭṭārikā) gives rise to infinite, future absorptions and emanations and that there is an appearance of succession and non-succession (kramākramāvabhāsaḥ) in that nature of the Divine which is above both succession and simultaneity (kramaugapadyāśahiṣṇu). As has been said: “Lord Bhairava is autonomous, perfect, whole and omnipresent. That which does not appear in the mirror of His Self does not exist.” Non-succession can have its existence only in consciousness in which there is an appearance of both succession and non-succession (akramasya tatpūrvakeṇa saṁvidyeva bhāvāt), so succession has to be accepted for the sake of exposition. Since succession has its ratio essendi in consciousness only, all this mental grip in the form of speech is only succession (sarva evāyaṁ vāgrpah kramika eva). That grip which is of the inner consciousness is non-successive only. Thus the divine supreme Sakti (parābhāṭṭārikā) is always of this kind, i.e. multifarious and variegated (vicitrā). Therefore it is in accordance with succession, i.e. in order to indicate succession in non-succession, the grammarians have formed at by placing t after a.

It is against this metaphysical backdrop that the manifestation of the phonemes, which is purely an expression of the Divine Power of Freedom, takes place. It is his Energies which take the form of the vowels, descending from a, i.e. Anuttara: Abhinavagupta develops the theme with his genial combination of metaphysics (manifestation of the Divine Energies), linguistics (all based on Sanskrit grammar), epistemology (aspects of knowledge), and psychology (the same stages of unfolding can be found in the individual consciousness). All these levels of understanding are dimensions of the Divine vimarśa-śakti. Thus in between the entire speculation he again admonishes his disciples/readers:

\begin{quote}
upasamharata bāhya vibhrama bhramaṇam tāvat ।
anupraviṣṭa sūkṣmām vimarśadevīm ।
\end{quote}

Desist from wandering in the error of external appearance. Set out on the path of the Divine Power of subtle reflection.
And he appeals to personal experience for verifying his explanation:

\[ \text{samvid}āh \ svātāntryām \ eva \ bhāvojji\text{gamiśātmakam}\text{ī}\text{śanam}I \]
\[ \text{svasa}ṃvit\text{pramānalandhameva}I \]

— p. 59

It is the autonomy of Consciousness only which, desirous of projecting objects, is known as īsāna or sovereignty. This is known by the testimony of one’s own experience. — p. 164

The manifestation of the sixteen vowels as Divine Energies is described also in the Tantraloka (and in a shorter version in the Tantrasāra), in the third āhni\mbox{ka} in the context of śāmbhavopāya or the Divine Way. It is significant, because this kind of linguistic meditation on the very constituents of language and of the universe as well belongs to a high stage of yogic consciousness.\(^{52}\) The topic is of immense spiritual magnitude. We propose only to summarise to a certain extent,\(^{53}\) and to show the specific contribution of the Vivaraṇa.

The vowels as bijas are symbols or “abbreviations” of the Śaktis, and the first 16 manifestations of Śiva’s “phonemic awareness” or varnaparāmarśa, as translated by A. Padoux:

This word denotes a synthetic awareness, of consideration, bringing together in a single act of consciousness the oneness of the agent of cognition (prama\text{tī}) that is, of the divine, absolute, consciousness which brings forth the universe, and the particularised forms of this universe, which, as we know, ever dwells in the knower. Thus the phonemic emanation will occur through a succession of fifty “phonemic awarenesses”: varnaparāmarśa, through which the supreme Śiva will become aware, and thereby bring forth fifty different aspects of his own energy, that of the Word, which he will apprehend both as being all different and yet dwelling all within him. Parāmarśa is thus the creative act itself. — Vāc, p. 228

The first three simple vowels: \(a, i\) and \(u\) are the fundamental constituents which expand and combine, according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar.

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52. Cf. TĀ III.108 cf. also III.77, it is the yogins only who discern this state of the beginning of differentiation.

53. I again refer to the relevant chapter in A. Padoux, Vāc, “The Phonematic Emanation”, pp. 223-86 for the vowels only.
When a being Anuttara expands it becomes ā which stands for ānanda, bliss. The combination of a + a symbolises the union (saṁghaṭṭa) of Śiva and Śakti,54 “from which the universe will be created.” The second vowel is i standing for icchā-ṣakti, the energy of will, the first impulse arising in the heart of the Absolute towards creation.

Thus the autonomy (svātantrya-ṣakti) of the Lord in the form of Will in which the manifestation of existents has not yet started (anunmūltita-bhāva-vikāśa) and the essence of which consists in an inner massive I-consciousness is designated a. That svātantrya-ṣakti (power of autonomy) abiding in the Transcendent (anuttara) is designated Will in which that which is to be willed has not yet become prominent. This will is only a state of consciousness of the transcendental being (anuttara-saṁśīla). The highest Lord is always conscious of His own nature. He is akula-ṣakti. Though in being aware of His form, He makes use of kula-ṣakti, yet there is a distinction in the concept of akula-ṣakti from that of kula-ṣakti. Akula is the creative I-consciousness (vimarśa saṁśīla) of Bhairava. That svātantrya-ṣakti expanding further is known as ā which denotes ānanda-ṣakti. Perfect icchā or Will is i. Icchā itself wishing to perceive (lit. to seize) the future jñāna or knowledge through its autonomy becomes ī which denotes īśana or sovereignty. Ī is the unmeṣa or appearance of īśana-ṣakti which is the source of all objective existents desired to be known.

But icchā also characterises the Divine way or śāmbhavopāya, consisting in the pure union of the yogī with divine Will. Icchā or i thus moves in both directions: towards manifestation in the case of the Divine, towards merging in the Divine (samāvesa) from the side of the practitioner. When i expands or is united with another i, emerges ī or īśana, sovereignty or lordship, which is an intensification or externalisation of pure icchā.

In the description of this expansion of vowels as acts of consciousness of the Divine, the verb ksūbh and ksobha are used, both in the Tantrāloka and the Vivaraṇa, a term which usually has the negative implication of agitation, perturbation, disturbance. For instance in the Spanda Kārika the supreme state is said to be

54. Cf. TĀ III.68.
attained "when agitation ceases."\textsuperscript{55} But in the context of a movement of expansion \textit{kṣobha} denotes the stir or creative agitation.\textsuperscript{56}

If one reflects on the essential nature of \textit{anuttara (a); ānanda (a); (akṣubdha or calm) icchā; (kṣubdha or perturbed icchā), i.e. īśāna (ī); (akṣubdha or calm jñāna) unmesa (u); (kṣubdha or perturbed jñāna) ānantā (ā) — one will find that the above six phonemes rest in the indivisible plane of consciousness, i.e. \textit{anuttara} or a phase as their base and that these divinities, the (six) energies of consciousness (though appearing separately) are not separate from their basic essential nature (\textit{ananyā eva sva-saṃvidah}), for being perfect, there is no difference in their nature. — p. 164

According to the five \textit{saktis} of the Supreme, \textit{cit, ānanda, icchā}, the last two are \textit{jñāna} and \textit{kriyā}. The third simple (non-agitated) vowel is \textit{u}, which stands for \textit{unmesa}, "awakening": "\textit{u} is the \textit{unmesa} or appearance of \textit{jñāna-sakti} which is the source of all objective existents desired to be known" (p. 162, Skt. p. 59). The intensification of \textit{unmesa} or \textit{jñāna-sakti} leads to objectivisation, and hence to a diminution of consciousness:

When \textit{unmesa} or the arising of knowledge (\textit{unmiśattā}) has, in consciousness, the desire for further objectivity (\textit{unmimiṣatāyām}), the transcendental consciousness becomes diminished (\textit{āṇibhūta anuttarasamvit}) owing to contraction (\textit{saṅkocavaśena}) which is due to all forms lying within or tending to assume subsequent objectivity (\textit{antahprāṇa sarvasvarūpa-unmesottaraika-rūpairapi}) and to the multitude of existents which lie within as nearly objective, in which the aspect of difference is almost indistinct and which are tending to appear objectively (\textit{antahkarāṇa-vedyadesīya-aspūṭa-prāyabhedaṁśa-bhāsanānabhaṅga-rāśibhiḥ}). This reduced consciousness, because of its retention within itself of all objectivity (\textit{sarvabhāvagarbhiṇāreṇa}), is like the udder of the wish-fulfilling celestial cow, viz. the \textit{parāsakti} (\textit{anānga-dhainavirūpa-paрадevatāyāḥ-ādhorūpā}), and upholding the multitude of entire

\textsuperscript{55} SpKâ I.9: yadā kṣobhah pralīyeta tadā syāt paramānāḥ padam.

\textsuperscript{56} Cf. TĀ III.82-90. "The nature of the seed consists in being the cause of stirring, the nature of the womb in being the receptacle (ādēṭra)." (v. 82ab). He further defines \textit{kṣobha}: "It is the nature of consciousness to cause a stir. It is itself stirred and causes to stir. \textit{Kṣobha} is the nature of the knowable (object), and by stirring it (consciousness) gets externalised" (82bc-83ab).
objectivity, becomes manifest (sphuṭa), wide-spreading jñāna-śakti, i.e. ā. — pp. 162-63

This stage is represented by ā identified with ānata, diminution. In the Tantrasāra Abhinavagupta uses the speaking term ārmi for ā: “wave,” because it is the agitated state of the calm ocean of awakening or unmeṣa.57

Thus svātantra-śakti (the power of autonomy) in the form of icchā (will) resting in its own ānanda (bliss) is designated mahāśrīṣṭi.58 — p. 163

Abhinavagupta clearly shows that this movement is not only tending towards manifestation, but also in the converse sense, towards absorption.

By the separation of the multitude of objects, she becomes emaciated, as she is engaged in the manifestation and expansion of objects. Thus she is like the sun. Being identical with the essential nature of Bhairava, by the desire to withdraw the creative consciousness into Anāśrita Śiva (kulasaṁvitsamājīhśātmika), she is known as jñāna-śakti who has the tremendous power of withdrawal. Again, reviewing her former expanding form, she, within herself, looks for the previous state of her own transcendental consciousness, symbolised by moon (soma) with the disposition of the retention of the successive form of the sun and the moon. In an inverse state she looks for the aspect of the moon, the symbol of manifestation (śrīṣṭi) and the sun, the symbol of withdrawal (samhāra).

In this changing state, now wishing samhāra and now wishing śrīṣṭi, jñāna and icchā sometimes tending towards expansion and sometimes not, one should not attribute the fallacy of non-finality (na ca atrānavastrā iti vācyam), for the expansion (prasara) and non-expansion (aprasara) go on changing their position. — p. 163

57. Cf. TS, p. 13 unmeṣa eva hi viśrāntir-ārmih yah kriyāsakteḥ prārmbhaḥ, “Awakening” is the state of rest (calmness), (and) the “wave” is the beginning of the power of activity.

58. Mahāśrīṣṭi designates the totality of all creations, hence “the great emanation,” in which everything is contained. Cf. p. 49 Skt. Cf. MVV 1.366-67. “Here [in our system] exists this great creation of Śiva which is replete and inside of which all other [cycles] of creation and resorption take place.” (tr. J. Hanneder, p. 177).
Here again, the concept of “rest” (viśrānti) is important, because in every case the expanded (or “agitated”) form of the vowel and Śakti “rests,” is in a calm state in its previous simple form.

The last of the five energies is kriyā-śakti, the energy of activity:

Impetuous eagerness is the essence of kriyā. Whatever intermixture occurs owing to the expansion of kriyā-śakti with something else, is due to the fact that anuttara (the Absolute) enters suddenly in a sphere of reality which is beyond mental grasp (anāmarṣanīya), and void (i.e. the state of Anāśrita Śiva) just as a frog by a simple leap reaches another place from one place. The consciousness that is anuttara (a) and ānanda (a) does not expand in the first four spheres (i.e. ɭ, ɬ, ɬ, ꞏ) (na prasarati), of kriyā-śakti, for that is an unnamable (anākhyā) state, not being the object of name and form (nāmarūpa).

This “leap,” compared with the unexpected suddenness of a frog’s jump, has various implications. The image is used, also by Indian grammarians, to indicate a sudden change from one rule to the next without giving the intermediary one. Here the leap refers to a break in the unfolding of the energies and the related vowels. After jñāna-śakti should follow kriyā-śakti, but there is a gap in between. This gap is conditioned by the Sanskrit alphabet itself, but, and expectedly in the Tantra and in Abhinavagupta, it is given a very high mystical interpretation. Before kriyā-śakti manifests in the form of the composite vowels (e, o, ai, au), there is a state of void. This is represented by the four liquids ɭ, ꞏ, ꞏ, ꞏ which are variously called amṛta-bīja, “immortal seeds,” or neuter (napuṁsaka), compared to eunuchs, because they cannot produce anything, hence sterile. At the same time they are given the highest status:

It enters the group of four phonemes (i.e. ɭ, ꞏ, ꞏ, ꞏ) which are the ambrosial seeds inasmuch as they are the womb of immortality being the essential nature of Śiva. The I-consciousness in the form of nāḍa thrives here and attains maturity.

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60. Cf. Skt. p. 61, etc.
The state of void, at the level of Anāśrita Śiva in the scheme of the tattvas, is at the same time a state of luminosity:

Then that kriyā-śakti full of impetuous eagerness, penetrating into its own form (denoted by त, फ, ल, ठ which is void (i.e. devoid of all manifestation), immerses at first into a luminous form which is tejas or fire (denoted by the experience of त). Thus arise त and फ. How can it be denied that in these letters, the energy of icchā-śakti (ि) and that of īsāna-śakti (।) are associated with the sound of र whose essential nature is luminosity. This is what the glorious Puṣpadanta says: “The tejas and mobility found in त, फ are established with the general sound of र.” — pp. 165-66

These four letters are seeds, but as though in a fried state, so that they cannot fructify:

There is in them no total absence of germ, i.e. the state of a vowel. Nothing can exist which is neither germ nor womb which symbolise Śiva and Śakti, for the existence of any other thing has not been mentioned either in Pūrva Śāstra (Mālinīvijaya) or any other Śāstra. Even in worldly pleasures, there is felicity in repose of this kind. That is why this group of four letters is said to be the germ of immortality. — p. 166

There is a further mystical interpretation of these four letters in the context of the mantra, where again, they are called the “four voids” (सून्य-कातुश्का) (p. 214). There they indicate four stages of vyomasamādhi (p. 219 note by J.S.)

A. Padoux summarises this intricate subject as follows:

The first six phonemes (a, á, i, ि, u, ū) each conveniently provided the initial letter of a term (anuttara, ānanda, icchā, etc.) suitable to denote the aspects successively assumed by the energy, within Śiva, in order to initiate the process of manifestation. The four liquids, which are our present concern, are of no help for such a use: few — and in any case, no suitable — words begin with त, and nearly none with फ, and ।; as for ।, its existence is purely theoretical. Hence it was even more difficult to vindicate the presence of these four phonemes.

62. In the context of the bija mantra the mystical meaning of the four “empty vowels” is given, cf. pp. 214-15.
(which the varṇasamānānāya, however, brings inevitably after ā and before the diphthongs) as stages of Śiva's inner evolution. As a result, intricate considerations, intermingling phonetics and cosmogony, are put forward in an attempt to demonstrate the necessity of inserting these four "sterile," "neuter," phonemes in the midst of the kinetic and vibrant creative movement of consciousness, as it is bringing forth the universe within itself. Abhinavagupta solves the problem by seeing in /owl, 9, and I a necessary stage for the initial impulse of consciousness (icchā), notably in its aspect of disturbance or stir (kṣobha). At that stage there must be a kind of pause in consciousness, which shines, then in four different forms, before it proceeds with its creative movement.

— Vāc, pp., 254-55

It is after this gap or void that the energies resume their descending dynamism with kriyā-śakti, the power of activity, manifesting in the compound vowels: e, o, ai, au. These are, grammatically and metaphysically, a combination or merging of the first six vowels in various ways, such as: anuttara (a) and icchā (i) produce e,63 anuttara and unmeṣa produce o, and their long forms combine to ai and au.64 Thus fourteen vowels are manifested in the movement towards ever more pronounced (sphuta) activity and exteriority. But the last diphthong, au, assumes a special importance. It is called śula or triśūla in the Mālinīvijayottara (cf. MVT 4.25), because in it the three powers (icchā, jñāna, kriyā) are equally present in a unity of essence (sāmarasya).65 The Vivaraṇa describes this last state of the power of activity thus:

tathāḥ aukāre eva kriyā-śakti parispandah parisamāpyate iti
icchājñānayoratraivāntarbhāvāt | triśūlarūpattvam asya śaḍārdsāsāstre nīrūpitam |

— p. 61

Thus the subtle vibration of kriyā-śakti comes to an accomplishment in au, and since the energies of will and knowledge are included in it (kriyā-śakti), it (i.e. au) has been described in the Trikaśāstra as of the form of a trident (of the three energies).

— p. 167

63. Abhinavagupta also distinguishes between a short and a long e, but we need not go into such details. Cf. pp. 164-65.


Au again assumes importance in the context of the hrdaya-bija or the core mantra (see chapter 9).

Abhinavagupta emphasises once more the rootedness of all the vowels in the unsurpassable:

That indeterminate consciousness \( \text{nirvikalpa} \) which is not yet limited by the cluster of objects, which is massive consciousness, perfect and whole, whose very being is autonomy is perfectly autonomous only because of its having within itself a mass of beatitude. Therefore the presence of ananda (beatitude) in it cannot be gainsaid. Anuttara \( (a) \), the unsurpassable, the possessor of sakti or creative energy, who is beyond all appellation or description, whose essence is supreme amazement of beatitude, who is venerable Bhairava, of course, shines everywhere (i.e. both as Śiva from \( a \) to \( ah \) and as jagat, world from \( ka \) to \( kṣa \) as the autonomous active agent). — p. 164, Skt. p. 59

The last two of the sixteen svaras have a special significance, considering that the entire theory of the alphabet is the basis for mantra. Both, anusvāra or bindu, and visarga, are not really vowels, but they are the ending of vowels. Both terms are loaded with meaning outside the domain of grammar.

**Bindu**

Bindu,\(^{66}\) dot, point, concentrated energy, drop of light, is called anusvāra in grammar, literally “following the vowel.”\(^{67}\) Being the simplest and most basic “letter,” it arises in the following way:

Thus icchā and jñāna (i.e. \( i, ī, u, ā \)) by entering the essential nature of anuttara (i.e. \( a \)) become developed, i.e. reach au which is symbolic of full development of kriyā-sakti. After this, they abandon the variation of those saktis, and mounting to the state of non-difference, get immersed in the remaining form of a bindu, i.e. \( aṁ \), a dot which

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67. The Ratnatrayaparikṣā (70-71) gives the following synonyms of bindu: śabdattvā (essence of speech), aghoṣā vāk (unsounded word), Brahman, kuṇḍalinī, the stable one (dhruva), vidyā (knowledge), sakti, para nāda (supreme sound), mahāmāyā, vyoma (void), and anahata (unstruck sound).
represents awareness (vedanā) of the very nature of the Reality that is pure consciousness (cinmayapurūṣatattvasatattvā), and get immersed in the anuttara state. So they get dissolved in the state of anuttara.

— p. 167

The dot or, phonetically, nasalisation, is something like a summary. “Bindu represents the remainder, viz. pure awareness only” (p. 168, bindur̥ punarvedanāṁatraśeṣataiva, p. 61). And pure awareness (vedana or samvedana) has one all-encompassing mantra: aham, “I” which terminates in am or bindu, and embraces the entire reality from a to ha.68

In the context of the core mantra, one of the interpretations of Brahna reads:

Brahma appearing in the innumerable forms of the external world is the bindu or dot (anusvara). It is the hṛdaya or the very core of Reality, viz. Bhairava in his aspect of knowledge.

— p. 217

The concept of bindu is a vast subject in the Tantras. We may only quote Kṣemarāja’s Śivasūtravimarśinī where he summarises the two aspects:

iyatparyantarivaikavedanarūpam bindumumīlya yugapadantar-bahirvisarjanamaya bindudvayātmānam visarga-bhūmimuddarśitavati

— II.7

Then the supreme I-consciousness expresses the undivided knowledge of the universe in the form of a dot (bindu) in the letter am. It shows further the visarga stage in the form of two dots: indicating simultaneously inner and outer manifestation.

— tr. Jaideva Singh, p. 107

Visarga

An equally multidimensional concept is that of visarga: in phonetics the final aspiration h, represented by two dots: (both, in Śāradā and Devanāgarī scripts), in metaphysics the creative or emissive force.69 A. Sanderson translates it by

68. The Tantrasāra presents bindu again in the briefest possible way: “When, at the end of the power of activity, the entire created world is about to enter into Anuttara, it first takes the form of awareness (samvedana), and because it is of the nature of light (prakāśamātratvena), it becomes bindu.” (TS, pp. 14-15).

“potential.”\(^{70}\) Since it is uttered by breathing out, it has to do with prāṇa. Actually both bindu and visarga represent the transition from sound to silence, either through nasalisation or through breathing out, hence they are ideally suited as endings of bīja-mantras, which contain a concentration of the Divine Word, but leading back to its source, silence.

Graphically visarga with its two dots is understood as a split of bindu: from unity to the dual aspect of Śiva and Śakti, and hence the very origin of creativity. Not by chance visarga stands at the limit between vowels (identified with Śiva) and consonants (identified with Śakti). Again, cosmologically speaking, the movement goes in both directions: towards manifestation, and back to the One: Anuttara.

The consciousness symbolised by one phoneme, viz. a, i.e. the anuttara or transcendental consciousness indeed by its very nature transcends all concepts of space, time and causality and which, according to the previously stated principle, is wholly perfect, resorts instantly to the stage of para-visarga, i.e. the supreme stage of manifestation.

It is only after connexion with the stage of para-visarga, i.e. the supreme creative élan, that there is the stance of ānanda, icchā, īśāna, unmeṣa, its expansion, i.e. ānatā or ā, its diversity, i.e., ṭ, ṭ, ɦ, ɦ and the product of kriyā-śaktī, viz. e, ai, o, au.

Abhinavagupta dwells on the several aspects of visarga: its position as the 16th vowel as the transition to the consonants, its meaning as a śakti, and the entire erotic symbolism associated with the terms bīja and yoni.

The Lord (always coupled with His emanatory Energy) emanates the universe. That energy of emanation (visarga-śaktī) extends from the earth to śakti (from the point of view of tattva) or from ka to kṣa (from the point of view of letter). This is declared as the “sixteenth kala” (also as amā kalā) in the following verse: “In the cinmaya puruṣa,

70. Cf. A. Sanderson., “A Commentary on the Opening Verses of the Tantrasāra”, in: Sāmarasya, p. 98, note 28: “The common sense of the term visarga is ‘emission,’ meaning either ‘the action of emitting’ or ‘that which is emitted.’ But in this higher visargah no process or object of emission is manifest. I have therefore abandoned the literal meaning of the term and translated it ‘the state of absolute potential.’”
LEVELS OF MANIFESTATION: EMANATION OF PHONEMES AND TATTVAS

i.e. Śiva who is of 16 kalās, the 16th kalā is known as amṛtakalā (the immortal or "changeless" kalā). This is the standpoint neither of Śāṅkhya nor of Vedānta, but only of Śaiva Śāstra. The visarga-śakti of the supreme Lord is the seed of the highest beatitude.

Thus a and other letters (i.e. ā, i, u, ū and l) having acquired compactness (ghanatā) and assuming the form of śaktayoni or consonant do not deviate from their essential nature. All these, by their transmission in consonants (yonirūpa) which are however, their own essential nature, are known as having acquired the position of visarga, i.e. expansion.

The classes of consonants (varga) are derived from the vowels, and they are described as their condensation (ghanatā, p. 63 Skt.). Visarga is then taken in its full erotic implications.

Thus Śiva-bīja, i.e. svara (vowel) becoming condensed through its autonomy and abiding in the sākta-rūpa in a sakti form as kusuma (blood) is called yoni, i.e. a consonant. (By the combination of Śiva-bīja and sākta-yoni, there is universal manifestation.)

That red sperm of Śakti or female principle according to the principle referred to before, consisting of three angles, viz., grāhya (object), grahāna (knowledge), grāhaka (subject) when mingled with the semen of Śiva or male principle becomes the place of procreation (visargapada) or external expansion. It is only by the meeting of both Śiva and Śakti that there is the activity of puṣpa or the female creative red sperm, i.e. in the female aspect, it is known as yoni or female organ of generation because of its fitness for mating by the Śiva aspect or male. Therefore, that red sperm (kusumam eva) itself being three-angled represents the yoni or female organ of generation.

Visarga in the sense of emission or creativity also partakes in the three levels: para, parāpara and para, depending on the stage of its unfoldment.

That supreme energy of manifestation (para śāṅbhava visarga) becomes supreme-cum-non-supreme energy (parāpara) which expands because of its excessive plentitude and because of its being inseparably connected with the supreme energy and instantly
becomes the aspect of ha, i.e. apara visarga or external manifestation. It is the acquisition of the state of ha, i.e. external manifestation that actually brings about the existence of a network of innumerable categories symbolised by ka, etc. It is again this very ha kala or external manifestation which entering the bindu, i.e. an of aham terminates into the anuttara state. — p. 182

There is then a movement to and fro between visarga and bindu. Being the sixteenth (vowel), the Vivarana comes back to the symbolism of the tithis or lunar phases, where the elements of Time and Breath come into play.

In accordance with the principle that there are sixteen tutsis in one movement of prāṇa, the a etc., viz. the 16 vowels while inhering within as phonemes divide the tutsi into half and half and including the cessation in the first half and the rise of prāṇa into the second half, represent the fortnight of time (15 tithis) in the external world. These tithis are also said to be kalas or digits of the moon. When the sixteenth digit, which has the sakti or power to expand (visargakala or kala) remains apart, i.e. does not expand, it is designated the seventeenth digit in Śrī Vādya and other scriptures in the following words:

"That 16th or visargatmika kala by itself becomes half of ha, i.e. visarga (;) and further half of visarga, i.e. bindu (.) Then it is known as the 17th goddess or kala." Because of visarga being half of ha and further half of this being bindu, which is viślesa, i.e. apart, not taking part in expansion is known as the 17th kala. — p. 187

The complexity of the symbolism of visarga is again overarched by its spiritual significance in connection with the kundalinī, as Abhinavagupta develops it in the Tantrāloka (III.137-46), where he describes the three types or stages of kundalinī: sakti-kundalinī, prāṇa-kundalinī and para-kundalinī (III.139-40), and he concludes: "The movement of creation and absorption of the Lord is nothing but visarga (emission, potential)" (III.141ab: visargamātram nāthasya śṛṣṭi sanhāra vibhramāḥ).

Creativity or potential as visarga is hence related to all its dimensions: cosmic, linguistic, sexual, and spiritual, and all symbolised by two dots.
The Goddess Alphabet: Mātṛkā and Mālinī

The Tantra gives the emanation of the phonemes in the order of Mātṛkā but there is no reference to mālinī, the “mixed” alphabet. Abhinavagupta introduces mālinī on the basis of the Mālinīvijayottara which he quotes from extensively. It is important to understand the relationship between the three terms containing the totality of sounds or letters. The Tantrāloka provides brief and clear definitions:

Thus the Supreme Lord, full with the Power of the fifty acts of consciousness (the fifty phonemes) is only One Reflective Awareness (vimārsa), all the other (phonematic) energies are established there itself.

— III.196cd-197ab

When (the phonic emanation) is made up of one single act of consciousness, this is Bhairava, the Mass of Sounds (Śabdaraśī). When this (mass of sounds) is touched by the shadow of the object of the act of consciousness, this (results in the arising of the phonemes in) the energy, the mātṛkā.

— III.198, verse tr. A. Padoux, Vac, p. 312

The verses quoted above define first the difference between śabdaraśī as the unity of all sounds in Śiva, and mātṛkā, the Śakti aspect in the form of the alphabet in its usual grammatical sequence. And then he comes to the third aspect of the totality of phonemes, mālinī. Jayaratha introduces the verse thus:

Thus the power of Emission (visarga-śakti) only manifests the universal forms in her own self by the respective acts of (phonematic) awareness, and in the Āgamas they are described by these terms:

It is called Totality of Sound (śabdaraśī), and she (Śakti) is known as mātṛkā. By the penetration of that which is to be incited (i.e. the consonants) and the inciter (i.e. the vowels as Śiva), she is called mālinī. Mālinī, who is beautiful by the arising of the emission brought about by the combination of seed (vowels) and womb (consonants), is the Supreme Energy, described as containing the form of the universe (visvarūpini). — Tantrāloka III.232-33

Mālinī is then introduced in the Vivaraṇa in this way:

In these very letters of mālinī, the structure of the sākta-sarīra has

71. Jayaratha quotes in confirmation the Parātrisākā, verse 9, mātṛkā being the source of all mantras.
been described (in Mālinīvijaya) for the purpose of nyāsa (mental assignment of the various parts of the body to tutelary deities by placing one’s fingers on them). Thus the principle that “everything else is in everything” has been completely demonstrated. It is the venerable supreme verbum (parā vāk) which, according to the principle enunciated, casting its reflection in pāśyantī, simultaneously attains in madhyama established as identical with itself a form of letters in which consonants are intermingled with vowels in an irregular order, and thus becomes mālinī itself which is characterised by difference in the reckoning of the various vowels (kula-puruṣa) and the various consonants (i.e. kula-śakti indicated by the word ādi) in innumerable ways owing to the endless diversity of intermixture of consonants (yoni) and vowels (bīja). As has been said:

One should worship mālinī whose corpus is constituted by a group of many vowels (kula-deha) and consonants (kula-śakti).

By adopting this practice, the yogī who is engrossed in the practice of repeated meditation acquires supernormal power in respect of various bhuvanas, tattvas, centres of energy in the body (śātṛesu cakresu) everywhere in respect of body and prāṇa. — pp. 149 f.

This passage already contains some of the essential elements constituting mālinī, “the garlanded Goddess” (with the fifty phonemes in mixed order): She makes up the body of energy brought about by nyāsa or imposition of syllables on the body of the practitioner in order to transform it into a divine body. At the same time, her own body consists of the phonemes. In a stotra fragment Abhinavagupta calls the Goddess (Ambikā): sakalasabdādamāyī kila te tanuḥ, “Your body consists of all the sounds/words,”72 and hence, all the words uttered are nothing but a praise to Her.

S. Vasudeva has devoted an article to the Mālinī73 where he introduces the theme thus:

The Goddess Mālinī is one of two alphabet deities prominent in the Tāntric system called the Trika. The mantric identity of this Goddess is the nādiṃphāntakrama (lit. “the order [of the alphabet] beginning with na and ending with pha”), a particular rearrangement of the Sanskrit syllabary in which vowels and consonants are intermingled in a

72. Quoted in Gitārthasaṅgraha, p. 221.
hitherto unexplained and at first sight random order. In all early sources surviving each individual phoneme of the sequence is said to be a body-part of the Goddess Mālinī, and some accounts also supply the names and details of fifty presiding female phoneme-deities. To explain the underlying rationale of the nādiṃphāntakrama the two presumed original functions of the sequence are here investigated: the ritual projection of the alphabet into the practitioner’s body (nyāsa) and the encryption and “extraction” (decoding) of mantras (mantrōddhāra).

The other important aspect of mālinī hinted at in the Vivaraṇa passage concerns her direct descent from parā via paśyantī to madhyamā. Her locus in the scheme of vak is therefore madhyamā, she does not descend to the level of vaikharī. This means the predominance of the psychological-spiritual dimension based on the “covering up of objectivity by pure subjectivity ... and the mutual inherence of that which expresses (vācaka) and that which has to be expressed (vācyā).” Her stage is one that precedes language itself. She therefore belongs to the level of parāparā, mediating between the transcendent and the immanent.

The goddess parā vak who assumes different states (i.e. the state of paśyantī, madhyamā, etc.) becomes in her chief mode, i.e. madhyamā (i.e. parāparā state) goddess Mālinī herself. At this stage, She becomes so infinite, that considering the varied forms which She assumes she appears omnifarious, and thus being of all forms, she assumes the state of letter (vārṇa), word (mantra) and sentence (pada) through the predominance of three aspects, viz. para (supreme), parāparā (i.e. subtle or sūkṣma) and apara (gross or sthūla), i.e. even in parāparā state.

The third and controversial aspect mentioned in the above passage is the nature of mālinī as bhinnayoni, which means a mixing of vowels and consonants in an unusual order. The justification for this mixing is, interestingly, the universal nature, the interconnectedness or omnipresence of everything (i.e. phonemes and

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75. p. 121.
77. The term akrāma need not mean “orderless,” as translated by Jaideva Singh, but “not of the usual order.” Cf. the criticism of S. Vasudeva, art. cit., p. 518.
tattvas): viśvātmakatvam or sarvātmakatvam. This explains the interpenetration of vācyā (consonants) and vācaka (vowels).\textsuperscript{78} A more dynamic way of expressing this mutual connection is lolībhāva (cf. p. 121), the oscillation between two poles.\textsuperscript{79} This swinging or fusion concerns Śiva and Śakti, vowels and consonants, signifier and signified. As L. Silburn and A. Padoux remark, this is a precursor of language in its mixed or combined form.\textsuperscript{80}

S. Vasudeva has rightly pointed out that the “non-order” or mixed order which has been transmitted in a number of early Trika texts does not constitute an arbitrary or confused sequence of phonemes, but that there is a surprising uniformity in the texts with very little variations. Thus the rationale behind the bhinnayoni order is the ritual nyāsa and the construction of the Divine body of the Goddess Mālinī herself. The body of the worshipper and of the worshipped are made of the same power of the letters in a particular ritual procedure.\textsuperscript{81}

If the order of māṭṛkā is transgressed in mālinī, this does not effect the order of tattvas, whether in descending (sṛṣṭikrama) or in ascending (saṁhārakrama).

The māṭṛkā order is also preserved in the sense that the first 16 phonemes are assigned to the Śiva-tattva, as are the 16 vowels of māṭṛkā, although they are not only vowels but mixed. In this way the rationale of the system is preserved.

However, the iconographic and calligraphic aspects of mālinī described in the early Trika texts (and the attempt at a reconstruction by S. Vasudeva) are absent in the Vivaraṇa. As we have already seen, Abhinavagupta differs from Somānanda

\textsuperscript{78} viśvātmakatvam ca parasparasvarūpavyāmisratayā syāt, bijātmamām svarāṇām vācakatvam yonirūpānam ca vyañjananām vācyatvam — kramaṇa śivasaktyātmakatvāt 1 — p. 50

\textsuperscript{79} Cf. S. Vasudeva, art. cit., “The Sanskrit technical term used to express such “fusion” is lolībhāva. More precisely this seems to have originally denoted a state of indistinctness or instability that various entities must assume when they are on the verge of merging together, to the extent that they can no longer be distinguished. In the Kashmirian exegetical tradition lolībhāva is usually interpreted as a synonym for other technical terms denoting such fusion: laya, saṅghaṭṭa, yāmala and sāmarasya, but evidently these terms all have complex histories of their own,” pp. 534-35.

\textsuperscript{80} Cf. Abhinavagupta, La lumière sur les Tantras (comm. on III.198-200): “Mais l’important est, par le mélange des phonèmes, la mālinī prefigure en quelque sorte le langage,” p. 186.

\textsuperscript{81} For details I refer to S. Vasudeva, art. cit., for example the description of the MVT 3.37-416, tr. pp. 524-25.
## Levels of Manifestation: Emanation of Phonemes and Tattvas

### Malini Alphabet with tattvas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Varna or arṇa</th>
<th>Tattva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>gha</td>
<td>Sādāśīva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>īna</td>
<td>Īśvara</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>Śuddha-vidyā</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Māyā</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>va</td>
<td>Niyati</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>bha</td>
<td>Kāla</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>ya</td>
<td>Rāga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>da</td>
<td>Vidyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>ḍha</td>
<td>Kahā</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>ṭha</td>
<td>Puruṣa</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>jha</td>
<td>Prakṛti</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>ṇa</td>
<td>Buddhī</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>ja</td>
<td>Ahamkāra</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>ra</td>
<td>Manas</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>'ṭa</td>
<td>Śrotra</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>pa</td>
<td>Tvak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>cha</td>
<td>Caksu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>la</td>
<td>Rasanā</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>ā</td>
<td>Ghrāṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>sa</td>
<td>Vāk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>aḥ</td>
<td>Pāṇi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>ha</td>
<td>Pāda</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>śa</td>
<td>Upastha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>kṣa</td>
<td>Pāyu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>Śabda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>śa</td>
<td>Sparśa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with regard to lipi, since he considers scripts a more regionally limited mode of expressing the Word than sound. We also do not find in the Vivaraṇa the names of Śaktis associated with the letters, only the mention of kulapuruṣa for the power of vowels, and kula-śakti for consonants. What remains is the importance of ritual purification and divinisation of the body.82 That is why Abhinavagupta relates the entire theme to the ritual and spiritual purification: śodhana, śodhya, śodhaka (cf. pp. 156-59).

Abhinavagupta defends a variety of scriptural assembling and mixing of letters, and he compares it to the mixture of certain ingredients in a medicine, which brings about healing in the body, whereas the various mantras taught in the Tantras bring about spiritual power and siddhis (p. 149). There is a clear parallelism between physical and spiritual healing implied.

Generally comparing the three systems of phonematic manifestation or alphabets, the śabdarāṣī, identified with Śiva, the mālinī and māṭṛkā, identified with Śakti, the most powerful is the mālinī, which has arisen from a friction of śabdarāṣī and māṭṛkā.83 It is mālinī with the mutual pervasion of the vowels and

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82. Cf. S. Vasudeva, art. cit., p. 528: “Just as the śabdarāṣī sequence has a series of Rudras presiding over the individual phonemes. So the Nādiphānta sequence has a pantheon of female deities, variously called Śakti, Kalā, Dūti or Yogini, presiding over the individual syllables. Their original purpose was the ritual purification, empowerment and divinisation of the physical body during the imposition of the phonemes in the practice of nyāsa.” See his list of varṇas and their śaktis, pp. 529-30.

83. Cf. TĀ III.199.
consonants and the tattvas, which is most apt to demonstrate the pervasiveness of All-in-all (sarvaṁ sarvātmakam).

This did not remain an esoteric secret, but in hymnology Mālinī is invoked in several of her aspects mentioned above. Thus the Bahurūpagarbhastotra of the Svachchanda Tantra has the following verse:

\[
\text{naphakoṭīsamāveśabharitākhila sṛṣṭaye} \quad \text{II} \\
\text{namah śaktiśarīrāya koṭidvitayasāṅgine} \quad \text{v. 26}
\]

Praise be to you, who fill the entire creation by entering within (the phonemes) from na to pha (i.e. mālinī), who embody Energy, and who is closely associated with these two extremes (i.e. the first and last letters).\(^{84}\)

We have already encountered elements of mātykā. Again, if śabdarāsi corresponds to the supreme level (para), and mālinī is a reflection of pasyanti in madhyama, mātykā is a reflection of śabdarāsi in pasyanti.

The Specular Nature of Reality: Bimba-Pratibimba

What exactly is the relationship of the phonemes as basic constituents of language and the cosmotheandric reality levels or tattvas? and what is the place of a hierarchically ordered multiplicity in a non-dualist system? These underlying questions are constantly addressed by Abhinavagupta in varying ways and contexts. The two fundamental hermeneutic insights he uses as keys are (1) the interconnectedness of all things, sarvaṁ sarvātmakam, and (2) the “theory”\(^ {85}\) of reflection, bimba-pratibimba. Both serve as unifying hermeneutic tools and overarching systems of understanding reality. A. Padoux calls it “Abhinavagupta’s emanationist non-dualism,” “occurring through projection of light and reflection (pratibimba)” (Vāc, p. 231). On the background of the non-dual unity of the Godhead, it is “the theory of the ābhasa and of the reflection (pratibimba), which

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85. I understand “theory” here in the ancient Greek sense of theoria which is not the opposite of praxis, but which has a contemplative implication, not dissimilar to vimarśa, which also means reflective awareness and meditation.
### The Reflection of the Tattvas and Phonemes: Bimba-Pratibimba

The Reflection of the Tattvas and Phonemes: Bimba-Pratibimba demands that the paradigm of all differentiation should abide within the primal state of undifferentiation” (ibid., p. 234).

In the scheme of the *upāyas* or spiritual stages/ways, *bimba-pratibimba* is not by chance realised at the level of *sāmbhava*, the Divine way. Only the *yogī* whose awareness is already merged with Śiva (Śambhu) can perceive the world as a reflection (*pratibimba*) of the Divine (*bimba*).86

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86. Cf. *TS III, p. 10*: *ayam ca asya upādesah-sarvam idam bhāvajātam bodhagagane pratibimbamātram pratibimbalakṣanopetatvōt* ... “This is the instruction: All this, the created reality, is nothing but a reflection in the sky of consciousness, because it has the characteristic of a reflection...” Swami Lakshman Joo, coming from the living tradition, gives the spiritual implications of the *bimba-pratibimba* practice: “The theory of reflection
The metaphor or analogy of reflection has been fully developed by Abhinavagupta on the basis of Utpaladeva’s initial theory. The metaphorical nyāya of comparing the relationship of the universe with Śiva or ultimate Consciousness is that of “city in a mirror” (darpaṇanagara). Philosophically he goes into the question of avoiding any sense of duality between bimba and pratibimba, the city and the mirror. True to the svātantryavāda he answers the difficult question, what is the cause of the reflection, by referring to the absolute independence of the Divine.

In the words of Swami Lakshman Joo:

The universe is reflected in the mirror of consciousness, not in the

(pratibimbavāda) is meant for advanced yogins. This theory teaches them how to be aware in their daily activities, while talking, while walking, while tasting, while touching, while hearing, while smelling. While they are doing all these various actions they see that all of these actions move in their Supreme Consciousness. Their vision, their perception, heretofore limited becomes unlimited. The mode of their actions becomes absolutely unique. They see each and every action in their God Consciousness. They exist in the state of sadāśiva. Each and every act of their life becomes glorious. This is the awareness that comes from the practice of pratibimba.” (Kashmir Shaivism, p. 32).


89. Cf. for a brief discussion, Tantrasāra III, p. 11. Cf. D.P. Lawrence, “Remarks on Abhinavagupta’s use of the Analogy of Reflection”, in: Journal of Indian Philosophy (2005) 33: 583-99, p. 591. “This leads to a question regarding which Abhinavagupta does give inconsistent answers in his texts — whether or not there is a prototype object (bimba) for the reflection (pratibimba) that is the universe. Sometimes Abhinava indicates that there is a bimba and sometimes that there is not. His basic point is that there is no bimba if that is conceived as something external to consciousness. However, he always makes it clear that there is a cause (hetu) for the pratibimba, that is, an efficient cause (nimitta) rather than a material cause (upādana). That cause is none other than Śakti, variously identified as the Kaulikī Śakti, Supreme Speech (parāvāk), semantic intuition (pratibhā), the Unsurpassed (anuttara), agential self-determination (svātantrya) and the various modes of self-recognition (vimarsa, parāmarśa, and so on).” I disagree with Lawrence, e.g. when he places the Pratyabhijñā at the level of śāktopāya (p. 594), it is at the border between śāmbhava and anupāya. Besides, the designation of “monistic Śaivism” (used of course by other authors) is highly misleading, because monism would strictly speaking exclude multiplicity and the reality of worldly objects. But this will be discussed in the concluding chapter.
organs nor in the five gross elements. These are merely *tattvas* and cannot reflect anything. The real reflector is consciousness. In consciousness, however, you see only the reflected thing and not anything that is reflected. That which is reflected (*bimba*) is in fact *svātantra*. This whole universe is the reflection in God Consciousness or *svātantra*. There is no additional class of similar objects existing outside of this world that He reflects in His nature. The outside element, that which is reflected, is only *svātantra*. The infinite variety which is created is only the expansion of *svātantra*.

— *Kashmir Shaivism*, pp. 29-30

In the summary verse to the chapter on *śāmbhavopāya* of the *Tantrasāra* Abhinavagupta says it in poetic language:

\[
\begin{align*}
antarvibhāti sakalam jagadātmanīha 
yadavadvicitraracanā mukurāntarāle 1 
bodhaḥ param nijavimarśarasanānunvṛttya 
viśvam parāmṛṣati no mukurastathā tu \text{I}^{90}
\end{align*}
\]

The whole world shines within the self 
just as manifold creations are reflected in a mirror. 
The Supreme Consciousness, in harmony 
with the blissful taste of its own reflective awareness 
recognises the universe perfectly, but not the mirror.

In the *Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta develops this theme precisely in the context of the phonemes and *tattvas*. Here the metaphor serves again to uphold the unity of Consciousness *vis-à-vis* the multiplicity of language and reality levels, and it plays with the idea of reversal, where left becomes right and right left, or up and down are interchanged.

This reflectivity goes beyond a mere system of correspondences, which we find from the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads onwards. However, the highest correspondence in Śaiva non-dualism is that of *prakāśa* and *vimāraśa*. At the supreme level even the duality of *bimba* and *pratibimba* is transcended:

\[
\text{atra tu parasarīnvidi yathāha bhāsāḥ tathaiva vyavahāramayo 'pi vimāraśaḥ, tena}
\]

In the supreme consciousness, however, as is the light, so is the reflection, even in the outer activity.\(^91\) Therefore, all things appear as non-different (from consciousness), just as water is in water, or flame in flame, not just like a reflected image. \(^{92}\)

The reflection occurs from \(\text{para}\) down to \(\text{parapara}\), hence to \(\text{pasyanti}\) and \(\text{madhyama}\). But the reversal happens in the case of the \(\text{tattvas}\) and not the phonemes, which are divinely arranged.

I may cite the summary by A. Padoux before giving examples of the reflection and interpenetration of phonemes and \(\text{tattvas}\). In fact, the two systems of hermeneutics are closely related: the \(\text{sarvasarvātmakatva}\) and the philosophy of \(\text{bimba-pratibimba}\), because it is by the principle of the presence of everything in everything that reflection is possible; and vice versa, things and states are interconnected because there is a Divine reflection in the whole of Reality.

It is, of course, Śiva, the Word at its highest level, who is here at work. It is the Word that casts the reflection (\(\text{pratibimbam arpayet}\)) of the \(\text{tattvas}\) of the manifestation in \(\text{parāvāc}\) into the next stage, that of the supreme-non-supreme energy where differentiation, utterly absent at the level of Śiva, gradually arises. But since there exists no other energy than that of the Word, the energy acts as a — not at all passive — mirror “made of the Word.” This mirror, or more accurately, this supreme-non-supreme energy, says Abhinavagupta, is constituted by the garland of phonemes from \(\text{ka}\) to \(\text{kṣa}\) (\(\text{kādiśāntavarnāmālāsaśira}\)). Thus only the \(\text{tattvas}\) are reflected, and not the phonemes, since these form the phonematic energy upon which the consonants are reflected. \(\text{— Vāc, p. 315}\)

\(^{91}\) The conciseness of this sentence could remind one of “as in heaven so on earth” of the Christian tradition (cf. the “Our Father”). It also reminds us of the identity of \(\text{samsāra}\) and \(\text{nirvāṇa}\) in Mahāyāna Buddhism (Nāgārjuna).

\(^{92}\) Cf. \textit{Vijñāna Bhairava} v. 110: “Just as waves arise from water, flames from fire and rays from the sun, in the same way the differentiated aspects of the universe have sprung form me, (that is) Bhairava.”
We may consider the example of the descending reflection from Śiva down to Earth.\(^9\)

So this alone is possible and appears appropriate also that the light of Bhairava, at the very first stage of external manifestation, having its objective the earth category, through vimarśa-śakti continues to move towards earth only in its march of descent.

Thus that very last tattva, viz. पृथ्वी (earth), while maintaining its character as earth ( sa hi caramo bhāgaḥ tathātāvat svātma-rūpānī bibhṛat) and holding within itself all the innumerable earlier tattvas (e.g., water — jala, fire — agni, etc.) as inseparable from itself, appearing in that form (bhasamāno) and viewed in that aspect (vimṛṣyamānāḥ) is complete in itself. Its precedent tattva also (i.e. jala or water) having the posterior tattva (i.e. पृथ्वी or earth) as its background, being identical with the appearance and perceptibility present in the earth category (vṛttapaṭivaparipūrṇābhāsāsāravimarśa-tādātmyāt) and not renouncing the completeness of its posterior tattva (i.e. the पृथ्वी tattva) inevitably brings within its compass the fullness of all the preceding tattvas also (svayam ca svarūpanāntariya katāhaḥ kṛṣṭapūrva-pūrvatarādi bhāgantarā-bhogo) and appearing and being carefully considered in that way is integral in the same way (as the पृथ्वी tattva). Thus one by one, all the preceding tattvas (agni — fire, etc.) not being separated from their posterior two or three ones, including within themselves the delightful existence of their antecedent tattvas in accordance with the non-divergence from the nature of Bhairava which has accrued to them, are perfectly integral. \(^{—} pp. 112-13\)

Abhinavagupta makes it clear that this is a process of meditation by which all levels of reality are integrated in the divine Bhairava-nature. Therefore he adds a practical dhāraṇā for entering into the state of Bhairava, quoting the Vijñāna Bhairava. It is a method of perceiving the totality in all fragments.

You, who are proficient in thinking of Bhairava, become engrossed in meditating on Him. An undivided sight from a distance of a wilderness without limitation of associated objects like pond, mountain, tree, etc. or even with these limitations (tadvatyāpi) providing a wholeness of vision offers a well-known means of entree

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93. I use the capital for the tattva, to distinguish it from the physical entity (earth).
LEVELS OF MANIFESTATION: EMANATION OF PHONEMES AND TATTVAS | 195

into Bhairava-consciousness. As Vijñāna Bhairava puts it: “One should cast one’s gaze on a region in which there are no trees, or mountain, or even wall. His mental state being without any support will then dissolve and the fluctuations of his mind will cease” (verse 60). Otherwise if there is partial perception, then if the perception beginning with the first part of the same is only of parts (i.e. is not an integral perception), then what is the difference of Bhairava-consciousness from the other lower states of consciousness which are full of difference and are avowedly fragmentary? The difference lies in the fact that Bhairava-consciousness expressing as it does the delight of the unity of endless variety of existence is considered to be integral as compared with other states of consciousness which are fragmentary. Those who have received proper training and have penetrated into the divine consciousness know this difference themselves.

— pp. 113-14

As a spiritual master Abhinavagupta knows the limitations of verbal instructions, even of the highest kind, if the disciple/reader is not open to the Divine grace:

If the heart-lotus of some animal-like men has not blown under the ray of grace falling from the highest Lord, then hundreds of words of mine, even though their hearts be pierced with sharp needle-like words can neither make the heart-lotus bloom nor make it accomplish (the objective).

On a (thing like) jar also, one similarly casts an integral look. In this case also, the indeterminate consciousness instantly (jñagiti) takes in a view of the jar as a whole (not of its constituent parts), and then forms all kinds of determinate ideas about it and they starting from the barest ultimate part enter into the interior and the interior-most aspect and finally dissolve again in the indeterminate state. Therefore, there is no use in referring to other similar cases. Similarly in this matter also, the Śiva principle is inherent in all cases (i.e. even in the earth category) as an indeterminate reality, and having the elegant autonomy of generating determinate states is, though itself beginningless, decidedly the prius of all reality. There is no difference of opinion in this matter. This Śiva principle can be considered complete only if it abides also in the ultimate earth category. So also, the consciousness of earth (dharṭa-sāṁvit) can display it as identical with central Reality in spite of its appearance as an
object only when it is able to display the awareness of all categories as inherent in the earth category. — p. 114

Perceiving the whole of objective reality in this way means to overcome the fragmented perception and seeing things in the light of the Divine:

Finally, the Earth itself is but the integral divine consciousness, i.e. the very Self of Śiva. Thus even a fraction of space contains the entire form of Brahman (p. 116) (pradeśamātram api brahmaṇah sarvarūpaṃ, p. 47).

Kṣemarāja quotes the last phrase in his commentary on the Svacchanda Tantra (IV.102), in the context of dikṣā, where the initiated has to pass through the tattvas and the corresponding phonemes. He introduces the statements thus:

\[ \text{tathāpi adikṣāntasya śabdaraśer-aśeṣa viśvaśarīra parabhairava-parāmarśātmakatvena ekaiko ‘pyamsāḥ} \] — p. 59

Even then every single part of the totality of sounds, beginning with a and ending in kṣa, (is complete) because of the synthetic awareness of the entire universe as the body of the Supreme Bhairava.

The basis of this statement is again the theory of the “omnipresence of all in all,”95 viśvātmakatvāt (p. 59, l. 10), the interconnectedness of all things, and the presence of the totality in a single part:

\[ \text{ekaikaṭra ca tattve śaṭṭrimśatattvarūpātā} \] — ibid.

In every single (cosmotheandric) reality the nature of all the thirty six tattvas is present.

The context of dikṣā is significant for the practical implications of the development in the Vivarāṇa.

95. A. Padoux’s translation.
Concluding Verses

In his both systematic and poetic way, Abhinavagupta concludes this section of commenting verses 5-9 by 31 verses giving the meaning in brief (ṣaṁkṣepārthaḥ, p. 72). They are extremely helpful for not losing the thrust of the complex subject matter. First he states the overall conception of the metaphysical reality underlying all manifestations.

The one who is characterised by the wonder of union with the blissful essence of pure freedom is the Goddess Parā (the Supreme) who ever shines as Bhairavi Herself.

The one (Śiva) who is in union with Her nature, he is unimpeded and ever present, being of the nature of consciousness full of self-reflection, he shines in manifestations (reaching) from Sadāśiva down to the Earth, (in all things such as) blue, yellow, happiness (and sorrow).

That is called means of knowledge which perceives everything in its own nature, and which shines equally in children, animals and in the wise.

Thus the Light (of Consciousness) is by its nature of the essence of self-reflection and that which is awareness of the true nature (svarūpaṁ marṣanam) is itself the body of the Supreme Word (paravāguvaṁ). It is its very nature to appear in diverse forms of existence. Therefore, it shines as the cosmos of variegated beings. It never undergoes a state of dependence on others.

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97. "all-knowing," sarvavidām.
98. Free verse my own translation.
As it is not dependent on anything (outside itself), how can any impediment possibly exist in it? Therefore, self-consciousness which is void of convention transcends all space, time, *kalā*, *māyā*, limitation of place or activity. It is perfect in itself, it is the all yet different from all forms and figures. It is the natural, supreme consciousness characterised by excellent refinement, of the pure form of *suddha-vidyā*, it is the *aham* or I in both ways, i.e. both as Śiva and Śakti, both as consciousness and its expression as Energy. That *aham* (I) itself as *mātṛkā*, is the very essential nature of earth, etc. In the highest sense, its fluid form is said to be the vowel (*bija*) and the solid form the consonant (*yoni*), the very nature of Śiva and Śakti. — p. 194

By the union of Śiva and Śakti arises the universal bliss. 15ab

The virile energy (of *anuttara* or I-consciousness) which is the highest reality (*pāramārthika-sadvapuḥ*) and which is present in the universe inherent within up to its extreme limit is designated as *visarga* both in its aspect of *viśleśa*, i.e. external expansion or *prasāra* and its aspect as *yojana*, i.e. inward withdrawal or *samhāra*. This *visarga* is the invariable domain (of the aspirants), this is the easy means of attaining to *anuttara*.  — p. 195

Abhinavagupta then summarises *mātṛkā* and *mālinī* and comes to *mantravīrya*, the potency of *mantra* which is *aham*, “I.” The aim of the entire enterprise is nothing but liberation-in-life:

When the awakened one realises it as his supreme nature, he is at once liberated-in-life.

But the *yogīs* who desire supernormal powers meditate on *aham* in a limited way, (concentrating) on the navel, the space of the heart (and other centres).

Abhinavagupta then ends with his personal statement in due humility, leaving this realisation to the disciples/readers: The goal of this knowledge is not limited to the *yogī* but he has to share it with others by liberating them:

I have explained this to a certain extent (*manāk*)

according to (the teaching) of the *guru* and Āgama.

As to what happens by resorting to this I-consciousness,
ask your personal experience.
I have only shown a little bit of the path.

Who can say with certainty “this much is all” regarding the divine consciousness? The divine grace has been vouchsafed to me only to this extent. By that (grace), I have been privileged to disclose this much (as means) (viz. khecari sāmya or identity with the divine consciousness). Subtler tarka than this (i.e. sat-tarka) may occur to other experiencers either today (in the present) or at some other time (past or future), i.e. the tarka either may occur in the present (bhavati), or occurred in the past (abhaññ), or will occur in the future (bhavati).

Among all the lights of the component parts of yoga, this (i.e. tarka) has been determined in Śrī Pūrva Śāstra (i.e. Mālinīvijaya) as the brilliant sun (gabhastimān) by which one gets liberated and liberates others. This (i.e. tarka) should be clearly understood in every way and reflected on by the clear-sighted ones (vicaksanaiḥ) desirous of the supreme state (paresubhiḥ) by abandoning for a moment jealousy common to mortal beings. The aspirant is established in the essential nature of the Self immediately after sat-tarka (ālocana) and, therefore, the specks of cloud that cover the sun of consciousness are dissolved automatically by the savour of delight that the aspirant experiences at this moment. — p. 196
The Core Mantra
Hṛdayabīja — The Seed of the Heart

The section on phonematic manifestation is the basis for the revelation of the core mantra of the entire text. The last verse of the preceding group indicated that “the emission from a to kṣa (i.e. the entire alphabet) is the basis of all mantras and vidyās” (v.8). It has been sufficiently shown that the totality of creation emanates from and is contained in Anuttara, just as the phonemes emerge from a. In the introductory section (avatārika) to the next group of verses (9-18) Abhinavagupta comes back to the phrase uttarasyāpi anuttaram (v.3), “the Unsurpassable of even the surpassed” (to venture another translation).

It has been determined that even the subsequent one, i.e. expansion of the universe has the anuttara or the transcendental as its precedent. Now it is the nature of the transcendental which requires a detailed consideration. . . . (idānāṁ tu anuttaram eva svarūpeṇa vistarato nirūtāḥ).

— p. 75

Though in this system, anuttara or the transcendental is nothing different from the uttara or the posterior — for if it were something other, that would also fall within the category of the uttara, even then there is this difference brought about by the autonomy of the Lord from the point of view of the disciple and the teacher.

— pp. 201-2

Now, the svarūpa of Anuttara is precisely the core mantra, which is the Heart, Bhairava. The entire theory of language, phonemes and tattvas has been adduced to arrive at this point where Anuttara is not described any more (philosophically or “etymologically” as in the 16 interpretations at the beginning), but its “own-
form” or phonic symbol is revealed as the core mantra or “seed of the heart”: ḫṛdayabīja (v.25).

A frequently quoted text from the Sarvācāra (Tantra) says: mantrā varṇātmakāḥ sarve varṇāḥ sarve śivātmakāḥ (quoted p. 83, tr. p. 222), “All mantras consist of phonemes, and all phonemes are of the nature of Śiva.”

The mantroddhiira or “extraction of the mantra” is of course given in a code language. We have already learnt this code language in the previous section. Let us first consider the revelation of the core mantra:

caturdāsāyutam bhadre
tīṭīsantasamanvitam || 9 ||
tṛṭṭīyam brahma suśrṇī
hṛdayam bhairavātmanah |
etannāyoginījāto
nārudro labhate sputam || 10 ||
hṛdayam devadevasya
sadyo yogavimuktidam |
asyoccāre kyte saṁyaṁ
mantramudrāgānao mahān || 11 ||

A literal translation without decoding the mantra reads:

O Gracious One! it is the third Brahma, joined with the fourteenth and combined with the end of the lord of tīthis, O one with beautiful thighs! This is the Heart of the essence of Bhairava. — 9cd-10ab

This cannot clearly be obtained unless one is born from a yoginī or one is a Rudra. — 10cd

It is the (very) Heart of the God of gods, which bestows immediately union and liberation. — 11ab

The remaining verses of this group (11cd-18ab) give the fruit or result of the meditation on or “recitation” (uccāra) of this seed mantra, which Abhinavagupta takes time to decode.

1. I understand the compound as karmadhāraya: hṛdayam eva bijam, “the seed that is the Heart,” not as sāṣṭī tatpurūṣa: hṛdayasya bija.
The Core Mantra: Hṛdayabija — the Seed of the Heart | 203

Our author first addresses the phrase hṛdayam bhairavātmanah, “the Heart of the nature of Bhairava” in the following way:

The essential being of the universe which is of the nature of Bhairava (of Divine nature), as it has been shown by reasoning and by the Āgama, is determined to be the venerable (Goddess) parāparā, and (hence) made of Energy.² Its heart, (which means the essence of all) is of the nature of Śiva who is completely embraced by the supreme Goddess, the Venerable Parā.

— p. 77 Skt. with Gnoli’s emendation

Abhinavagupta thus opens his commentary by focusing on the Heart and the unity of Śiva and Śakti within that Heart which is the essence of all of Reality. He thereby implicitly hints at the mystico-erotic connotations of the Heart as well as of the mantra, and its universal nature. Since the Energy pervades the universe (śaktah svabhāvah), it is She who percolates down from the Divine to the human and sub-human levels, where, at every level, the erotic plays a role. Therefore he gives importance to the appellation of the Devī as suśroṇi, “one with beautiful thighs,” hinting at the female organ of generation (yonirūpaṃ).

The Śakti in the form of yoni is the state of Bhairava that indicates the wholeness (pārnatā) of the nara-bhāva or phenomenal reality which includes within itself the entire host of experients from sakalas (i.e. limited experients), Mantra, Mantramāheśvara, down to immobile beings (like plants, etc.) whose very life consists of empirical I-feeling and which is rightly designated as “ours” (nāḥ).

Still without decoding the mantra, Abhinavagupta comments on tṛṭīyāṁ brahma, again defining brahma over against the Vedāntic meaning.

Brahman (accepted in Trika) is that in whom the virility of the universe is inherent and who is full of the mass of bliss (ānandaśaktighanāṁ) that is surging forward for visarga-visleṣaṇa, i.e. visarga or separation from Śiva and viṣleṣaṇa or union (with Śakti). Such Brahman is vast

² I follow R. Gnoli’s emendation. J.S. has pradeśita-yuktyāgama-nirūpiṇarūpapāparābhāttārikāsvabhāvah śaktah, and Gnoli has amended it to: . . . nirūpiṇapāparābhāttārikāsvabhāvah . . . It makes more sense that the śakta nature of the universe belongs to the intermediate level of parāpara.
The aim is clearly hrdayavyāpti (or hrdayānupraveṣa, p. 78), "pervasion of or penetration in the heart," which is the Divine Heart and the core of Reality. Apart from yogīs and mystics who achieve this penetration, as the Devī said, vijñātāmātrena (v. 1), by mere intuitive knowledge, at once (sadyaḥ, cf. v. 1), Abhinavagupta concedes that even people who are following the normal religious practices externally, will gradually have their bondage loosened and be freed to enter that very heart (cf. pp. 205-06, Skt. p. 78), thus making a concession for ānāvopāya in the middle of sāṃbhava. As a true spiritual master he immediately senses the danger of merely pretending to have reached that stage:

This penetration into the Heart is not like a literal statement as in "I have entered the heart, it is the supreme goddess," rather it is the search inside the heart. This has been already said in detail.

The bonds of Śāstras cannot contract the Heart, nor can this world contaminate consciousness. May there be the state of absolute Fullness filled with absorption flashing forth, the true natural path of the essence of Plenitude.³

The introductory passage before coming to the actual exegesis and various ways of decoding the mantra revealed, is an invitation to enter the Heart, and an elucidation of the kaulika understanding of Heart. At the beginning (v. 2) Bhairavī asks about the kaulikī śakti dwelling in the Heart (hrdayasthā), and Bhairava reveals that this kaulika-vidhi is present in the ether of His Heart (mama hrdayomani, v. 4). With the revelation of the core mantra this kaulika-vidhi is also manifested, still combining the secrecy (guhyam) as well as non-secrecy (āguhyam of v. 3). The

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³. See Motto for the Sanskrit text (Skt. p. 78).
essence of the kautilika-vidhi or "prescription of totality" is precisely the Heart. But this Heart is the sāmarasya fusion of essence (p. 79), the union of Śiva and Śakti, prakāśa and vimarśa. At the ritual level it is experienced in the union of vīra and yugini. In the case of the solitary spiritual hero (ekavīra), the same experience of the bliss of union "occurs by yoga consisting in repose in the bliss of the essential nature" (ekavīrayāmapi svarūpānandaviśrāntiyogena, p. 78, line 3 from below). In the case of ordinary humans, bliss is experienced at the time of sexual union. But even this is not a mere natural joy, by quoting Vījñāna Bhairava (v. 68)⁴ on an erotic dhāranā, it is connected to "the yoga of beatitude which is the worship of the heart" (p. 207, evamānandayogaeva hṛdayapūjā, p. 79). The Trikatantrasāra is quoted in confirmation, that "the flow of bliss is this worship which should be conceived on the triangle" (ānandaprasarāṁ pūjā tāṁ trikoṇa prakalpayet, p. 79).

The triangle (trikoṇa) is another symbol that connects the metaphysical — the three Energies parā, parāparā and aparā, with the physical, i.e. the female generative organ or yoni (cf. p. 206). Therefore the emendation from nara to parāparā (Gnoli) is fully justified.

At the centre of this triangle is "the goddess of the nature of the 'churning' Bhairava of supreme bliss" (madhyedevīparānandabhairavamathanarūpā,

**Trikoṇa and Šaṭkoṇa**

![Diagram of Trikoṇa and Šaṭkoṇa](image)

⁴ The context in which this dhāranā is quoted throws light on the understanding of the two "erotic" dhāranās of the Vījñāna Bhairava: verse 68 does not refer to the sexual act but to the level of the ekavīra, whereas verse 69 refers to the vīrayogini union.
p. 78, line 6 from below).\textsuperscript{5} This refers to the divine level (devatānām samprāyaḥ), the yāmala practice of vīra and yogini has already been referred to, as also the ekavīra.\textsuperscript{6}

The two triangles, of Śiva (with apex above) and Śakti (with apex below) are then identified with jñāna-sakti and kriyā-sakti respectively:

Every thing is pervaded by two mudrās — of the essence of jñāna and kriyā-sakti. In the case of deities jñāna-mudrā is internal and kriyā-mudrā external. In the case of vīras it is the reverse.

— p. 79 Skt.

The theme of mudrā will engage us in the commentary on the following verse (11cd.).

Decoding the Mantra

It is only after this introduction that Abhinavagupta proceeds to the decoding of the mantra and commenting on verses 9-10. He does it in 16 different ways, parallel or corresponding to the 16 meanings of Anuttara given at the beginning by means of grammatical and semantic analysis (nirvacana).

Before embarking upon this exegesis I would like to refer to the Tantrāloka in its exposition of the core mantra or hrdayabrjā. In the Tantrāloka Abhinavagupta places the interpretation of the mantra at different levels of the upāyas or means of realisation, since the practice and meaning differ according to the level of awareness of the practitioners. Accordingly the derivations or symbolisations of the components of the mantra also differ. Let us first take a simple decoding of the verse:

\textit{caturdaśa} : the fourteenth (phoneme or vowel) = \textit{au}

\textit{tithīśānta} : the end of the Lord of tīthis = the Lord of tīthis is Śiva as Lord of the vowels, and the end is the last vowel: \textit{ḥ, visarga}. Alternatively, the lord of the vowels is \textit{aṁ, bindu}, and at its end comes \textit{visarga}.

\textit{tṛtiyāṁ brahma} : the third brahma is derived variously — if it is taken to be the third tattoo from above, it refers to Sadāśiva; if it is based on

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\textsuperscript{5} Reference to Manthanabhairava.

\textsuperscript{6} Cf. TĀ 29.
the “definition” of Brahman in the Upaniṣads and Bhagavad-Gītā om tat sat, it refers to sat, being.⁷ Both begin with the anacka s.

Now joining the third brahma = s with the fourteenth vowel = au, and adding the end of vowels = ḥ or visarga the bījamantra SAUḤ is obtained.

In the Tantrāloka we find the following enigmatic description of the mantra:

Indeed, this being (sat = S) whose root is Brahmā and which is called the sphere of Māyā (māyāṇḍa) would not be said to exist if it did not enter into the [trident = AU of the three energies of] precognitive impulse, cognition, and action. For it is through entering into these three energies that it is emitted (or projected; visṛgyate = visarga: ḥ) into the consciousness of Bhairava. Or it is emitted outside because of that. Thus the fact that these [constituent elements of the cosmos] (exist sat = S) actually results in their being in the nature of the three energies (AU) in the emission (visarga = ḥ) that is projected outward by the supreme consciousness.

— Tantrāloka IV.186-89 (tr. A. Padoux, Vāc, p. 418)

The diphthong au is described as triṣūla, trident in the Mālinīvijayottara, because it contains the three energies: Will, Knowledge and Activity. The symbolic shape of the triṣūla assumes another meaning in the context of the individual way (ānaṇopāya) where it is associated with the kundalini rising through the body of the yogī.⁸

SAUḤ is the bījamantra of Parā, but the term bīja does not occur in verses 9-18, it comes later with a powerful meaning (vv. 25 and 35), in verse 9 it is only called “the Heart of the nature of Bhairava.”⁹

⁷ Jayaratha, on TĀ III.167 quotes PT v. 9 tṛṭiyāṇ brahma sūṣrṇi and comments: tṛṭiyāṇ brahma sakārah, yadgītim ‘om tatsaditi brahmanāstraśridvīdhāṁ smṛtah. “The third brahma is the phoneme sa (s), as it is said ‘om tat sat’ is the threefold definition of Brahman.”

⁸ Cf. TĀ V.54-61. Cf. 60 cd-61ab: “It is in the great Heart where the great root (=s), the trident (=au) and the emission (ḥ) become one, that (the yogī) attains repose due to the universal fullness.”

⁹ Other translators take hṛdayam bhairavātmanah as “the heart of the Self of Bhairava” (A. Padoux, Muller-Ortega).
In the 30th ahnika of the Tantraloka Abhinavagupta gives a survey of mantras, where he derives the mantra of Parā in the following way:

The mantra of Parā which is pervasion of being (sadvyāpti) consists in life (jīva, i.e. s), along with fourteenth (vowel, i.e. au and the visarga), it has been revealed by the great Lord as of various forms in the Trisirohśāstra (Trisirobhairava Tantra). Although in its essential form (it does not change), yet there are a number of variations. There (in that mantra) life (s) depends on breath (prāṇa = h), or prāṇa is established in life.

After describing another variant of the mantra sauḥ he concludes:

This (mantra) which is expressive of Parā has the nature of great wisdom. The supreme one-syllabled mantra is the clear knowledge of the Heart of Bhairava, consisting of nectar (s), established in the void (h), or joined with Savitrikā (au), and united with two voids (h) — this is the supreme Heart of (Goddess) Parā.

— TĀ XXX.26-28, 31-33

It has to be stated at the outset that this bijamantra, "the seed of the Heart," the "ambrosial seed" (or "seed of immortality," amṛtabija) is not meant for "recitation" but with all its implied phonic symbolism it is to be meditated upon in an all-embracing way or realised intuitively, depending on the level or upāya of the practitioner.

A. Padoux gives an encompassing description of the mantra: "With its three constituent phonemes we have the Absolute itself (S), the triad of Śiva's fundamental powers in their absolute fullness (AU), and finally the perennial surging forth (both internally and externally, but always within consciousness, the stuff the world is made of) of the Godhead's creative flow, the throbbing of the Divine Heart (H). One understands easily, therefore, that to meditate this mantra, to grasp its full meaning directly through an all-embracing intellectual intuition, is a liberating experience" (Vāc, p. 419).

We shall now look at the complexity of this mantric meditation in the sixteen interpretations given in the Vivaraṇa (selecting some examples).

These sixteen nirvacanas take the lead of the sixteen vowels which are the bijas at the level of Śiva.
THE CORE MANTRA : Hṛdayabija — THE SEED OF THE HEART | 209

[This] i.e. the third brahma, viz. hṛdaya-sa (or amṛta-bija) joined with the fourteenth vowel, i.e. au, is linked with the sixteenth, i.e. visarga, ah, which occurs at the end of tithīsa, the soul of fifteen kalās. (Thus it becomes sa+au+ah = sauh.)

Yutam may be interpreted as yugmam or a pair. With the fourteenth, the pair makes sixteen which is the īsa or the presiding deity of the fifteen vowels, viz. visarga (ah).

Its (i.e. of the visarga) end is the seventeenth, viz. the anuttara or the transcendental aspect (of Reality). Hṛdaya or heart is that which is linked with it (i.e. with anuttara). It has already been stated in detail that all things whether external such as a jar, or internal, such as pleasure, take hold of that germ (the source of all existence) as the highest Reality. Therefore that (seed) is the heart or core (of Reality).

--- p. 210

The last part reads:

\[
tasyāntaḥ saptadaśyanuttarakalā tadanvitarī hṛdayaṁ hṛdayaṁ
\]

\[
sarvāni gaṇasukhādini vastūni tāmeva bijasattām paramārtha-rūpenākrāmantītvyaktāṁ vistaratah, ata eva tät hṛdayaṁ
\]

--- p. 79 ll. 11-13

What Abhinavagupta achieves by this hermeneutics is to state the transcendence of Anuttara (by making it the seventeenth kalā) and the all-containing nature of the bija or seed. The number 16 (tithis, vowels) still belongs to the immanent aspect (kalā).

Right from the beginning of his commentary on the mantra Abhinavagupta does not dwell on its "recitation" aspect, but on its metaphysical meaning, thus not very different from the 16 meanings of Anuttara. The difference lies precisely in the fact that here we have the svarūpa, the symbol, the condensed form in a seed, and not the concept. Hence "Heart," as we shall see, assumes the whole power of a symbol.

Actually the first interpretation starts from a:

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10. R. Gnoli begins the numbering of the 16 meanings with the following one, Jaideva Singh numbers it as the 2nd which cannot be correct.
Abhinavagupta gives this interpretation by splitting *caturdasa* into *catur* (four) and *daśā* (states): This is an interpretation with reference to the phoneme *a*. That which is *brahma*, i.e. *sāmarasya* or equipoise, in other words, which is the conjunction of the four states (*caturdasa*), i.e. *udyoga*, *avabhāsa*, *carvāṇa* and *vilāpana* of the subject and the object is the primal undifferentiated state. Being linked with that means “inseparable from that.”

The vowels which are up to the end of *ū*, are known as *tithiśa*, because out of them, the other remaining phonemes are born. The last ones of the vowels coming at the end of the above *tithiśa* vowels are the four immortal phonemes, viz. ṛ, ṇ, ḍ, ṇ. *Brahma* is well connected with these vowels. From the point of view of ascent Śiva who is higher than *nara* and Śakti is the third. Therefore, the third *brahma* is identical with supreme Śiva...

By accomplishing the fusion of the stir of the state of the subject and object within the Self, he enters the state of *anuttara*, the very heart of the universe which can be accessible only to *jñāna* (gnosis) characterised by identity, or *yoga* characterised by activity.

All the interpretations are offered with the purpose of defining the “third *brahma*” by the initial vowel and the corresponding Śakti, besides the analysis of *caturdasyayutam* and *tithiśāntasamanvitam*, which compounds are dissolved in different ways. As Gnoli remarks: “In all these interpretations, that which in each case is interpreted as one of the sixteen vowels is the heart, which does not always appear as the subject, but which is understood. The meaning is, in short, that the heart is the third *brahma*, etc. and is identified with Bhairava.”

Let us consider two more examples of this hermeneutics. The four “void vowels” (*śūnyacatuśka*) offer an interesting connection with the elements.

The interpretations are given with reference to the four void vowels (*śūnya-catuśka*), viz. ṛ, ṇ, ḍ, ṇ. First of all the interpretation is being given with reference to ṛ. That is the void or empty *ākāśa* (ether) symbolised by ṛ in which the condition (*daśā*) of the four (*catur*), viz. the earth,
water, fire and air either disappear in the gross form in samhāra or withdrawal of the world-process or in the subtle form remain as void ether. The icchā (i) inhering in त्र (r + i =त्र), considered in a reverse order with reference to kriyā (ananda, icchā, jñāna, kriyā) is the third brahma. Linked (yutam) with that void ether, the third brahma may be termed icchā. This brahma is full of the external glow of tithīśvara, i.e. the sun. Arka or the sun is the symbol of pramāṇa or knowledge. So tithīśānta-samanvitaṁ means joined with the tejas or glow of pramāṇa or knowledge. — p. 214

The third brahma is known as icchā inasmuch as i inheres in त्र (l+i = त्र). It is vyoma or śunya (ether) which is the inner state (antarādaśā) of four (elements), viz. earth, water, fire and air, is its base (ādhāra). Therefore, it is linked with that. This brahma being connected with some reality which follows the tithīśānta, i.e. the glow of fire (vahni), known as pramāṇa-tejas is of the nature of the void (vyomātma).

— p. 215

As in प phoneme, the third brahma inherent in the phonemes त्र is तस्यन (l+i = त्र) itself. This also is connected, on the one hand, with the ether, the inner void, the base of the four categories of earth, water, fire and air (caturdaśa-yutam) and on the other, with something indefinable that follows the pramāṇa-tejas (tithīśānta).

Only this one plunges with tremendous momentum into the fullest form of the void (paripūrṇa śunya) which is Bhairava itself.13

What this means is the following: When icchā together with tisāna which is its own nature, reaches the vyoma plane (i.e. the plane of the void) of objective experience (vedya), then it rests in slight luminosity for a while, suddenly enters the plane of the void (vyomabhūtim) which is unbounded (aparyantatām), invariably steady (niścalām) almost like wood or stone. About such yogīs as have entered the state of the void which is like deep sleep without the awareness of any object whatsoever (apavedya-suṣupta), it has been said: “Even the sound of a kettledrum or bronze cymbal cannot awaken him from his state of absorption.” — p. 215

13. This is an extraordinary “definition” of Bhairava who is described either in terms of fullness or void but here combining both in a sort of coincidentia oppositorum. (cf. also Vijñāna Bhairava with its dhāranās leading to either state).
This shows the connection of these apparently abstruse interpretations with yogic states. As expected, the two last “vowels,” ām and āh or bindu and visarga, are specially significant:

In accordance with what has been said earlier, brahma, joined with the distributed form of the forty categories and the group of vowel-consonants, i.e. brahma appearing in the innumerable forms of the external world is the bindu or dot (anusvāra). It is the hṛdaya or the very core of Reality, viz. Bhairava in his aspect of knowledge. Consequently, this core or bindu is the nature of the third brahma.

“16th interpretation: (with reference to the phoneme āh)

(i) From the point of view of external visarga: All this multitude of categories darts forth as Bhairava and being emitted outside and expanding, it is known as brahma inasmuch as it is of the nature of expansion and abides externally.

(ii) From the point of view of internal visarga: It is the stage of visarga which is identified with Bhairava, which by setting aside all exclusion indicative of difference and having acquired “the state of everything being all things” has grown and is thus present also as an internal visarga. (Consequently there are with reference to visarga two aspects of the third brahma — external and internal.) This has been determined with attentiveness.

Thus the pervasion of the third brahma of sixteen kinds has been described with reference to vowels. Its pervasion with reference to each consonant has already been described.” — p. 217

The “third Brahma joined with the four” has yet another field of interpretation, more down-to-earth, by linking it with the four stages (according to the “etymology” of catur-daśa) of life and the forms of the body. The stages of life are: (1) childhood, (2) youth, (3) old age, and (4) taking on another body after death. The different bodies are the gross body consisting of the five elements (pañcabhautikam), the body consisting of prāṇa, the puryaśṭaka or subtle body, and the inner self (antarātma). This is also the third brahma.

Being pervasive, it is void, and the heart abiding in it is of Śakti (atra ca hṛdayam śaktyātma). In fact, it is Śiva-bija (bijā, i.e. source of all existence) who is all awareness (bodhātmaka) and who in progressive
compactness or solidification having adopted (1) physical body, (2) \( \text{prāṇa} \), (3) \( \text{pūryaṣṭaka} \), (4) \( \text{śānya} \) or consciousness devoid of any object, and (5) \( \text{turīya} \) or the fourth state of consciousness or the metaphysical Self has expanded into five kinds of experiencers with particular kinds of vehicles. These are called respectively (1) external self (\( \text{bāhyātma} \)), (2) \( \text{prāṇa} \) as the self (\( \text{bhatātma} \)), (3) the subtle body as the self which carries the soul from one state of existence to another (\( \text{ātivāhikātma} \)), (4) the inner self (\( \text{antarātma} \)), and (5) the supreme self (\( \text{paramātma} \)). This is the \( \text{ḥṛdaya} \) (centre), i.e. Bhairava Himself.

— p. 218

The Means for Entry into Brahman: \( \text{Praveśopāya} \)

In the sequence Abhinavagupta relates the \( \text{bijamantra} \) to various tantric practices by ever more ingenious ways of \( \text{nirvācana} \) or semantic analysis. I need not go into the grammatical details but I confine myself to the content. He explicitly relates the \( \text{mantroddhāra} \) (v. 9) to the yogic-erotic practice of vīra and yoginī (p. 211, pp. 82-83 Skt.), to the substances produced in their ritual union, and to the other not socially approved substances such as alcohol. The purpose of these apparently shocking practices is clearly stated: "These substances inasmuch measure as is obtainable destroy all taint of difference" (p. 222, \( \text{tadetāni dravyāni yathālābham bhedamavilāpakāni} \), p. 83). It is at this point that Abhinavagupta goes into the question of overcoming limitations and restrictions of the mental and social conventions, all tainted by \( \text{bheda} \), separation.

Psychologically it all starts in the mind which creates doubts, narrowness and depression:

The following process is generally observed. Doubt which brings about narrowness of mind is generative of the first sprout of the mundane tree, and then it expands, becomes mature, and finally brings about the very fruit (i.e. complete involvement) of mundane existence. It has been fabricated by the awakened ones in such a way that it may become stationary in the case of the unawakened ones. In the case of fools, once a doubt is entertained, it gets rooted in their mind, it fructifies in diverse ways for them, according to their peculiar nature.

Therefore, on account of diverse imagination doubts assume different forms and are described as \( \text{adharma} \) (unrighteous) etc. They vary according to each scripture and each country. As has been
said, "Just as a plunderer carries away the valuables of the house, even so depression saps away the vitality of the body." (SpK. III.8) — p. 222

The relative nature of the ideas of good and evil or high and low, the very basis of sāṁsāra, is exposed and liberated by breaking societal norms. The aim is:

When that doubt is instantly dissolved, then the stain of the trouble of the psycho-physical limitations of the aspirant is cast out and he enters the heart of Bhairava. Therefore, one should in every way, practise the discipline that leads to the heart of Bhairava. — p. 222

A defence of tāntric and kaula practices is supported by Tantras such as Tilakaśāstra, Bhargāśikhā, Vīrāvalī and Sarvācāra, stressing the non-difference of all things. In this context Abhinavagupta makes a powerful statement against the distinctions on the basis of caste:

Therefore, in Trika Śāstra, this very activity almost without any curb is worship. All things are available for the fulfilment of this worship. The course of knowledge has been described in detail. Regarding the caste — brāhmaṇas, etc., there is no fixed principle, for the caste distinction is artificial. — p. 223

jāttinām ... nāsti sthitiḥ (Skt. p. 84) could also be translated as "the castes ... have no standing/basis."

What all this suggests is that the overcoming of narrowness and division is a necessary part of the liberation consisting in attaining the Heart which is Bhairava. Therefore the whole topic of limited, dualistic thought (vikalpa) and its overcoming is part of the exegesis of the bijāmantra.

The fourteenth vowel, i.e. the middle one between o and aṁ is au. Tithiśanta, i.e. that final of the vowels, i.e. aḥ. Tṛtiyam brahma is that which comes in between a and ha, i.e. sa. This is really the mantra (i.e. sauḥ) which is the generating seed of the universe. Whatever existent (ṣat) represented by that sa appears whether in the sphere of earth, prakṛti or māyā that falling within icchā, jñāna or kriyā is a triad (represented by au) and being an epitome of all, is delivered in and by Śiva (represented by the visarga, aḥ). Thus this indeterminate (nirvikālpaka) continuum of manifestation goes on ceaselessly.
A determinate thought-construct is used when it is meant to express predominantly a sense of difference, connected as it may be with the three series of time. . . . On the contrary, even the stage of Śiva being that of liberation is for the unfortunate ones always a desert or a vast forest owing to the fear of transmigratory state. 

That even a state of disturbing thoughts (vikalpa) does not diminish the divinity which is ever present is assured by the frequent reference to a kārikā by Utpaladeva:

He who knows that all this glory (of manifestation) is mine (i.e. belongs to the Self), who realises that the entire cosmos is his Self possesses mahēśatā (lordship) even when dichotomising thought-constructs have their play.

— Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā IV.11

Abhinavagupta returns to the initial phonemes of the “seed of the Heart”: sa, which he connects with other words beginning with s:

Sa, the nature of which is the ambrosia of the highest beatitude, casting the host of all other phonemes within itself, shines forth in manifestation. That which is the highest nature of satya (truth), sukhā (happiness), saṃpat (acquisition), sattā (existence), all beginning with sa, is experienced at the time of the appearance of the sound si to express pleasurable sensation when there is the quivering of the male organ and contraction-cum-expansion of the female organ. That is really the non-māyā nature of satya, etc. — p. 224

This phoneme alone can express all levels of meaning, from the erotic (sītkāra) to the metaphysical. The practice of the bijamantra can enable the yogī to apprehend meaning by a mere hint or one phoneme. In confirmation he again quotes the Yogasūtra (III.17).

There is an intermixture of words, the object denoted and the knowledge (indicated by the word) by mutual imposition. If one practises samyama on each of them separately, he can acquire the knowledge of the sound of all creatures. — quoted on p. 225

It is a kind of linguistic siddhi which is acquired by the practice of the mantra. Here the non-conventional power of language in all its parts becomes clear:

14. Here Abhinavagupta breaks out in poetry with a rare reference to fate (daīva) as the cause of sāṁsāric existence (p. 84 Skt.).
In Vedic grammar and divine Śastras like Śiva-Sātras, an etymological explanation of words occurring as mantra (sacred formula) or in initiation, in accordance with the intent of each letter of the word is considered to be perfectly appropriate. That is not conventional; the etymological explanation of every word, owing to unforeseen destiny has not reached the common people. So the nature of the phoneme sa is also like this. The explanation of au and the visarga (of the mantra sauh) has already been given. — p. 225

Much of the speculation is based on the Mālinīvijayottara. We have not gone into the cosmic spheres (aṇḍa) and their relation to the tattvas and phonemes. Here is a sample of the connection:

sāṛṇena tritaya triśūlena caturthakam I
sarvāttitaṁ visargaṇa parā vyāptirudāḥṣtā II — Skt. p. 85

Three spheres (viz. pṛthivi, prakṛti and māyā) are pervaded by the phoneme sa, the fourth one (viz. the Śakti sphere) is pervaded by the trident, i.e. au and the one that transcends all, viz. Śiva is indicated by visarga, i.e. aḥ. This is how the pervasion of parā is described.

— MVT IV.25, p. 225

Justifying the coded or “secret” language Abhinavagupta says that it is a rule concerning mantras that they should not be written in a book (ata evalekhyam pustake iti niyamaḥ, p. 86). He quotes a famous verse from the Kulacūḍāmaṇi Tantra.

ekam sṛṣṭimayam bijam eka mudrā ca khecarī I
dvavetau yasya jāyete so ’tiśāntapade sthitā II

Only one is the seed of creation, only one is the mudrā, i.e. khecarī. Whoever conquers these two is established in a state of surpassing peace.

Thus the bija SAUḤ is identified with the “seed of creation,” sṛṣṭibija.

15. The term alekhyam, alekha, also related to alaksya, has had far-reaching influence on the medieval and later nirguna sampradāyas, up to the Bauls and the Mahimā Dharma of Orissa, whose mantra is mahimā alekha. Cf. Bhima Bhoi, Verses from the Void, ed. by B. Bäumer and J. Beltz, Delhi (Manohar) 2009, my Introduction.

16. Quoted in Śivasūtra Vimārsinī II.5.
After this long and multi-layered exposition on the hrdayabhja Abhinavagupta takes up the remaining part of verse 10: etannayoginijato narudro labhate sphutam. He gives an ingenious interpretation of na+a+ah:

Explanation of etannah... yogavimuktidam:

(Naḥ = na+a+ah, i.e. na, the first letter of Mālinī, a, the first letter of Mātṛkā, symbol of vīra, and ah, symbol of visarga-sakti yogini. The person born from the union of these is known as yogini-jāta). Only such a person can have realisation of the heart of Bhairava, i.e. amṛtabija or the mantra sauḥ in whom:

1. The state of an experiencer has arisen (jātaḥ prādurbhūta-pramāṭṛbhaśāvah) from the union of Śiva-vīra who is to be cognised by means of na (the first letter of Mālinī) and a (the first letter of Mātṛkā) and visarga-sakti (i.e. yogini).

2. Or in him who is Rudra, Rudra is one who can successfully keep off or destroy the bonds of māyā. He is the veritable man. He alone can clearly realise it. He who is not Rudra, nor born of yogini cannot realise it. The realisation of amṛtabija can bestow sadyoga or identity with Bhairava, which is ascertained as liberation (in Trika). The word sadyah denotes immediately. This suggests that he who realises it is of this kind, i.e. Rudra or born of yogini; no one else can obtain it. He who is of the above kind realises it clearly. Thus he realises the heart, i.e. sauḥ which offers liberation immediately.

— p. 226

The condition for “obtaining” this mantra is therefore the unification of the three components of Trika: Śiva, Śakti and Nara (Rudra).

Commentary on Verses 11-18

hrdayam devadevasya
sadyo yogavimuktidam ī
asyocāre kṛte samyaṁ
mantramudrāgaṇo mahāṁ 11 ī
sadyastanmukhatāmeti
svadehāveśalakṣaṇam ī
muhūrtam smarate yastu
cumbakena abhimudritaḥ 12 ī
sa badhnāti tada sarvam
mantramudrāgaṇaṁ naraḥ
ātītāṅgaṇaṁ arthān
prṣṭo 'sau kathayatyapi II 13 II

praharādyadabhipreṇa
devatārūpam uccaran II
sākṣāt paśyatyasamādīgadham
ākṛṣṭam rudraśaktibhiḥ II 14 II

praharadvayamātreṇa
vyaostho jāyate smaran II
trayeṇa mātaraḥ sarvā
yogīśvaryo mahābalāh II 15 II

vīra vīresvarāḥ siddhā
balaśāḥ chākinīgaṇaḥ
āgatyā samayāṁ datvā
bhairavaṇa pracoditāḥ II 16 II

yacchanti paramāṁ siddhiṁ
phalam yadvā samīhitam II
anena siddhāḥ setasyanti
sādhayanti ca mantriṇaḥ II 17 II

yatkiṁcid bhairave tantre
sarvamasmaṁ prasiddhyati II
adṛśṭamandalo 's pyevam . . . II 18 II

These verses contain the siddhis or achievements by means of the bijamantra, and it is clear from the brevity of the commentary that Abhinavagupta did not attach much importance to these powers, rather he gave them another interpretation than the usual one.

First he gives a rather traditional explanation of mantras and mudrās:

Explaination of asya uccāra kṛte . . . svadehāvesalakṣaṇam:

Mantras are the sacred phonemes both worldly and divine. They save by reflection (mananatānārūpāḥ). For worldly purposes, they are
of the form of thought-construct, i.e. *vikalpa*; as divine or transcendental, they are full of *samvit-šakti* (the power of higher consciousness). The *mudrās* are the particular dispositions of the hands and feet of the nature of *kriyā-šakti*. *Mantramudrāgaṇa*, therefore, means a host of great powers brought into being by mantra and *mudrā*, which in the collective form is identical with *parāśakti* (the supreme šakti).

The fruit of "perfectly reciting" this *mantra* (*asyoceca kṛte samyak*) is the "penetration in one's own body" (*svadeheśa*). No wonder Abhinavagupta attaches the utmost importance to *āveśa*, entering, pervading, being possessed, since it comes close to the highest state of Divine absorption: *samāveśa*. Of course, *sva* is understood as *ātman*, of the Self.

*Āveśaha* means immediately by the entrance (in oneself) of the highest nature, there is the disappearance of the stupefaction which connotes dependence on others and the emergence of the stage of the conscious subject permeated by autonomy. . . So the whole phrase (*svadeheśalakṣaṇam*) means in a manner characterised by the penetration in him of the expansion of *thā* which has the divine nature of *prakāsa* and *vimarśa*. The supreme state of the Experient characterised by such *thā* is *svadeheśaḥ*. That is the (real) enunciation of this *mantra*, i.e. *sauḥ* which arises in the above manner, being established in the highest aspect, i.e. the aspect of the supreme conscious Self (*ūrdhva-caraṇe sthitau satyām*).

By way of different *nirvacanas* he arrives at:

By the word *sadyaḥ* (immediately) is suggested absorption in the *anuttara* stage. *Tanmukhatām eti* means that after *samāveśa*, one acquires supreme consciousness (*para-rūpa*).

In the *Tantrāloka* Abhinavagupta gives a mystical "summary" of the *mantra* SAUḤ:

By unifying the great root (*S*), the trident (*AU*) and the emission (*H*) in the supreme Heart (the *yogī*) attains repose due to universal Fullness.¹⁷

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¹⁷. ekiktyamahamulaśulavaisargike hṛdi ā
parasminneti viśrāntiṁ sarvāpūrṇaḥyogatāḥ
The Relation of Time to Spiritual Powers

The remaining verses (12b-18a) are very much related to time and units of time such as *muhūrta* (48 minutes), *prahara* (3 hours, a unit of the day), etc. where the fruit of the practice, the respective power attained, depends on the duration of the “recitation” (*uccāra*) or “remembrance” (*smarana*, *smṛti*) of the *mantra*. Abhinavagupta transposes the literal meaning of the Tantra into the realm of timelessness. Hence a whole meditation on time takes the start from these verses. The practice whose duration is mentioned is *smarana* (*smṛti*, *yah* *smarate* in v. 12), literally “memory, remembrance,” but which has a specific meditative meaning in relation to *mantra*. Abhinavagupta quotes a definition of *smṛti*/*smarana* from the *Trisrothairava* in the *Tantraloka*, in the context of *āṇavopāya*, the only means where time actually plays a role, since it belongs to *kriyā* or activity. It follows the mention of the “extraction of the *mantra*.”

Memory means recalling, and in reality it is already present preceding all modalities (or: states). Its essence is *mantra*. It unites that which is to come about to its own nature.

We need not go into the commentary by Jayaratha, but it shows the complexity of *smṛti* which is far more than “memory.” A. Padoux comments: “Thus the outstanding role of memory, its eminent nature, coincides somehow with the pre-eminence of the *mantras* as supreme consciousness” (*Vāc*, p. 398). In the *Vivaraṇa* Abhinavagupta explains *smarate* by *anusamdhatte*, the verbal form of *anusandhana*, the unifying awareness, a kind of contemplation linking two realities, hence the practice suitable to a non-dual system.

Commenting on *muhūrta*, Abhinavagupta immediately goes to add: “Although (the reality of the *mantra*) is not determined by time, yet the word *muhūrta* (hour) is used with reference to the experience of other experients which is temporal (*akālakalitave 'pi parakalanāpekṣaya*, p. 87 Skt.). He in this manner makes a concession to those practitioners at the level of *āṇavopāya*.

He “remembers” means he applies the unifying awareness (*anusamdhatte*). He binds all the host of *mantras* and *mudrās* means that he unifies them in his own self because of his non-dual

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consciousness (advayataḥ). How? by means of cumbaka, which means by his body of energy touching the universal aspect he “impresses” with mudrās everywhere, in an act of awareness (cumbakena viśvasparśakena šāktena rūpenābhitaḥ sarvato mudritaṁ mudraṇāṁ kṛtvā... p. 87).

He who, being stamped with the pulsation of Śakti, has joined his consciousness in congruous unity with Śiva who is the embodiment of this kind of true state, i.e. sauḥ; he alone accomplishes this, not stone, etc. which come under the category of nara. — p. 228

He then comments on the siddhi of foretelling past and future: atītānāgatān arthān prṣṭo ’sau kathayatyapi (v. 13). In justification of this power he quotes the famous verse of the Spanda Kārikā.

As the sustainer of this universe (i.e. Śiva) when eagerly entreated with desire accomplishes all the desires abiding in the heart of the embodied yogi who is awake after causing the rise of the moon (soma) and the sun (sūrya).

— SpK III, 1; p. 229

Not being constrained by time (akālakalita) means being in the present:

One and the same yogi even in memory (which refers to the past) and imagination (which refers to the future) remains equally in the present. Past and future do not exist for him. As has been said:

“It is better to remain in the present which is not limited by the past and the future.” When the state of the experient has been existing from before (from endless time) and there cannot be any increase or decrease in it, how can it tolerate such limitations of the present? “So and so knows this, does this.” Therefore, it has saṅgdvibhātatva, i.e. it is shining eternally. Therefore has it been said. It is because of this [i.e. limitation] that the present time requires a reference to the past, etc., i.e. to the past and future. In the absence of limitation, because of non-applicability of expectancy, reality is undetermined by time.

— p. 229

The quotation about being in the present comes from the Śrīdāmara tantra, which Abhinavagupta has quoted in his Mālinīvijayavārttika (I.155-56), precisely in the context of the overcoming of time, called also kālagrāsa, “swallowing of time.” Let us see it in the entire context:
When a meditator (yogi) intent on devouring time comes to rest in the limit of consciousness for only a moment (tuṣṭi), he at once becomes “one who moves in the void of consciousness.” (khecaraḥ) — 152cd-153ab

For it is taught that time, which is the appearance of the world, is the vibration of the rays of one’s own consciousness which is projecting [the world]. . . . Therefore the one . . . who is completely immersed in the devouring of time, spontaneously (svayam) becomes “one who moves in the void [of consciousness].” — 153cd-155ab

This has been said by Śiva in the Śrīdāmaratana: “After immobilising one’s circle of rays and tasting the supreme nectar he should dwell in bliss within the present that is not divided from both past and future.” — 155cd-156ab

Earlier in the Vivarana, in another context, Abhinavagupta has made the powerful statement that

time is only a thought-construct, what is time in the introverted consciousness? The essence of time consists in the experience of successive appearances and disappearances of objects. Its essence consists in the absence of the awareness of introverted consciousness which is timeless. — p. 157

Abhinavagupta emphasises the relativity of time, which is manifested by the Lord as kālaśakti:

Those who are in the waking state, what they experience as a ghatikā (24 minutes) is experienced by subjects in a dream state variously, as a day, a prahara (unit of 3 hours), or year, etc. — Skt. p. 87 end

Here again, his psychological observation is an aid to the spiritual-metaphysical understanding of time.

19. Tr. by J. Hanneder, Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation, pp. 84-85. The last line reads: kalobhayaparicchinne vartamāne sukham bhavet.

20. antarmukhe samvidātmāni proktanayena kah kālaḥ . . . , Cf. a similar discussion about krama and akrama on p. 58 (Skt.), see p. 161 (tr.).

21. Reference not found.
Similarly, he gives another “etymology” of praḥara (which occurs in verses 14-15), instead of taking it as a unit of time he interprets it as “dissolution” (prakṛṣṭo harāḥ samhāraḥ, p. 88).

While commenting on the phrase ākṛṣṭam rudraśaktibhiḥ of verse 14 (“drawn near by the powers of Rudra”) he dissolves the word Rudra in two verbs: rodhana and drāvana: He does interpret them in the sense of yogic powers, but of a higher order:

Ru denotes rodhana and dra denotes drāvana. Rodhana in this context is a technical term. It means samhāra, i.e. withdrawal or dissolution. Drāvana is also a technical term in this context. It means srṣṭi, i.e. manifestation. Being drawn, i.e. going in a state of absorption through the samhāra and srṣṭi saktis, he (the yogi) fully perceives, i.e. experiences. This is what is meant to be said. (First of all, there is rodhana — the state of inward dissolution and then there is drāvana, the state of external expansion.)

1. Rodhana — the state of inward dissolution: What is said to be perception or experience (yadidāṁ darśanaṁ nāma) that comes to the yogī who, having reached the state of akula in which the waves of all the external vikalpas (thought-constructs) have dissolved and full of icchā-śakti which has reached its highest capacity by coming in contact with svātantra (divine autonomy) full of endless glory (ananta-mahima-svātantra-yogāt), realises the dissolution of icchā in anuttara.

2. Drāvana — the state of external expansion: Then the same icchā becoming externally oriented assumes the aspect of jñāna-śakti, having slightly indistinct appearance of difference as its object.

(Rodhana even in external orientation and Drāvana even in internal orientation:)

The jñāna-śakti of the nature of sāmānya spanda (general pulsation) expanding towards the outside, assumes the form of the senses of the nature of specific spanda and the yogi at this state achieves the rodhana or arresting of the senses in the same condition outside. This is indeed atana in rodhana, i.e. sātatyāgamana of continuous movement in rodhana or arresting. Therefore, rodhana is both drāvana or expansion and bhaksāna (swallowing) or
dissolution. This process is known as _vamana-bhasaṇa_, i.e. both ejecting outside and swallowing within. _Darśana_ or experience is of the nature of _prathā_, i.e. it involves both _sāmāṇya_ or general _jñāna_ and _viśeṣa_ or specific _jñāna_, and what is _prathā_ involves diversity of expansion (_prathāyaśca tathāvīcitra-yogāt_). A state of indecision or doubt depends on two alternatives, e.g. whether this is the trunk of a tree or a human being. Even this uncertainty has an element of certainty about it (for certainty it is one of these and cannot be anything else). Thus the divine power achieves what is hard to accomplish. — pp. 230-31

The identification of the _yogī_ with Bhairava is connected with _smṛti-smarana_ which would be better translated by "awareness":

Such a _yogī_ is verily Bhairava who has the power of memory which is _parāpara_, i.e. which assimilates a past experience to a present one. That is why it has been said only in "two praharas," i.e. by placing two cognitions (_para_ and _apara_) together. The _para_ or the previous or the past _prahara_ is that of actual experience and the _apara_ or the second _prahara_ is the cognition of the sameness in the present. Remembering the _āmṛatabjā_ in this way (i.e. in _parāpara_ way) he becomes settled in _vyoma_ or empty space (_vyomastho jāyate_), i.e. he acquires the status of an experient in _puryaśṭaka_ (at the time of perception or first experience) and _śūnya_ or void (at the time of _apohana_). When his perceptual experience is characterised by _prahara_, i.e. by complete absorption, he deliberates upon it by calling it up in memory again and again. "_Sāksāt pasyati asarh digdharh ... rudra śaktibhīḥ_" is connected with this as with the previous one. It has been said that till that time even the memory is like the original experience itself. It is said that he is united with the _vikalpa sakti_ of the nature of _apara_, i.e. _apohana_, i.e. he experiences even the gap occurring between the first experience and its recall. — p. 231

By interpreting the _siddhis_ mentioned in verses 15-17 Abhinavagupta avoids any dualistic understanding and brings every word into a non-dualist yogic meaning. _Yogeśvaryaḥ_ means those who have gained _aisvarya_, i.e. _svātantra_ or autonomy by means of yoga characterised by identity with the inner genuine experient. _Mahābalāḥ_ means _mahat balaṁ yāśāṁ tāḥ_, i.e. they whose prowess is great. The _bala_ or prowess here means the power of expanding in all directions without any check in contrast to the
external senses. "They" refers to the inner śakti (antah-karana-didhatayah), viz. manas, buddhi and ahamkāra. These are also perfect because regardless of the restraints advocated by all the ordinary empirical texts, they are full of activity prompted by the ardour or autonomy.

Virāḥ — Viras in this context are what are called the organs of sense and the organs of action (of such yogīs). They also become perfect. Vīresvarāḥ, i.e. the lords of the virās or in other words, the energies of ka and other phonemes also become perfect.

Śakinīganāḥ means Brāhmī and other divinities who appear with the manifestation of ka and other phonemes and who are a host of powers denoting different mental modes such as attraction, aversion, etc. This host of powers also becomes perfect. Since it is perfect, therefore it is powerful (balavāna).

Paramāṁ siddhim ācchanti means (they) offer the paramā-perfection; paramā means parasyamā, i.e. pramiti or correct notion of the supreme experient (parasya). This siddhi or perfection is vikalpātmikā, i.e. even with external means of proof, the yogī is able to pinpoint the nature of the supreme, e.g. such the supreme (asau paraḥ) or they offer the (most) desired object of the yogī, viz. the realisation of the (real) "I."

— p. 232

Although Abhinavagupta concedes that even practitioners (mantriṇāḥ) of lower (i.e. dualistic) Śāstras will achieve perfection, but even they will attain liberation-in-life through that very Heart (i.e. ṣrdayabīja, p. 89 Skt.), and even those who achieve it by the yoga of animā, etc. (the supernatural powers).

\[
\text{evama parameśvara eva ṣrdayātmā} \|
\]
\[
\text{evanrūpatāyā śaktitritaya bṛñhītatsatatodayamānasāṁhriya-}
\]
\[
māṇānanta-samvidaiyāsālī. \quad \text{— p. 89}
\]

Thus the supreme Lord is Himself the Heart, in this way, strengthened by the three Energies (parā-parāparā- aparā) he is one with the infinite (forms of) consciousness which are ever arising and subsiding.

— tr. different from J.S.

What Abhinavagupta expresses by this kind of summary of the preceding exegesis of the powers attained by the practice of awareness (smarana) of the Heart (mantra) is (1) the non-duality of the Lord and the Heart-mantra, (2) the dynamism of the
śaktis in their rising and dissolving, in the case of the yogi passing through different phases. The non-duality is expressed also by stating that "even the worldly activity is a power which cannot be achieved without penetrating in that Heart" (*nahi etaddhṛdayānupraveśam vinā vyāvahārikya api siddhiḥ*, p. 89).

By interpreting the section on the siddhis achieved by the power of the mantra, Abhinavagupta has traced the limited powers back to their unlimited source and purpose, the supreme I-consciousness of Bhairava (cf. p. 232). At the end of the *Parātrīśikā* (vv. 36-37) the "fruit" of the practice of the *bījamantra* is said to be omniscience (*sarvajñatvam*).

**Erotic Symbolism**

The question of the Devī in verse one was directed to achieving the *kaulikasiddhi*, "the perfection of totality," and Bhairava, in verse 4, promises in his answer to reveal that secret which bestows it, by declaring that the *kaulikavidhi* is present in the space of His Heart. In the second or *pratibimba* section of the Tantra, this *kaulikavidhi* has been revealed as the Heart-mantra, which is identical with the Deity, Bhairava Himself, or the Parā Śakti. This Heart is their union of essence (*sāmarasya*). How otherwise but by means of erotic images could this union be symbolised. The entire purport of the *Parātrīśikā* is precisely to enable the yogī or practitioner to participate or unite him/herself in this very union of Bhairava and Parā, embracing within them the entire cosmos. All this is symbolised in the "Seed of the Heart," the mantra SAUḤ. The siddhi consists then in this unification by means of the mantra, its *uccāra* and *smaraṇa* (both being technical terms of the mantra practice).

*Kaula, kaulika*, has certainly erotic implications, since the union of the two sexes is the most universal and powerful symbol for the integration of the opposites and complementarities. What in the visual arts, especially in temple sculpture, has been expressed in *sthūla* or material form, has been symbolised in linguistic terms in the Tantra. In both cases, layers of meaning have to be deciphered and the entire coded language needs to be interpreted. This is the task which Abhinavagupta has astonishingly accomplished.

The elements of the mantric symbolism have already been rendered clear in the *varṇaparāmarśa* or the theory of the phonematic manifestation (chapter 8),
especially when describing the vowels as bija or “seeds,” and the consonants as yoni or “womb,” and as belonging to Śiva and Śakti respectively. Further sexual symbolism is implied in the terms bindu and visarga with their multiple connotations. The triangle (trikona), which among other things represents the vowel e, implies not only the entire Trika metaphysics, and on the physical plane, also the downward-facing shape of the yoni. Here again, the integration of the two triangles of Śiva and Śakti in the sātkona or hexagram, has an erotic component, and it is an essential central part of many yantras or maṇḍalas.

Thus the entire erotic symbolism should not be surprising or misleading, it has to be seen precisely in the context of Trika and Kaula spirituality and metaphysics.22

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Transcending Ritual

adṛṣṭa mandalo ’pi . . . — v. 18

Even without having seen the ritual maṇḍala . . .

According to Alexis Sanderson “the true character of the text (Parātrīṣikā) is instruction in the worship of, and meditation on, the mantra of the Trika’s Parā,”¹ and he describes the Parātrīṣikā as “a short text teaching a form of the Trika known as the Anuttara, Ekavīra, or Parākrama, in which a simplified, essentialising form of worship and meditation is directed to Parā alone and her seed-syllable Sauḥ.”² In the previous chapter we have dealt with this seed syllable and its esoteric analysis. Now the last part of the Tantra is precisely devoted to the worship or ritual connected with it. In the predominantly non-dualist Tantras such as Mālinīvijayottara,³ Svacchanda, Netra, Vijñāna Bhairava and Parātrīṣikā, external ritual is relativised, spiritualised, and substituted by internal ritual or meditation, but ritual still remains the paradigm for spiritual practice.⁴ Thus even in the non-dualist spirituality of Anuttara Trika, ritual is not excluded but sublimated. As Sanderson remarks, “the expanded consciousness which is the Absolute of the Śaiva left did not exclude the plurality (bhedaḥ) and sequence (kramaḥ) of action. For it was defined as that which projects itself as this plural and sequential reality

¹ A. Sanderson, “The Śaiva Exegesis of Kashmir”, p. 379.
² Ibid.
³ Which, according to Sanderson, is not purely non-dualist, cf. “The Doctrine of the Malinīvijayottaratantra”.
⁴ Cf. for this subject A. Sanderson, Meanings in Tantric Ritual, New Delhi (rpt: Tantra Foundation), 2006.
while retaining the non-duality and timeless simultaneity of the consciousness which is its inner ground.”⁵ Thus in the context of supreme non-dualism (paramādvaita) “transcending ritual” does not mean negating it, but attaining a level of consciousness where the ritual acts are transformed into divinised states of life itself. There is an interesting parallelism between the last section of the Parātrīśikā (vv. 19-36) and the last section of the Viśnuna Bhairava (vv. 143-53), although the way of dealing with ritual differs. The Viśnuna Bhairava substitutes spiritual states for the ritual, whereas the Parātrīśikā retains some of the ritual components.

Abhinavagupta and his commentator Jayaratha quote the Parātrīśikā precisely when it is a question of transcending ritual.⁶ Now the most important Śaiva ritual is initiation (dīkṣā)⁷ which gives access to both powers and liberation. The uninitiated who do not follow a spiritual path are called paśus, “animals,”⁸ even in Trika. It is only dīkṣā which empowers the aspirant to practise the regular or occasional worship. The Advaita Śaivas could not avoid this necessity, but they could transform, substitute and thereby transcend it. In one such context where Abhinavagupta quotes the Parātrīśikā in the Tantraloka he says succinctly: “Gnosis alone is initiation, as enunciated in the Śrītrīśikā.” (TĀ XV.15). And Jayaratha adds the quotation from the Parātrīśikā (vv. 25 and 19). In the Tantraloka Abhinavagupta states more generally about the relation to ritual:

Worship is considered to be the offering of all things in non-differentiated unity...

The state of perfect fullness which is obtained by worship, recitation, meditation, sacrifice, vows and other practices, is called absorption (samādhi) by the ancient masters.

There (i.e. in this tradition) in relation to worship, recitation and other practices, whether externally or internally, there is no prescription or prohibition at all.

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5. Ibid., p. 48.
6. Cf. TĀ IV.50 quoting PTv. 26, Jayaratha quotes verses 18 and 20; XII.16 quoting PT v. 20; XV.15 quoting PT v. 25.
8. Cf. for example Kiranāgama I.15.
There the purification of imagination or the rites of twilight have no usefulness.

It is said in the Śrītrikāsūtra (Parātrīśikā) extensively, such as “the one who does not know the ritual prescription he becomes a knower of sacrifice.” — TĀ XII.13-16ab

The Kashmir Series edition has at the end of the preceding group of verses (9-18) the beginning of the section under discussion (18c): adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo ‘pyevam. Abhinavagupta starts giving a different interpretation (cf. p. 233) which he concludes by a quotation (source unknown) which connects darśana or direct experience with parā, the supreme Śakti, smarāṇa or memory with parāparā, the transcendent-immanent Śakti, and vikalpa or thought with aparā, the immanent Śakti (p. 234). “Memory” may be a hint to the practice of the bijamantra (smarāṇa in verse 12).

Clearly marking a transition to the next section of the Tantra Abhinavagupta introduces verse 19 by: “It has been said, "Trika is higher than Kula." Now, of (the schools of) Trika the highest is Anuttara (Trika). It is this which (the Tantra) is going to describe” (Skt. p. 90, tr. 236).

\[
\text{adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo} \ '\text{pyevam} \\
yah kaścidvetti tattvataḥ \\
\text{sa siddhibhāg bhaven nityām} \\
\text{sa yogyā sa ca dikṣitaḥ} \ \parallel 19 \ \parallel
\]

Whoever thus knows truly (the bijamantra sauh), even if he has not seen the maṇḍala, he enjoys the success of perfection eternally. He is (perfect) yogyā, he is (really) initiated. — p. 236

Abhinavagupta gives three interpretations of maṇḍala:

9. Not a literal quotation of verse 20, as clarified by Jayaratha:

\[
\text{śrītrikāsūtra iti trikaprameyasyaśicikāyām śriparātrīśikāyāmītyartham} \\
tathā ca tatra avidhijño vidhānajño jāyate yajanaṁ prati ityādi yaduktam \parallel
\]


11. The phrase adṛṣṭamaṇḍalo ‘pi is found frequently in other works stressing the freedom from ritual. Cf. e.g. Tantrasāra 20, p. 186.
Maṇḍala means a mystic circle (diagram) in which the deity is installed. Adṛṣṭa means one who has not seen or one who has not joined the association of yoginis (apṛptamelako 'pi) by means of caryā or observance of certain religious rites through śakti process (śāktipāya) or niśātana, i.e. a religious rite practised at night [through ānava process or haṭhapāka, i.e. a persistent process of assimilating experience to the consciousness of the experient classed under śāmbhava process].

Another explanation of maṇḍala may be the system of nerves as medium of prāṇic currents and a smaller group of nerves.

So adṛṣṭamāṇḍalaḥ according to this interpretation of maṇḍala would mean "one who has not perceived the group of nerves, etc. by means of yogic practice."

It may be interpreted as not even having seen the diagram of the trident with lotuses. In the matter of realisation, maṇḍala or the ceremony of initiation is of no use.

However, the person who is qualified in this way is only one "who has been favoured by the highest descent of grace (paraśaktipātagṛhitah), vetti means he alone knows. This realisation alone is dīkṣā, what else is dīkṣā (initiation)? Knowing in this way, he is truly initiated by the all-pervading Lord Bhairava." If the condition of śaktipāta is fulfilled, the usual rules concerning mantras are not applicable:

The statement that "The man with little intelligence who adopts a mantra by himself (without the help of a guru) gets into trouble" applies only to mantras other than this central seminal mantra, not to this mantra, viz. sauḥ bīja, for it is the very heart of Bhairava. [emphasis added]. This mantra transcends even such deities as Mantra, Mantresvara.

This cannot be expressed in a book. It is the very core of the Divine. It has (already) been clearly laid down that this is truly acquired only by the favour of the highest grace. So "anyone" suggests that anyone can acquire it irrespective of caste, religious vow, caryā, etc.; insight into it is the main point.

That yogī enjoys full perfection. Since a yogī is one who yearns after communion with the Divine, initiation characterised by the gift of spiritual insight (jñāna-dāna) and the destruction of māya (māya-kṣaṣaṇa) is imparted to him alone. The particle ca has been used in the sense
of certainty. Therefore he should be wholly considered a yogi. That is why it is said, “He alone is the yogi who has attained full perfection. He alone is ever initiated.”

— p. 238

Abhinavagupta is not interested in going into details of the maṇḍalas which he describes in the context of initiation in the Tantraloka and Tantrasāra. The intention of the Tantra was certainly the maṇḍala drawn at the time of initiation, but the other, external and internal, meanings are equally relevant.

The Outline of the Maṇḍala of the Trident and Lotuses (trisūlābja maṇḍalam) prescribed by MVT 9.6-31

12. The traditional etymology of dīkṣā derives it from the two roots dāna (giving) and ksapaṇa (destroying): dīyate jñānam, kṣīyate pāpam, “it bestows knowledge and destroys sin.”

13. TĀ XV. Cf. A. Sanderson, “Maṇḍala and Āgamic Identity in the Trika of Kashmir” for details. Cf. TĀ XXXI, the whole āhnika on maṇḍala, according to various Tantras, the main symbolic elements of which are the trident and the lotus (trisūlābja)
Knowledge Substitutes Ritual

In the very first question the Devī proposes pure gnosis for achieving the perfection of the totality: *yena vijnātamātreṇa*, “by merely knowing this,” referring to *Anuttaram* (v. 1). The Tantra is consistent by coming back to the same expression:

\[ \text{anena jñānamātreṇa} \\
\text{jñāyate sarvasaktibhiḥ} \]

\[ 1 \rightarrow 20ab \]

corresponding to *yah kaścidvetti tattvatāḥ* in verse 19, and *evam yo vetti tatvena* in verse 26 (he who knows thus in reality). These phrases remind one of the Upaniṣadic *ya evam veda,* “he who knows thus,” where the *evam* relates to correspondences discovered by introspection in the Self and in the cosmos.\(^{14}\) Invariably the result of this knowledge is “becoming what one has known” (*sa eva bhavati*). The *evamvīd* is not one who knows objectively, but one who knows *thus,* i.e. meaning the mode of knowing, not the object. In the Tantra the *anena* is related to *Anuttara* (v. 1), and to the *mantra* which is its own nature or symbol, *svarūpa* (vv. 20, 26). Thus the connection with the question of the Devī is established towards the end, when the Heart and the seed *mantra* has already been revealed.

\[ \text{anena jñānamātreṇa jñāyate sarvasaktibhiḥ} \]

By mere knowledge of this (Heart, mantra) (the *yogī*) is known by all the Śaktis.

*Vivarana:*

He is known by all the deities and by all the omniscient powers. By mere knowledge of this (*mantra*) he knows whatever is known by this very knowledge alone, as said before. The use of the instrumental “by all the śaktis” denotes the instrument.

Abhinavagupta is very brief here, but the implication of the instrumental is significant, because knowledge which is mystical and transformative, is both active (*jñānamātreṇa*) and passive (*jñāyate*). This instrumental also expresses the recognition, not of but *by* the Divine energies who, being omniscient, bestow omniscience to the *yogī* (*cf. vv. 36-37*). The passivity of the mystical knowledge is also expressed in the second half of verse 20:

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\(^{14}\) A frequent phrase in the Upaniṣads.
Abhinavagupta ingeniously interprets the term *sāmānya* in the superior sense of *sāmānya spanda* or generic/universal vibration:

Merely by having an insight in this *mantra*, without the practice of *yoga* which brings about identity with the Divine after the end of this body formed by *māya*, the aspirant not only becomes equal to the family of *Śakinīs* — but becomes even superior to them, for the group of *Śakinīs* has only *viṣeṣa spanda* (particular *spanda*) (which only leads to behaviour and intercourse characterised by differentiation), whereas he (the aspirant) becomes identified with *sāmānya spanda* or universal pulsation of the Divine, with the energy of the unsurpassed *akula* (*sāmānya spanda rūpo akularūpaḥ*) and becomes the master of the group of *saktis*. — p. 239

Abhinavagupta takes *kula* not only in the sense of “family group,” but as the “cosmic body,” or the totality which is transcended by *akula*, *kula* also meaning *Śakti* and *akula* Śiva or *Anuttara*.15 “Without the practice of *yoga*” is a parallel to the overcoming of ritual, since both involve the action of the individual (*nara*), whereas here it is the *saktis* who are the active agents. In terms of the *upāyas*, this *yogī* is at the level of *sākta* which is *jñānopāya*, and where the individual (*aṇu*) is in a passive role — hence *jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ* is eminently fitting to the way of Energy.

**Vivarana:**

*Vidhi* means both knowledge (*jñānam*) (of the injunctions pertaining to religious ceremonies) and its practical application (*kriya*). He who

---


has not got these two is a mere animal. As has been said in *Kiranāgama:*

"He who is engaged only in thinking of the means of (sensuous) enjoyment (*bhogopāyavicintakah*) is always a mere formless animal, ignorant, incapable of doing anything, having no qualities, wanting in power, diffusive (*vyāpi*), confined only within *māya*, and steeped in her interior.” — I.15\(^{17}\)

Even such an animal by mere insight into this *mantra* becomes a *vidhānajña* of sacrifice. *Vidhānajña* is one who has both knowledge of the injunctions and their practical application (*vidhānam jñaca yasya saḥ*), i.e. he is both a knower and performer of the ceremony appropriate to a certain religious obligation (*viṣayasamāgata karaṇam prati kartā jñātā ca*).

Though the sacrifice that he performs may not be formally perfect, yet it becomes perfect for *this Heart is all-inclusive.*

— J.S., pp. 240-41, amended, emphasis mine

(yajanaḥ ca asyāpūryamapipūram bhavati-sarvamayatvāt hṛdayasya, p. 91).

The Tantra returns to an encoded description of the *hṛdayabija* SAUḤ:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kālagnim āditaḥ kṛtvā} \\
\text{māyāntam brahmadehagam} \\
\text{śiva viśvādyanantāntaḥ} \\
\text{paraṁ saktitrayām matam} \end{align*} \]

Beginning from *kālagni*, i.e. the earth right up to *māya* [thirty-one *tattvas*] rest in *brahma*-body. Śiva [i.e. *anāśrita* Śiva with Śakti] rests in *an+anta+antaḥ*, i.e. in *visarga* (coming) at the end of *a*, i.e. *aḥ*. In the remaining (*para*), i.e. *au* beginning from *śuddha-vidyā* (*viśvādi*), rest the three Śaktis [śakti-traya, i.e. śakti-triśūla — *Sadāśiva, Iśvara, and Śuddha-vidyā* of the nature of *iccha, jñāna* and *kriya*]. This Śakti-triśūla is acknowledged as the Supreme (*tacca paraṁ matam*) or Creative force (*visargamaya*).

— p. 241

The above verse seems to reiterate the universal all-embracing nature of SAUḤ, passing through all the *tattvas* and containing them as in abbreviated form. The following two verses refer to this seed by beginning with *tat* (vv. 23-24).

\[\text{17. Cf. TĀ IX.145-46.}\]
Whatever exists is established in that (mantra), all that is reposing in the pure path. The limited individual attains without delay (immediately) the pure knowledge of the Divine.

— p. 242, modified

Vivaraṇa:

Whatever is established in a variegated way, i.e. in bheda-bheda and bheda in the universe, all that reposes in the central seminal mantra sauh in a pure state, i.e. in a state of undifferentiated unity. Aṇu is (1) one who breathes or (2) one who experiences and utters in a limited way. Even he (after the realisation of sauh) becomes topmost of living beings (mūrdhanyo bhavan) and obtains by the influence of this mantra (tatprabhavaṭ) the Divine knowledge very soon. — p. 243

Summarising again the bijamantra and its effects, the next verse is the only one on the guru — literally codaka (from the root cud) means the one who impels, who inspires, who directs one speedily on the path.

taccodakaḥ śivojñeyah,

sarvajñah paramēśvarah I
sarvago nirmalaḥ svacchas

tṛptah svāyatanah śucih II 24 II

(The first line has two senses):

(1) The guru who inspires to know [the secret of] that [amṛta-bīja] should be considered as Śiva.

(2) It should be known that He who inspires to know this mantra is Śiva. He is unknown to others but He is Himself omniscient, Supreme Lord. He is omnipresent, spotless, pure, fully satisfied, abiding in His own essential nature, unsullied.

Vivaraṇa:

The guru or spiritual director who inspires this mantra to realise should be understood to be Śiva Himself. It is Śiva alone who inspires it.
He is beyond comprehension, for he is the (eternal) subject (and cannot be reduced to an object). *Svāyatana* is one who (while abiding in his essential nature) emanates his own (*sva*) ayas, i.e. the existence or objects in the form of consciousness. — p. 243

The non-dual identity of *guru* and Śiva is such that all the Divine qualities become qualities of the *guru*, and these can be used even as criteria to identify the true master. It is significant that this verse comes almost at the end of the Tantra, although it is the *guru*, or *Parameśvara* as *guru*, who initiates and bestows the power or *kaulikasiddhi*.

**As the Seed of the Banyan Tree . . .**

The entire Tantra teaches the seed *mantra* or *hṛdayabīja* SAUḤ, but the term *bīja* occurs only at the end (vv. 25, 34, 35), where it assumes its full force. One of the most powerful symbols or metaphors of the text is that of the seed of the *nyagrodha* (banyan) tree.

\[
yathā nyagrodhabījasthathā
duṣṭī hṛdayabījasthām
dharmahṛdayatattvabhūtā
dharmasaktibhrujatā
dharmatattvajñānām
dharmatattvāt
dharmatattvāt
dharmatattvāt
dharmatattvāt
dharmatattvāt
\]

As the great banyan tree lies in the form of potency in its seed, even so this universe with all the mobile and immobile beings lies in the seminal *mantra* (*sauḥ*), the very Heart (of the Supreme). — p. 244

The third point of comparison is *śakti*: the potency of the seed producing the mighty tree on the one side, the power of the one-syllabled *mantra* on the other, which is the Divine Energy, the Heart.\(^\text{18}\)

\[
evaṁ yo vetti tattvena
tasya nirvāṇagāminiḥ
dīkṣā bhavatyaśamāndigdha
tilajyāhutivarjita
\]

He who knows this *mantra* in its essence, becomes competent for

\(^{18}\) Cf. Kṣemarāja, *Parāpravesikā, maṅgalaśloka*, where *Parā Śakti* is called *hṛdayam paramesītuh*, "the Heart of the Supreme Lord." This text quotes the present verse of the PT with a brief comment.
The simile affords Abhinavagupta the occasion to prove the all-inclusiveness of Reality, *sargvam sarvātmakam* (here in terms of *viśvam viśvātmaṇam*).\(^{19}\)

**Vivaraṇa:**

It has already been said that there is nothing in this world which is simply non-existent. Everything (in its place) is all-inclusive. Just as in the seed of the banyan tree lie all the relevant parts, viz. sprout, branches, leaves and fruits, even so this universe lies in the heart of the Supreme. The certain conviction of this is (in itself) undoubted initiation for liberation (*nirvāṇa*). As has been said:

This is the acquisition of ambrosia leading to immortality; this alone is the realisation of Self. This alone is the initiation of liberation (*nirvāṇa-dikṣā*) leading to identity with Śiva. (*SpK* II.7)

There are other kinds of initiation also which may offer worldly enjoyments, but the insight into this (*mantra*) is the essential initiation. That is why it (Trika-Śāstra) is superior to every other Śāstra; it is even superior to *Kulaśāstra.*

Abhinavagupta uses once more an image from daily life: the balance. The comparison with the *tattvas* seems to imply the limitations of measures and categories of space, time, etc.

As in the weights of a balance, though there may be only a limited removal of the weight there arises a good deal of difference in the measure of a thing only by slightly raising or lowering the balance, even so there occurs a good deal of difference in respect of the knowledge of space, time, and enjoyment of the higher and higher *tattvas* (categories of existence). It is even possible that the sphere of experience (*samvedana*) rising higher and higher may exceed the thirty-six categories. Since insight (*samvedana*) into the *hrdaya-bija* or

---

19. Another common symbol found in the Tantras to express the potency of everything contained in the Divine is the egg of the peacock, *mayūraṇa.*, which contains potentially all the colours and forms of the peacock.
sauḥ is initiation (dīkṣā), therefore it is said that viśva and yoginī who have penetrated this insight (etat sarvānt anupraṇiṣṭo) stand initiated (kṛtadīkṣaṇa) by the grace of the I-consciousness described as revered, supreme Bhairava who is the ruler of the collective whole (cakraśvara) of the twelve external and internal sense-divinities (raśmi-devatā-dvādaśa) that are constantly present (satatodita) in the supreme reality (para-sattā) and are transcendent to māyā (amāyīya).

Nirvāṇadīkṣā is, in the Śaiva-gamas, the highest initiation (after samaya, putraka, sādhaka) which normally leads to immediate liberation. According to Abhinavagupta the purpose of the Parātrīṣika is liberation-in-life, jīvanmukti, and the understanding of nirvāṇadīkṣā as immediately leading to the death of the initiate would not agree with this. There may be a difference in the expression nirvāṇagāmini, “leading to,” hence not directly followed by death. Now this dīkṣā is attained by sarvāvedana, variously translated by “experience,” “insight,” also “perception, feeling, awareness,” it is the active correspondent to sarvāvita, hence “active consciousness.” Bija occurs again at the end in verse 35 where it becomes the object of meditation (dhyānet):

adyantarahiratam bijam
vikasat tithimadhyagam
ḥṛtpadmaṁtargataṁ dhyāyet
somāṁśaṁ nityaṁ abhyayet II 35 II

The yogī must meditate on this bija which has neither beginning nor end, which has expanded into fifteen vowels (vikasat tithimadhyagam) and which resides in the heart-lotus. He should also practise the lunar part (somāṁśam, i.e. view all objects of the world as nothing but the manifestation of sauḥ).

This cryptic verse has several interpretations, depending on the level of consciousness. Abhinavagupta ascribes the meanings to two masters: Bhaṭṭa

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20. Reference to the 12 Kālīs of the Krama system.
21. Cf. Tā XIII.151-55; 234-35; XV.31-33; 460-63, etc. Cf. among others, Ajitāgama, ch. 77.
22. Cf. VBh v. 49: ṛṣayākāśe nilinākṣaḥ padmasamputamadhyagah I ananyacetāḥ subhage param saubhāgyam āpnyayat II
Dhānesvara Śarmā,23 and his own guru (Śambhunātha). This verse is directed to the practical aspect of bīja, expressed by two verbs: dhyāyet, to meditate, and abhyaset, to practise. He first comments on the two lines:

\[ \text{ādyantararhitam bījam} \]

This central seminal mantra (hrdayabīja or sauh) is without beginning or end (1) for it does not require any extraneous light, i.e. it shines by its own light (dīpakabhāvāt), (2) for it is without variation, without coming in and going out (gamāgame-śānyaṭvāt), and (3) for it is ever actively present (satatodītavāt).

\[ \text{vikasat and tithimadhyagam:} \]

This [mantra], on the one hand, has expanded in the form of the external objective world and thus reached its complete manifestation. On the other hand, it inheres in the sixteen tithis, being their innermost essence.

Then follows a first interpretation related to the vīra-yogini union. On the question: “what sort of meditation is this?” he answers:

\[ \text{Somāṃśam nityam abhyaset — abhyaset to be taken in the sense of abhi+asyet.} \]

The aspirant should cast the somāṃśa, i.e. apāna current (the current of inhalation) full of sixteen tuṭis from all sides (abhitaḥ) towards the male organ or the female organ. This means that the aspirant should project the apāna current of breath which is synonymous with full moon into hṛtānātikā up to puṣpa, i.e. the point of origin of the creative energy existing in each one at an inner distance of twelve fingers.

Then after coming in contact with amṛta [i.e. kuṇḍalinī-śakti], in accordance with the inner vibration that is surging up, he acquires kākacaṅcupsa-mudrā.24

Then the apāna current being withdrawn and expanding with the relish of the nectar of Šakti, excites the vibration within. The aspirant should make the apāna current fully developed by drinking in the nectar which is churned out by the vibratory force.

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23. Except for occasional quotations not much is known about him.
After this, at the moment of the rise of the prāṇa (sūrya kalā), the exhalatory breath-current, resting in vowel-less s (vowel-less s of sauh mantra), he should continue his practice, supported by the experience of thrill, stoppage (of breath), an inner sensation of springing up, tears, tremor, etc. This is sāktopāya according to Bhaṭṭa Dhaneśvara Śarmā. — pp. 263-64, modified

Whatever is experienced by vīra and yoginī will be internalised by the ekavīra at the level of sāktopāya.

A still higher experience takes place at the level of sambhavopāya, the highest mystical states being described, in the context of the rise of urdhva kūṇḍalinī. Jaideva Singh translates the verse in this light as follows:

The hrdayabīja is without beginning or end. Of the mantra ‘sauḥ’ the s-part which betokens prāṇa, and au-part which betokens apāna being devoured, what remains is only the visarga (:) part. The actual nature (svārūpa) of this visarga is the seventeenth bindu-kalā which transcends the sixteenth kalā inherent in the fifteen tithis each of the passage of prāṇa and apāna. This has to be realised only in the heart-lotus. One should always practise the repetition of somāṁśa, i.e. all the external objects like blue, etc. and internal mental contents like pleasure, etc. as prameya or objectivity. — p. 264

2. Explanation according to sambhava upāya:

The hrdaya-bīja, (i.e. sauh) without beginning or end is only s. Then together with the sixteen tithis [i.e. au and aḥ], i.e. together with the sixteen-phased apāna current, the aspirant should project it by the contrivance of grāśana (dissolution) into the Heart. Just as in pouring water in a pipe there is at first movement with slow tempo (calana), then medium tempo (kampana), and finally fast tempo (spandana), so by the practice of slow, medium and fast tempo, he should penetrate (the cakras) mūlādhāra, trikoṇa, bhadrakāla, kanda, hrdaya and mukha, i.e., hṛt-karnikā. After this, simultaneously using slow, medium, and fast movement he reaches the culminating point at which there is a tremendous current owing to which both prāṇa (sūrya) and apāna (soma) become dissolved.

From the point of view of succession of the phonemes, without the beginning and the next, i.e. without s and au of hrdaya bīja (ādyantābhyaṁ
The aspirant rises even higher than this which is the seventeenth kalā, the commencement of ārdhvvakundalinī. He or she should always meditate on the amṛta-amśa, which is the sixteenth aspect, i.e. the visarga-kalā in the heart. This is what my guru (Śambhunātha) says.

[The mystic explanation of somāṁśa is the following:]

According to the etymological analysis — saha umayā (vartate), i.e. he who abides with Umā or Śakti, Soma means Śiva, for Śiva is constantly in union with goddess Parāśakti, and is in a state of spanda (kṣobhena) due to union which is indicative of the state of churning together of the two tattvas. Amśa in somāṁśa means that all objects, internal like pleasure and external like blue, are like organs of the organic whole who is Śiva, and who is perfect I-consciousness. So the aspirant should practise the meditation over and over again with the japa of his senses both in an extroverted way in which he regards objective manifestation (śṛṣṭi) as Śiva and in an introverted way in which he regards the withdrawal of manifestation (saṁhāra) also as Śiva. This is the ever-present hṛdaya-japa. The potential mood has been used in the sense of possibility, competence.

— pp. 265-66, modified

There is a third interpretation given to this mystical verse (according to ānava-upāya, the individual way), in relation to the practice of prāṇa:

3. Explanation according to ānava upāya:

Others, i.e. those who follow the ānava upāya explain this Sūtra in the following way:

The starting point of breath is the heart, and the movement of prāṇa from that point up to bāhya (external) dvādasānta measures up to thirty-six fingers. From that out, beginning with prāṇa-vāyu (sūryataya uśasya), the aspirant should restrain it at the point of bāhya-dvādasānta for half a tuti (before beginning the movement of apāna-vāyu). Then after the rise of the movement of apāna-vāyu which is known as the somakalā, the imperishable, amṛta-like visarga, the aspirant should

25. Followed by different analyses of "without beginning and end" applied to SAUH.
increase the candrakalā or in other words the apāna kalā at every tūti which measures two and a quarter fingers. Thus when fifteen tūtis are completed, the apāna vāyu becomes soma or moon of sixteen digits at the point of hṛṛtpadma (the heart-lotus), i.e. the antaḥ (inner) dvādaśānta, for there has to be a pause of half a tūti there also. In this way, all told the passage of apāna current is complete at thirty-six fingers. (Pause of h tūti at bāhya-dvādaśānta+15 apāna-cāra + pause of h tūti at antaḥdvādaśānta totals to 16 tūtis. Each tūti being of 2½ fingers, the 16 tūtis make 36 fingers).

In such a state, “without beginning or end“ only means that since the parābīja or amṛtabīja (sauḥ) is ever present at the first half tūti (on the occasion of pause at the bāhya dvādaśānta) and the last half tūti (on the occasion of pause at the antaḥ dvādaśānta), it cannot be limited by time. Therefore, it is without beginning or end.

Leaving aside these two half tūtis, the aspirant should practise the dissolution of the kalās, by meditating on the somāṁśa, i.e. on visarga kalā (aḥ) without s and au within the remaining tūtis, separating it within himself in the form of the seventeenth bindu-kalā.

— pp. 266-67

Concluding the multiple meanings Abhinavagupta makes a statement about the nature of the Tantra, called a Sūtra, and the possibilities of hermeneutics given to the commentator:

All these three explanations should be considered to be appropriate. This verse is a sūtra. Therefore, by turning its words this way or that way, many kinds of explanation would become quite fit, as has been said that “a sūtra is that which gives scope for manifold senses.“ The respected teachers have averred that Parātrīṣikā is an unsurpassable sūtra.26 In this way, there can be many interpretations of the earlier verses also which are indeed like sūtras.

— p. 267

A. Sanderson goes into the questions of “The non-duality of the factors of action and the interpretation of the stages of ritual“ in his “Meaning in Tantric Ritual“ (pp. 48-62) in relation to the Tantrāloka, Svavchanda and Netra Tantras as interpreted

26. Trīṣikā cānuttarasūtram iti guruvaḥ l p. 102. Anuttarasūtra should rather be taken to mean “Sūtra concerning the Unsurpassable," it is not an adjective to sūtra. There is a clear correspondence between the Tantra as Anuttarasūtra and the Vivaraṇa as Anuttaraprakriyā.
by Kṣemarāja. There he states the validity of ritual action even in a non-dualist context:

To be made fit to participate in the cult of the deity or in non-dualistic terms, to be realised as the deity, so that the proper awareness of the worshipper should be that the Śiva worships Śiva with Śiva on Śiva, etc. Tāntric ritual can therefore be interpreted as presenting the initiate with a model of the Absolute which he is to realise as his true identity. — pp. 48-49

Details differ in the different texts, but the basic attitude is the same.

**Supreme Worship**

In an apparent contradiction to the declared transcendence of ritual by knowledge, the Tantra still describes a ritual process comprising nyāsa (imposition of mantras on parts of the body), disabandha (fettering the directions), āsana (seat for the deity), and worship (yajana, pūjā), including fire sacrifice (agnikārya). Abhinavagupta, while introducing verses 27-33, provides a justification for accepting even external worship:

Thus the way in which the transcendental (anuttara) state occurs without abandoning the external extension has been determined many a time both separately and in a composite way.

Now this is what is to be said. In every Śāstra it is said:
Having assumed a human body, those who worship the Heart, the essence of Trika, are the Supreme Lord in hidden form, even if they have not realised its full potential.27

How is this worship to be performed? Even though this external worship is without its full virility, there must be in it the impact of the unsurpassable reality (anuttara sattā), for anuttara is after all anuttara. What is the operational method of this worship? In order to give a definite answer to this query, the author lays down the following verses: — p. 245

These verses describe some of the elements of ritual:

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27. manusyadehamāsthāya channāste parameśvarāh nirvīryamapi ye hārdam trikārtham samupāsate. — p. 94 (my translation).
mūrdhni vaktre ca hrdaye
guhye mūrtau tathaiva ca |
nyāsaṁ kṛtvā śikhāṁ baddhva
saptavimśatimantritām || 27 ||

ekaikam tu diśāṁ bandham
daśānām api yojayet |
tālātrayam purā dattvā
saśabdam vighnaśāntaye || 28 ||

śikhāsaṁkhyābhijaptena
toyenābhyukṣayet tataḥ |
puspādikam kramat sarvam
linge vā sthaṇḍile 'tha vā || 29 ||

caturdaśābhijaptena
puspaṇāsanakalpanā |
tatra śṛṣṭim yajed vīrah
punarevāsanām tataḥ || 30 ||

To summarise: nyāsa or the imposition of the hands on parts of the body with mantras has the purpose to divinise the body to make it worthy to perform the worship of the deity (v. 27). Digbandha or the fixing of the ten directions of space has the purpose of creating a sacred space free from obstacles (v. 28). Creating a seat (āsana) for the deity with flowers and mantras is the next act, on which the vīra or spiritual hero performs worship to the emission (śṛṣṭi, v. 30). After this procedure it is the Great Goddess (Maheśānī) who is worshipped.

śṛṣṭim tu sampūṭikṛtya
paścād yajanam ārabhet,
sarvatattva-saṁpūrṇāṁ
sarvābharanaḥ-bhūṣitām || 31 ||
yajed devīṁ maheśānīṁ
saptavimśatimantritāṁ

28. Cf. the list of mantras in Jaideva Singh, pp. 246-47.
After the sampūṭikaraṇa of sṛṣṭi, one should start the yajana, i.e. the internal supreme worship. One should worship the Goddess Maheśānī who is fully equipped with all the tattvas or categories of existence, is decorated with all the ornaments and who is consecrated with (the previously described) twenty seven mantras. Then with fragrant flowers one should render the goddess due honour according to one's capability (yathā śakti).30

In this way, one should worship with supreme devotion and surrender completely to her. The internal worship has been described in this way. The same procedure should be followed in the matter of agnikārya or sacrificial libation to fire associated with this worship.

Abhinavagupta gives an esoteric interpretation of all the elements of ritual. He reconnects the nyāsa with the tattvas and phonemes.

The esoteric aspect of the limbs pertaining to nyāsa:

The nyāsa on the head, etc. is all right from the exoteric point of view. Really speaking, however, since they indicate mantra, these mantras are:

(1) indications of the five gross elements, viz. from ether down to earth which are said to be the external forms of the Supreme Brahman.

(2) the essence of Īśāna, Tatpuruṣa, Aghora, Vāmadeva, and Sadyojāta, the five faces of Bhairava.

(3) forms of cit (consciousness), unmeṣa in the sense of ānanda or bliss, icchā or will, jñāna or knowledge, kriyā or activity.

Their mantras are the following:

30. Alternative Interpretation: “together with the yogini.”
(1) तसानमुर्ध्नेः
(2) तत्पुरुषावाक्त्रया
(3) अघोरधर्मयाः
(4) वामदेवागुह्ययाः
(5) सद्योजातामुर्तये

Really speaking, there is no difference among the five (etat pañcakavibhāgatmakatve). Each of these is quintuple. Therefore, the number of the mantras is twenty-five. The Mālinī mantra (napha hrīṁ) and Mātṛkā mantra (akṣa hrīṁ) are both included within these twenty-five.

Śīkhā-bandha (tying the tuft of hair):

There have become nine forms of the three goddesses, viz. para, parāparā, and aparā because of each of them being connected with icchā, jñāna and kriya. Each of them being associated with srṣṭi, sthiti and samhāra again becomes threefold. Thus their number becomes twenty-seven. All of them derive their nurture from hrdaya-bīja.

Śīkhā symbolises the autonomy of the Divine diffused from Śiva up to the earth; its tying indicates identity, the quintessence of the non-differentiation of all. — pp. 251-52, modified

Both, in relation to tying the top-knot (śīkhā) and the fixing of the directions, the term bandhana, "binding," is used, which Abhinavagupta interprets in a non-dualistic sense as interrelationships leading to or expressing unity (bandhanam — sarvāvibhāgasāram tādātmyam). This is again related to the principle of sarvam sarvātmakam, i.e. that every part is related to the whole, applied also to the limbs of the body to be sanctified:

Though the limbs, head, mouth, etc. have been indicated separately, yet each one of them is specifying the other. This fact has already been established by the principle: "Everything is the epitome of all" (sarvaṁ sarvaṁvatmakam).

— p. 252

He gives an indication to the worshipper to perform each detail of the ritual with an awareness of the totality, and to consider or meditate on each part of the body as containing the whole, i.e. divine body. Even the ten directions which are
symbolised by earthen jars filled with water placed in the directions are to be related to the Self of the worshipper. The removing of obstacles by three clappings of the hands is again given a spiritual significance:

Three clappings:

This should be done with three clappings. Clapping is symbolic of stability (pratiṣṭhā), i.e. being stable in Self. In clapping, the hṛdayabija starting with s is the mantra, i.e. the first clapping should be done with the muttering of s, the second with the muttering of au, the third with the muttering of ah.

The mantra should be a mere mumble, i.e. it should be uttered only indistinctly in madhyāma vānī. Inner vimarśa is the essence of sounding. That is accomplished in madhyāma vānī. It has been stated frequently that vaikhari or gross speech is only an appendage of madhyāma vānī, i.e. gross speech is only external manifestation of what is inwardly mumbled in madhyāma.

And again, obstacles, the removal of which constitutes an important part of all rituals, are not to be considered as something outside consciousness:

Pacification of obstacles:

(In the esoteric sense), obstacles are the stain of waves of difference of which the essence is limitation and division in the Supreme Self (paramātmāni) which is free of all difference and division. Their pacification connotes identification with the Bhairava-ocean in which there is no wave of difference or division.

As has been said by venerable Somānanda:

May Śiva who has entered into us as (the empirical) subject make obeisance by Himself to Śiva who is extended as the universe by means of para who is His own Śakti in order to remove all obstacles which are but Himself. — Śivadrśṭi I, 1 (p. 253)

The consecration of water in the pots used for sprinkling on the image or symbol of worship is given a moving interpretation:

Water in this context means everything that melts the heart because
of non-restraint and non-hesitation (toyam atra sarvameva ḥṛdayadraśām ām— anīyantritavat asamkocadānācçca).

— p. 96, ll. 13-14

Regarding the linga or the symbol of Śiva he quotes the Mālinīvijayottāra giving the “spiritual linga” (ādhyātmikam lingam):

Do not worship the emblem of Śiva made of clay or stone or mineral or gem. Worship that spiritual emblem in which is absorbed the entire universe consisting of the mobile and immobile beings.

— MVT XVIII, 2-3 (p. 253)

He further interprets āsana in relation to autonomy (svātantrya):

Āsana (Seat):

That is (āsana) which is determined by the agent through his autonomy, for when the aspect of universality is the main principle, then in the act of sitting, the location and seat are determined through autonomy only.

— p. 254

The emission or creation (sṛṣṭi) to be worshipped is further interpreted as varṇasṛṣṭi or the emission of the phonemes from a to kṣa.

It is the hṛdaya (bīja or the mantra sauḥ) which is identified with the phonemes from a to kṣa.

That is the reason why the entire āsana is also covered with the same mantra, for the place of location (ādhāra) and that which is to be located are indissolubly connected.

(What this means is that there is no difference between Śiva-trikona and Śakti-trikona. Śakti-trikona is the ādhāra and Śiva-trikona is the ādheya).

— p. 254

The expression sampuṭikarana of sṛṣṭi (v. 31) means the enclosing of a mantra from both sides, e.g. by the same mantra, in this case the hṛdayabīja:

The sampuṭikarana of sṛṣṭi

31. “Water” in the Tāntric or Kaula context can also denote wine.

32. According to Jaideva Singh, it is the mantra aham which is the sampūṭa enclosing the mantra sauḥ (note on p. 255).
1. From the point of view of esoteric worship of the Supreme:

_Sṛṣṭi_ here means the arising and subsiding of all the phonemes from _a_ to _kṣa_ severally and cumulatively in the Supreme principle through _hṛdaya-bija_. _Sampūṣṭikaraṇa_ of _sṛṣṭi_ implies that _sampūṭa_ should be made by means of the mantra _sauḥ_ at first of all the letters severally from _a_ to _kṣa_ and then cumulatively of all the letters. It has already been said that there cannot be _regressus ad infinitum_ (anavasthā) in this matter.

—in p. 254

In the _Tantrasāra_ Abhinavagupta quotes the _Parātrīśikā_ (v. 30 _sṛṣṭim tu sampūṭikṛtya_. . . , p. 200) and gives the following comment on the elements of ritual:

Having “uttered” (the mantra _SAUḤ_) perfectly and having made imposition (nyāsa) of the support and the supported he should perceive (paśyet) the universe in consciousness, since it (the universe) is nothing but consciousness (_saṁvinmayam_). Thus he encloses the universe by consciousness (vิśvasya samvidā tena ca tasyāḥ sampūṭibhavo bhavati), since the consciousness arises from and rests in the knowable (vedya). In this way the reality of Consciousness is obtained by two enclosures, as has been said: _sṛṣṭim tu sampūṭikṛtya_. . .

He then relates the elements of worship like incense, flowers, etc. to the Self:

Having offered perfume, incense, wine, flowers, etc. which are all conducive to penetrating into the Self, reposing in one’s self and reciting (the mantra) silently, one should gather them and immerse them in water.

—in _Tantrasāra_ 22 (pp. 200-01)

In a further spiritualisation of the _sampūṭikaraṇa_ of _sṛṣṭi_ this is taken as a meditation on the mutual penetration of the universe and (pure, divine) consciousness. There he adduces the verse from the _Parātrīśikā_ as authority.

Abhinavagupta continues by giving an esoteric meaning to the description of the Goddess to be worshipped, where the question of meditation of or worship of particular forms of the Deities, their emblems and ornaments, is raised.

_Sarvatattvaiḥ . . . pūrṇatvam_ — means that the supreme _Devi_ is fully

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(samyak) and invariably (anapāyitaya) equipped with all the tattvas.

She is decorated with all the ābharana (ornaments). This means —

1. (Sarvābharana = sarvatra ā-bharanam)

The Supreme Goddess is making everything in all directions (sarvatra), even in the atoms wholly (samantāt) her own (ātmikaraṇam).

2. (Sarvābharana = sarvair-ā-bharanam)

It has already been explained that all external objects, such as jar, etc. all inner experiences, such as pleasure, etc. all experients such as animal, man, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mantra, Sadāśiva are like congruous limbs (avayava) of the Supreme Goddess so that her being a uniform (ekarasa) organism (avayavi) is fully justified. That is why meditation on any definite form or weapon of hers has not been prescribed, for all this is (only artificial).

(If it is not necessary to meditate on any definite form or weapon of the goddess), how can one desirous of mounting to the highest stage in spirituality, and desirous of following the path recommended by Trika achieve his object?

If this is the question, the reply is: Who is constrained to mount? If there is any such being, let him not mount. Let him follow the process advocated by siddha-tantra, etc., let him resort to the narrow method of meditation, etc. prescribed according to their mode of thinking (tadasayenaiva nirūpita). Such a person is not privileged to enter the stage of anuttara which is without any limitation or restriction. — pp. 255-56

The interpretation of parā bhakti (v. 33), supreme devotion, is given in the non-dualistic context, with three meanings:

The word parayā implies that the worship has to be done with heart’s devotion. How?

(Three kinds of bhakti):
1. (Bhakti from the root bhaj meaning “to serve”)

By identifying oneself with hrdaya-bīja or sauh (tādātmya) by entering into it (anupraveśa), and with a spirit of service or submissiveness (prahvatātmatā).

2. (Bhakti from the root bhaj meaning “to divide”)

Bhaktyā — with the self-contrived division of the worshipped and the worshipper. The one to be worshipped is (imaginatively) fashioned by oneself. The self-created object of worship has to be supreme, full of autonomy and consciousness for such is the power of the autonomy of anuttara (the Absolute). It cannot be insentient like a jar. That is the distinction of this system. It has been rightly said in Īśvara-pratyabhijñā:

“The Lord, by His non-dualistic autonomy, having fashioned His own free self into Īśvara (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, etc.) causes the world to worship Himself through them.” — I.5, 16

3. (Bhakti as samāveśa or compenetration):

By samāveśa which is formally known as worship, one realises the Supreme Reality (paraṁ tattvam lakṣyate). The recognition of samāveśa in all forms of ritual observance (sarva-kriyasu) is the best means (to the realisation of Supreme Reality), just as written letters are a means for the production and understanding of all empirical phonemes, and the empirical phonemes are a means of penetration into their energy. — pp. 256-57

The comparison given again from practical life is significant, because the forms of ritual are recognised as a means to union with the Supreme Reality, just as writing is a means to recognise the phonemes, and these are means to enter into their energy (p. 97 Skt.). This is another indication for Abhinavagupta’s view that script (lipi) is the lowest form of the Word or language.

Every form of worship terminates by a gesture of surrender or prostration (praṇāma), which may be a mere formality or filled with meaning. Abhinavagupta explains the phrase ātmānāṁ ca nivedayet, “one should surrender oneself” by saying:

Ātmānāṁ nivedayet means one should offer one’s self, for there is
nothing else worth offering than this. The purport is that (according to the etymology of nivedayet: nih — completely, vedayet — one should experience or understand oneself) one should, in conformity to the Absolute Reality, consider one's Self to be the Absolute Reality itself. Here the potential mood (liṅ) in nivedayet has been used in the sense of possibility, for it has already been said that any stance connected with Self is always one of possibility. — p. 257

_Yajanam_ (worship, sacrifice) has again been transposed into a non-dualistic meaning:

_Yajana — homage:_

The meaning of the expression _ākhyātam_ occurring in verse 33 is _ā-samantāt, sarvatra, sadā_ i.e. wholly, everywhere, always. _Khyātam_ connotes the _khyāti_ or realisation of the supreme, pure nature of Śiva. This is the true _yajana_ or homage of the goddess _Parā samvit_ (Supreme Consciousness). The root _yaja_ in _yajam_ connotes three meanings:

1. _Yaja_ in the sense of worship means: "Thus is her true worship."

2. _Yaja_ in the sense of _saṁgati_ means: "This kind of worship offers the opportunity of appropriate meeting (saṁyag-gamana) of the worshipper and the worshipped, in other words the identity with the Supreme."

3. _Yaj_ in the sense "to make an offer, to donate" means the following: "This worship by removing the narrow, limited sense of I-consciousness of the empirical individual, denotes the sense of unification of the self with the perfect mass of Consciousness which is Śiva-Śakti." — pp. 257-58

The last sacrificial act is _agnikārya_, which receives a perfect spiritual interpretation by Abhinavagupta:

_Agnikārya_ or oblation in the sacrificial fire:

\[
\text{svasvarūpaparijñānam mantro 'yāṁ pāramārthikah 1}
\]
\[
dīkṣeyamesa yāgaśca\textsuperscript{34} kriyāyāmapyanuttarah 1 — Skt. p. 98
\]

\textsuperscript{34} Some Mss have _yogā_, cf. R. Gnoli, p. 174 note 530a. He says rightly that _kriyāyām apyanuttarah_ would mean literally: "this is unsurpassed even in ritual action." He therefore opts for the emendation _kriśeyām_, "this ritual."
This is the real oblation in the sacrificial fire, viz. the oblation, i.e. the inner burning of the residual traces of all desires in the mighty flame of Supreme Bhairava who is always ablaze with the arani of Supreme Śakti excited by union with Śiva, which is burning brightly with the eager consumption of all objects as its fuel, which is aglow with the abundant light of lubricious melted butter of worldly attachments. This alone is the real injunction regarding oblation right up to initiation. There is none other different from this. This is the real purport of it.

Recognition of one’s essential nature — this is the highest mantra. This is the real initiation. This is the real sacrifice. Among all the ceremonies, this is the highest rite. — p. 258

At the end of the esoteric interpretation of the ritual Abhinavagupta makes a statement which clearly distinguishes the Parātrīśikā from other Āgamas. The four sections (pādas) of an Āgama comprise kriyā (ritual), caryā (conduct of life), jñāna (philosophy) and yoga, implying a dualism of action and knowledge. In the Parātrīśikā jñāna comes first and kriyā last, but he indicates the ekavākyatā or consistency and interconnectedness of the whole text.

It has been said earlier that just as in other scriptures, in the earlier part, ceremonies of worship with mantra are described, in the latter part the conclusion is made with jñāna, in the present Śāstra it is not so. What has been indicated in the sūtra “uttarasyāpi anuttaram” has been carried out to the end in this work. Sacrifice, initiation, ceremonies, etc. are only aspects of hṛdayabija and that is really anuttara (transcendent).

The last sentence reads:

\[
yaduktam uttarasyāpyanuttaram iti sūtre tadeva vaśadantena
\]
\[
\text{granthena nirvyādham — hṛdayasyāiva yāga-dīksākriyā-
\text{rūpatvāt tasya cānuttaratvāt}}
\]

— p. 98

The Fruit of the Practice

Every spiritual text ends with the declaration of the “fruit” of the practice concerned, phalaśruti, i.e. the result. This is related to the prayer of the Devī that she desires to
obtain complete satisfaction (yena त्र्योतिः लभायमयाहम्) by this knowledge (v. 2). At the end of the section on worship (पुजाविद्धि) the Tantra declares:

\[ kṣtapujāvidhiḥ samyak \\
smaran bījaṁ prasiddhyati \| 34 \|^{35} \]

Rightly remembering/meditating/mentally dwelling on this seed (of the Heart) (the worshipper) attains complete perfection.

Abhinavagupta relates this perfection to ṣiva-mukti:

1. Thus ceaselessly even in worldly affairs, the aspirant who carries on worship, while remembering the हṛdaya-बीजा, leaving aside other disciplines like Kaula-शास्त्र, Śaiva and Vaishnava Śāstra, having entered into the essence, i.e. हṛdaya-बीजा of revered Bhairava, making an outward display of object just for pastime, created by the blissful force of one’s own paraśaṁvīt (Supreme Consciousness), is verily liberated while alive. The use of the word smarana (remembering) connotes the repetition of one’s own experience, nothing else. In Śrīmata-Śāstra also the same idea has been expressed. — p. 259

His “definition” of smarana shows his unique greatness as a spiritual master: anubhava evaṁāvartate na tvanyat kiṁciditi smaranaṁ ucyate (pp. 98-99). The second meaning refers to the gradual process of krama-पुज्जा:

2. The worshipper who has not penetrated into the very heart of the energy of the great mantra, by rightly remembering the हṛdaya-बीजा through the efficacy of krama-पुज्जा, having gradually attained to the power of the mantra as हṛdaya-बीजा, also achieves the realisation of the highest perfection or the power of the mantra of हṛdaya-बीजा, either through the gradual superiority of the efficacy of the krama-पुज्जा or by himself, or through the exhortation from the mouth of an appeased guru (spiritual director) and becomes liberated while alive. — p. 259

Relying on the authority of Somananda, Abhinavagupta reiterates that external

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35. Another half verse.
worship need not be excluded, but it is not necessary for the spiritual purpose. 

\[ \text{atra dvāra-parivāragurupujananām gunaṁ khaṇḍanāṁ va na vahati (p. 99): “here the worship of the doorkeepers (of the temple), of the subsidiary deities and of the guru is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage.”} \]

Before taking up the summary verses of this section we may consider the last two verses of the Tantra which are concerned with the fruit of the mantra and of the entire text:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yān yān kāmayate kāmāṁs} \\
\text{tānstaṁ chhiṅghram avāpnuyāt} \\
\text{asmāt pratyakṣatām eti} \\
\text{sarvajñatvam na samśayah} \| 36 \|
\end{align*}
\]

The yogī obtains immediately whatever objects he desires. Therefore, omniscience becomes as direct to him as perception. There is no doubt about this.

**Vivarana:**

Thus the yogī becomes full of endeavour, perseverance, eagerness, and zeal through firmness of will brought about by the potency of the omnifarious sauh mantra (sarvamaya ṣṛdaya-virya-samucchalita-icchā prasara) and so by repetition of the continuous state of practice (tat sthiti-rūdhi-rūpa-abhyāsat), he acquires so much power that he obtains immediately whatever he desires. In short, in this very physical body, he acquires omniscience that is characteristic of the Supreme Bhairava.

Abhinavagupta introduces the concluding verse (37) by stating the essence of the state attained through the Tantra:

After examining from all points of view, the book is now being concluded. In the end, the progress of the yogī terminates in the attainment of this transcendental state (akula-sattā-asādane) which means resting in one’s essential Self; this alone is the state of Bhairava. This has been mentioned repeatedly. Now this is the concluding verse.

The Parātrīśikā concludes:
evar̄ṇ mantra-phalāvāptir ity
etad rudrayāmalam ā
etad abhyāsataḥ siddhiḥ
sarvajñatvam avāpyate II 37 II

[Translated literally:]
Such is the attainment of the fruit of the mantra, 
this is the union of Rudra and Rudra.
By this practice the perfection of omniscience is attained

In the translation of Jaideva Singh:

Such is the gain from the practice of this mantra (viz. hrdayabija or sauh). This betokens the union (yāmala) of Rudra and Rudrā or Śiva and Śakti. By the continuous practice of this is acquired the supernormal power of omniscience. — p. 269

Abhinavagupta concludes the Vivaraṇa at two levels: that of gnosis or meditative reflection (prasamkhyaṇa), and yoga, related to abhyāsa (practice)

In this way, the fruit of all mantras, even of the mantras with the phonemes of the other Śāstras also, is obtained, not otherwise. The word iti connotes conclusion.

In conclusion, it is said that this connotes the union of Rudra and Rudrā (Rudrayāmalā) i.e. of Śiva and Śakti where there is no division of question and answer, which is the state of awareness of the essential Self (svarūpa-āmarśana).

Beginning from a consideration of this up to the external state in which there are infinite, innumerable cases of manifestation and absorption . . . all this is indeed summarised in akula or anuttara, the transcendental Reality. This is the conclusion (of the dialogue between Bhairava and Devī) from the point of view of intuitive gnosis (prasamkhyaṇa).

"From the practice of this accrues the power of omniscience" — this is the conclusion from the point of view of yoga.

This (i.e. Rudrayāmala state) is ever-present in everybody. May there be good to all! (iti śivam). — pp. 269-70
The Heart, the Resting Place of All

Significantly, the last group of summary verses (sāmkṣepārtha) of the entire Vivaraṇa is devoted to the Heart in its different aspects and meanings. The concluding verses are more an extended colophon with autobiographical content. This shows the central place accorded to this symbol by Abhinavagupta, but in harmony with the Tantra (see the list of occurrences p. 114). If hṛdaya is literally the core — of the text, of the whole of Reality, of the Divine — Anuttara is the all-encompassing Reality itself.

These verses are so significant that I venture a new translation.

That in which the entire universe shines,
and which shines everywhere,
that is the one and unique resplendence
which is the Supreme Heart, O wise. (1)

Just as a jenny or a mare
simultaneously expanding and contracting her generative organ
rejoices in her heart,36
in the same way one should meditate
on the Heart, of the nature of creation,
in the innermost Heart in the central vein (suṣumṇa),
full of great bliss of both (Śiva and Śakti). (2-3)

That in which, whether meditating
remembering, reflecting or acting,
everything finds repose,
and whence it emerges in manifestation:
that is the Heart. (4)37

It is there where the one supreme knowledge
(and also) the determinate knowledge (arise),
where the levels of reality, the various worlds,
and the subjects, from Śiva to the bonded soul, (5)
finding their respective true own-nature, the ultimate one,
becoming manifold and shine,

36. A strange simile, derived from an unknown Tantric source, also quoted in TĀ V.58 b-59a.
37. dhāyan-smaran-vimśan-kurvanvā yatra kutracit, viśrāntimeti yasmācca prollaseddhṛdayair
tu tat.
manifesting even the wonderful Supreme Consciousness. (6)

The worship of this (Heart) is ever present, it is attained everywhere, in any country, with any substance, in any activity, location or knowledge certain beyond doubt. (7)

But the gradual process of worship (krama-pājā) is to be performed according to the Kula on auspicious days, with the sacred thread (pavitraka).38 In the Trika tradition it is called “correctness” of worship. (8)

As has been said:

As among liquid substances is semen, among phonemes the “seed of creation,” among traditions is Trikaśāstra, among states of liberation is the (attainment of the) state of Bhairava, (9) among ways of meditation is the state of absorption, among vows the practice of the vīras (spiritual heroes), in the same way, among auspicious occasions the Kula parvans (excel all) according to this tradition.39 (10)

While summarising the entire subject matter Abhinavagupta mentions the two ways of attaining: Anuttara: through gnosis or intuitive insight (prasamkhyāna) which lies beyond only practice, and yoga which leads to supernatural powers (siddhis). He stresses again that for both ways it is only grace (saktipāta) of different degrees that brings about the final result.

Thus the nature of anuttara (transcendental reality) has been described in detail. In it, there is no room for contemplation (bhāvana). In it

38. Pavitraka is an important ritual in which a thread with various knots, a ring of kuśa grass or made with other substances, is worshipped and offered Cf. TĀ XXVIII.112-86, pavitrakavidhiḥ.

only gnosis (prasamkhyaṇam) functions as the bearer of mountains fit for the burden of means (upāya-dhaurya-dharāḍharāṇi dhatte) up to the end of firm realisation of Self identified with hrdaya-bija which is characterised by steadfast spiritual delight.

Now the yoga for those who are desirous of attaining supernormal power (for show) has to be described. Though the supernormal powers pertaining to dṛṣṭayoga are possible only by means of the autonomy of the Absolute and they are beyond the sphere of popularly known and determinate laws, yet they cannot (wholly) transgress the divinely fixed order, “yet the means for the supernormal powers pertaining to multiple goals has to be described with respect,” as said by Somānanda in Śivadrṣṭi.

Even in the matter of yoga for the display of supernormal powers (dṛṣṭa-yoga), there is no violation of the transcendental nature, for like the effort to attain the supernormal powers for display, their actual attainment, and the cessation of all efforts in their maturity — everything is due to the grace of the Supreme. But in comparison to liberation in life, such an attainment would be said to be due to faint grace of the divine, for it does not lead to perfection.

— p. 261

Prasaṅkhyāna corresponds to the yena vijnātamātreṇa (by the knowledge of which alone) of the question of the Devi in verse one. It is an important term related to spiritual knowledge. S. Vasudeva remarks that it appears already in Kālidāsa “as a synonym of contemplation.”⁴⁰ He further quotes Vācaspati’s Nyāyavrāttikatātparyatīkā as defining: “Prasaṅkhyāna is the knowledge of truth arising from trance (samādhi).”⁴¹ There he adduces the Vivaraṇa passage quoted above.

In summing up it may be said that, although the Tantra adheres to ritual procedure, Abhinavagupta takes every aspect of worship and interprets it with a non-dualistic meaning. He, however, interprets the stages of ritual action, such as agnikārya or fire sacrifice, as stages of spiritual experience. While distinguishing between external (bāhya) ritual and its esoteric meaning, the latter is described as

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⁴⁰. In Kumārasambhava 3.40.
the “true” (vāstava) or “non-artificial” (akalpita) worship, which ultimately leads to recognition of the true Self (svasvarūpa-pratyabhijñā). What Abhinavagupta does is, as Sanderson calls it, a “translation” of ritual into metaphysics, and this “translation” again employs the methods of Sanskrit grammar and nirvacana. An important link in this transference from external acts of worship to their internal meaning is parā bhakti mentioned by the Parātrīśīkā. This supreme devotion or surrender could easily be understood in an advaitic sense, “because it is a means of recognition of the identical nature in all actions (of ritual).” In this transformative interpretation ritual becomes a key to self-recognition.

42. Cf. A. Sanderson, Meaning in Tantric Ritual, pp. 50-53.


44. sarvakriyāsvavarūpraptaprtyabhijñānamupāyatvāt — p. 97 (tr. different from J.S.).
Conclusion

sarvam sarvātmakam

Everything is connected to the Whole

I. Abhinavagupta's Personal Conclusion

Having concluded his commentary with a reference to the double meaning of Rudrayāmala, Abhinavagupta appends a lengthy colophon (20 verses) which presents what exegetes would call the "Sitz-im-Leben" — the living context in which he had composed this extraordinary text. Characteristically, he combines the most personal statements regarding his family, his gurus and disciples, with the most universal themes contained in the text. Even more than in the benedictory verses or maṅgala he states clearly his spiritual purpose. He is conscious of the inadequacy of language to convey the Divine reality (śrīśāmbhavam matamanargalitātra vācaḥ, v. 2b). His motivation in composing the text is clearly aimed at the spiritual well-being of humanity.

Thus being born of Cukhulaka, resident of Kashmir, I, a black bee at the lotus-feet of Maheśvara, intent on lifting up mankind looking up to me (for spiritual succour), have written this commentary pregnant with the deliberation of the mystery of Trika. (1)

Who can estimate emphatically that so much only is the doctrine pertaining to Śiva? There is no bar to words in this matter. All that which is within my comprehension appears here regarding the Universal Spirit (akhilātmā). Therefore, the wise should not be averse to it. (2)

This is a work of such nature that it makes firm the knowledge of the ignorant, of one who is full of doubts or of one who has contrary views. In the case of those in whom conviction has already started,
in whom it is fully grown (rūḍhasya), it makes the settled conviction of their heart harmonise with the teaching. (3)

What is singular with Abhinavagupta’s autobiographical texts is that he not only praises his masters,¹ but also the disciples and their high spiritual and intellectual qualities in a lively and loving way.² So we know for whom he has composed his texts and in what circumstances. But writing for his close disciples does not mean excluding humanity at large, they rather offer the occasion for the master to reveal the meaning for the spiritual well-being of all.

\[
\text{etatpriyahitakaraṇapratraḍhahṛdayena yanmayā racitam} \\
\text{mārgadarśanam tat sarvasya śivāptaye bhūyāt} \ |
\]

The following are the names of the disciples to whom the work is addressed:

In Kashmir, there was the chief minister of the king, Yaśaskara. He was named Vallabhācārya. He was a brāhmaṇa of the most excellent lineage. His son, Śauri, is worthy of renown on account of his good qualities and is like the ocean in dedication to the feet of the crescent-crested Śiva, is the abode of virtue, one who fully deserves the great fame that has spread about him, is a pleasant object of affection and who has an inborn tendency towards compassion on all people.

His life-companion (wife) is named Vatsalīkā. Because of the abounding devotion to her husband, her mind is filled with an inner disposition towards spiritual matters and expands with delight by the worship of Śiva. (4-5)

He has a son, named Karṇa, who is a brāhmaṇa who very well understands the mystery of the manifestation and maintenance of the world, who delights in the meditation and reflection on and worship of Śiva, who even in childhood and youth, abandoning attachment to objects of senses, has resorted to unwavering reflection which eradicates transmigratory existence. (6)

My own brother, by name Manoratha Gupta, having a longing for the Supreme Self, is engrossed in the Śaiva Śāstras; in order to


². Cf. the concluding verses of the Tantrāloka (37 end).
destroy transmigratory existence, he is eager to examine the entire range of Śāstras and Tantras for attaining the supreme state of Śiva. (7)

There is also another person, Rāmadeva by name, who is devoted to Śaiva Śāstra, who is well-versed in grammar (pada), Mīmāṁsā (vākya) and Nyāya (pramāṇa), and who brings about veritable adornment to his birth in the highest caste (i.e. brāhmaṇa). (8)

May that which I have written with heart full for the good and delight of all these serve as a guide for all for the attainment of (the nature of) Śiva. (9) — pp. 270-71 (modified)

He then mentions his own descent:

Atrigupta who was born in an excellent family in Antarvedi (the land between Gāṅgā and Yamunā) came to (settle down in) Kashmir the borders of which were hallowed by innumerable sages who were the incarnation of moon-crested Śiva. (10)

In his great lineage was born Varāhagupta whose son was Cukhula by name who was averse to worldly affairs and whose heart was set on Śiva alone. (11)

From him who had examined and understood the entire lot of categories and principles did Abhinavagupta obtain the human body sanctified by the Supreme Lord. (Even in this embodied condition), having attained full freedom from fear and doubt, he has instilled into the heart of his pupils the secret lore of Trika. (12)

He has some ironical remarks about people of little understanding:

To those who are devoid of right judgement, I can only make a bow. There are others who deliberate but are unable to reach a successful conclusion. One can but pity these senseless people. There may be someone else, though only one among a lakh (a hundred thousand) who has become steady in mind after having attained the quintessence of deep deliberation. The above may bring my effort to a successful issue. (13)

Any earnest request to those who are lazy in discerning their Self will not bear any fruit other than harrying oneself. There are those of unsteady mind who only make a fuss regarding the discernment of the universe. I only bow my head in respect to appease them. (14)
In an interesting parallel to the present-day situation where false gurus are deluding their confused disciples, Abhinavagupta describes a similar condition in his own time. Not only regarding other people, but he himself was as well disappointed by false teachers.

There are dull-witted people who are confused themselves and throw the senseless multitude of creatures into confusion. Having bound them fast with fetters, they bring them under their subjection by influencing them with tall talk of their qualities. Having thus seen creatures who are simply carriers of the burden of gurus and their (blind) followers, I have prepared a trident of wisdom\(^3\) in order to cut asunder their bondage. (15)

I was also thrown into confusion by many who presumed to be teachers of truth by declaring “that (Brāhma or Śiva) am I” but whose tongue had not even contacted the two words “that” and “thou” (tat tvam varṇayugamapi).\(^4\) (16)

Only one verse is dedicated to his guru, Śambhunātha\(^5\):

The Lord has set in motion the heart of the guru with compassion for lifting up those who have taken refuge (at his feet). That glorious guru Śambhunātha has set me\(^6\) on the path of truth. (17)

The next one relates to Somānanda as the author of the earlier commentary (Vivṛti), not as his guru, though his predecessor in the lineage.

I have written this work after (fully) reflecting on the doctrine of Somānanda which has spontaneously entered my heart which shares that pure state of truth taught by my guru. (18)

The last two verses are addressed to the goddesses who have inspired him in writing and who have appointed him as guru, for whose grace he prays. These goddesses

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3. \(jñānātṛisāla\): the trident as symbol of Trika, and as a weapon of Śiva for destroying bondage and ignorance. In v. 19 again the term \(jñānaśāla\) occurs.

4. \(tat tvam api\) seems to refer to the mahāvākya \(tattvam asi\) (you are That) of the Upaniṣads.

5. Strangely Jaideva Singh omits his name in the translation.

6. \(niyuktavāṃstāt\): \(niyukta\) can be taken in its several meanings: attached to, directed, placed or fixed on, appointed, ordered; implying both, his connection with truth and his being commissioned by his guru to pass it on.
may be the same who are called "the divinities of one’s own consciousness" (svasaṁvittidevibhir eva . . . dīksitaḥ) by Jayaratha,7 who initiate the spontaneously enlightened guru without ritual. They may be also identical with the Śaktis who recognise the yogī who has received this supreme knowledge (PT v. 20 jñāyate sarvasaktibhiḥ).

O goddesses full of streams of ardent delight rushing forth lavishly from you as you move about freely in the cakra of my heart and who dwell on the upper sharp edge of the trident of wisdom8 that is proficient in cutting asunder crores of my fetters, my mind, speech and body free of the reawakening of the fear of migratory existence are already surrendered at your feet. May you, therefore, confer your favour on me exceedingly and quickly, and dwell in my heart as Grace abounding. (19)

O goddesses, having your beautiful and ingenious continued existence in the centre of my heart (tatcakra), assigning the position of a guru, it is you who have employed me in the act of exposition of this text. Therefore forgive this fickleness of my speech and mind. (20)

The final colophon reads:

In nineteen hundred (verses) this Parātrīśikā has been explained. This will cut asunder the knots of doubts in all the Trika Śāstra. This has been written by Abhinavagupta.

1900 refers most probably to the extent at 1900 ślokas; since one śloka comprises 32 syllables, it would amount to 60,800 syllables for the entire text. The purpose of a commentary, as is often stated, is to “dissolve the knots (in the understanding of) the text” (granthagranthīnirdalanārtha).9

II. General Conclusion

Since Abhinavagupta calls the Tantra a Sūtra, which can have an infinite number of meanings, it is time to gather the threads which are spread out (root tan) in Tantra and Vivaraṇa, and in the present hermeneutical work. It is a difficult task, considering the depth and complexity of the two texts.

7. On Tantrāloka IV.50.
8. Reference to the maṇḍala with the three Śaktis on the spikes of the triśūla.
One of the great gifts of Abhinavagupta is that in the midst, or at the end, of a complex exegesis and elaboration, he always comes back to a simplified, universalised summary statement, often in verse form, when he wants to compress the meaning obtained. In this way he does not allow the reader to get lost in subtleties, but brings him back to the essential. Whenever he is carried away by an argument he stops himself from the digression (alaṃ ...).

One way of concluding is to look at the internal coherence of a text and its commentary, what is called ekavākyatā: literally, the text says only one thing from beginning to end. This one word is anuttara, the unsurpassed/unsurpassable, but the Tantra immediately adds: uttaryāpy anuttaram (v. 3), because anuttara should not be understood as excluding uttara, or as transcending it in a way to leave it behind.10 By frequently coming back to this sūtra along his commentary, Abhinavagupta time and again asserts the integration of the whole of Reality with the Absolute, or of the idam and the ahaṃ.

Starting off as a dialogue, the Tantra first accepts the duality of Bhairava and Devī, in the role of guru and disciple, and Abhinavagupta goes to a great length to avoid any dualistic interpretation and to show the unity of Consciousness. But Consciousness, in Trika and Pratyabhijña, is a dynamic, not a static reality, and this dynamism includes prakāśa and vimarśa, Light and its Reflection, which means also, at the level of person, relationship. At the very end (v. 37) the Tantra asserts that the entire revelation culminates in Rudrayāmala, i.e. the union of Śiva and Śakti, or Rudra and Rudrā.11 Abhinavagupta adds that this union (saṃghatā, the term has erotic connotations) implies no division in question and answer, because it flows from the awareness of the true essential nature (svārūpāmarśana prasarāt). Thus the entire text — Tantra and Vivarana — is contained in this process of moving from duality to non-duality. “Process” is what one of the titles of the text says: prakriyā or, in the words of the Tantra, vidhi. Anuttaraprakriyā is therefore

10. Cf. R. Panikkar, “The Experiential Argument of Abhinavagupta”, where he says: “Many systems of thought (a certain Vedānta, for instance) in their urge to go always beyond, leave Reality behind,” p. 499. When using the capital for Reality, it is the totality of the tattvas or cosmotheandric levels which is meant.

11. With the double meaning of the Rudrayāmala Tantra of which Parātrīśikā is supposed to be a part.
not a statement about Absolute Reality, but a way (upāya) of realising it, recognising it in a non-dual insight (pratyabhijñā), and therefore, a way to liberation-in-life. The connection with life and living experience is never cut asunder, especially by the Vivaraṇa, where Abhinavagupta brings even the most esoteric speculations back to lived experience — hence he calls the tradition anubhavasampradāya.

Philosophically, Abhinavagupta applies terms of Pratyabhijñā in the interpretation of the Tantra (what Sanderson would call “overcoding”), thereby achieving coherence. Apart from the conceptual pair prakāśa-vimarśa the concept of reflection or bimba-pratibimba is used, precisely to show the interconnection between Anuttara and uttara, or the Absolute and its reflection in the cosmotheandric Reality. Both conceptual pairs enclose between them the dynamic unity of Consciousness which does not exclude plurality or multiplicity.

This multiplicity consists of a system of hierarchically ordered levels of Reality or categories, tattvas, taken from the Śaivāgamā cosmology. The system of the tattvas, which is so pervasive in Indian cosmology, should not be misunderstood as a “primitive” view of the world, which does not agree with modern science, it has to be understood as a symbolic and holistic view including all the levels of Reality in a continuum: from the material to the elements of the human (the senses and internal organs, including the ego) up to the Divine, where Śakti and Śiva are not the transcendent Absolute but are still categories in the realm of objective reality. Beyond them is Paramaśiva or Anuttara, who cannot be counted among the 36 tattvas. I have therefore chosen the term “cosmotheandric” for these interconnections between the three domains of Reality. But in the paramādvaita of Trika hierarchies have no intrinsic value, and they are subverted, including the social hierarchies of caste, etc.

The most pervasive philosophical principle which Abhinavagupta uses in all contexts, “from Śiva down to Earth,” is sarvān sarvātmakam, variously translated as “everything is related to the totality,” “every part is related to the whole,” “omnifariousness” (Jaideva Singh), “omnipresence of all in all” (A. Padoux), “everything is of the nature of all,” etc. This doctrine has ancient antecedents,¹² with very different connotations, especially in Sāṁkhya. In non-dualist Śaivism

¹². Cf. the articles by A. Wezler, who traces its earliest occurrence to the Mahābhāṣya of Pāṇini (second century BCE). See Bibliography.
the doctrine assumes theological and mystical dimensions, starting from the founder of the philosophy, Somānanda, the precursor of Abhinavagupta in the interpretation of the Parātrīśikā. Summarising his view of the doctrine of the all-inclusiveness of Śiva, R. Torella writes: “In this universe where everything is penetrated by Śiva nothing remains in the margins, all is mirrored even in the humblest thing and the whole nature of Śiva is present in it.” Abhinavagupta not only espouses and applies the dictum, he goes as well into an extensive exegesis of a verse from the Mahābhārata: yasmin sarvam yataḥ sarvam . . . which exemplifies this omni-pervasiveness.

This hermeneutical principle is one that is applicable to the correspondences between phonemes and levels of Reality. Far from creating a chaotic concoction, there obtains a systematic way of interrelationships, with a strong foundation in language in all its aspects. There is no space for a serious comparison with other systems and traditions, but it would be worthwhile to juxtapose the sarvātmakatva with the Buddhist pratīyāsamutpāda. Apart from its relationship to causality, which is missing in sarvam sarvātmakam, because there is no earlier or later, what is common is the insight into the total interconnectedness of all things. Certainly, Abhinavagupta’s Śaiva version of the doctrine is strongly theistic, because everything is connected to, is contained in everything precisely because all things are a reflection of or contained in Śiva.

An interesting philosophical outcome of both Anuttara and sarvam sarvātmakam is the apparent tautology, which Abhinavagupta expresses once without hesitation: The reality of Anuttara must be present even in a worship that does not have the full intensity — “because Anuttara is after all Anuttara” (tathā ’pi cānuttarasattaya atrāpi bhāvyam — anuttaratvādeva, p. 94). This has both a philosophical and a spiritual implication. If nothing is outside Anuttara and apart from sarvam, the tautology is only a necessary statement of the same reality, however, each time qualified by an aspect of manifestation.

14. Another important point of difference between the Vivaraṇa and Laghuvedī, because the latter does not refer to sarvātmakatva at all.
15. Cf. the importance of Tautology in Western Philosophy, e.g. Wittgenstein.
Spiritually the implication is, as Somānanda expresses it in the very beginning of his Śivadvēṣṭi, that no obstacle, no disturbing thought (vikalpa), no negative experience, is outside the Divine Reality, Śiva — that would entail dualism. Therefore the Vijnāna Bhairava and Somānanda give examples of painful or sorrowful experiences which still hold the potential of expanding consciousness.16 This insight has far-reaching spiritual consequences.

Many scholars translate Śivādvayavāda as "monistic Śaivism," but I do not incline to have the term "monistic" as applied to the system of Trika and Pratyabhijñā. First of all, it is paramādvaita, or "supreme non-dualism," which does not exclude any reality, even duality. Monism would suggest a uniform reality without any room for plurality and relationships. What we have seen is that precisely Trika, and the related systems like Kaula and Krama, neither exclude manifestation (the idam), nor the dynamism of the inner-Trika relationships. The dynamic relationship of Śiva and Śakti, philosophically prakāsa-vimarsa, can never be described in terms of monism, but of non-dualism.

If sarvam sarvatmakam is a hermeneutical key running through the whole Vivaraṇa — without having any direct root in the Tantra — the other pervasive hermeneutical scheme is that of the four levels of Vāc: para, paśyantī, madhyamā, vaikharī. They are all in one, levels of Consciousness, levels of Speech or the Word, and levels of manifestation of the Divine. This conception, too, is not derived from the Tantra directly but from other sources (such as Bhartrhari), but it offers a vast and comprehensive scheme of interpretation. Since the primary method of Abhinavagupta, specifically in the Vivaraṇa, is a linguistic-grammatical one, and the largest part of the text is engaged with meditations and speculations on aspects of language, this fourfold scheme finds encompassing expression. Aside from Tantric exegesis, it has a much wider significance for any philosophy or theology of language. Apart from the Tantrāloka which contains many complementary and parallel passages, and the Malinīvijayavārttika, anyone dealing with philosophy of language and, specifically, theory of mantra, has to refer to the Vivaraṇa for its depth and clarity. The basis certainly lies in the Āgamas which approach reality in either of these two ways: through cosmology (or cosmotheandrism, the tattvas), and through language or mantra.

16. Cf. VBh v. 118, also 101, 111, 112; cf. also SpKā I.22, etc.
Each Āgama or Tantra teaches one central mantra, which, so to say, encapsulates the entire revelation. The centrality of the seed mantra SAUH and its comprehensive hermeneutics is one of the great contributions of Tantra and Vivaraṇa. It is called hrdayabija, “seed of the Heart,” and srṣṭibija, “seed of creation,” and each term receives an extensive elaboration. The symbol of the seed is both, linguistic and organic (yathā nyagrodhabija . . .). But the central concept and symbol is the Heart in all its dimensions and connotations. The multiple meanings are simultaneously present and it depends on the level of experience which one is predominant. In any case, “it is this Heart which is present everywhere, which shines spontaneously, and whose nature can be mainly realised by intuitive awareness.”

Spiritually, it is “by dissolving (depression and doubt) in an instant, when the stain of the limitations of bondage is removed, one enters the Heart of Bhairava.” The Heart is then the seed-mantra itself (SAUH) which is the svarūpa or own-form of Parā and Anuttara in non-dual union. Now, Parā or Anuttarā, “the feminine Absolute,” is defined by Jayaratha (on Tantraloka III.66) as “the (Goddess) who is filled with the wonder of unsurpassable sovereignty and freedom.” She is the Goddess Consciousness Herself, Anuttarā samvid, who, together with Bhairava in non-dual union (yāmala) has the nature of full I-consciousness. AHĀM, the mantra of I-consciousness, the other core concept of the Vivaraṇa, is the encompassing reality, enclosing within it the totality of all the phonemes (from a to ha and anusvāra) and tattvas (p. 182). AHĀM is the power underlying all mantras, hence mantravīrya.

18. tadeva hrdayam, sarvatrātra sakr̥dvibhātam prasaṅkhyānaganyāṁ rūpaṁ mukhyataḥ | — p. 80
20. Svarūpa means that in which the symbol and the symbolised coincide.
21. niratisayasvatantraitrāśivaryacamatkāramayī.
22. For the different traditions associated with Para, her iconography, etc. I refer to A. Sanderson, “The visualisation of the Deities of the Trika”.
23. tasya (J. yāmalasya) pratyavamarśo yaḥ paripūrṇo 'hamātmakaḥ | — TĀ III.235ab.
Abhinavagupta concludes that “really speaking, the highest truth of all kinds of knowledge is I-consciousness” (p. 183).24

By identifying the bijamantra with the Heart and with supreme I-consciousness, Abhinavagupta achieves a universalisation of the most intimate and secret mantra. This is one of his specific contributions in the hermeneutics of the Tantra. The theme of the relationship between secrecy and universality is especially important in the present-day context. The Parātrīśikā “extracts” the seed mantra or hṛdayabija in coded language which, traditionally, would be revealed only by the guru in initiation. Abhinavagupta is the master, not only of his direct disciples, but also of his readers today, who lifts that veil and makes the secret accessible. The actual practice of the mantra is reserved to those who are initiated in the tradition. But at the same time, Abhinavagupta makes an effort at universalising the teaching of the Tantra. What is then the position of a present-day reader in relation to the secrecy, and to what extent can he or she participate and profit from the great insights of the Tantra? All along the Vivaraṇa Abhinavagupta provides hints at the spiritual conditions and requirements in order to gain access to this hidden treasure. As he elaborates in the commentary to the sūtra: etad guhyam mahāguhyam (v. 3), the secret or mystery is at the same time an open truth, because total secrecy would contradict revelation.

We may now ask what is Abhinavagupta’s original contribution to the hermeneutics of the Tantra? It is certain that he has carried the interpretation of the very first word of the Parātrīśikā, Anuttara, to its utmost possible implications. Although the concept is not new, as it has also an important place in the Buddhist Tantras, it is Abhinavagupta who has developed it, especially in relation to its complement, uttara.25

Another original interpretation, though of course based on the earlier Tantras, is his developing of the reflection and inversion, or bimba-pratibimba, of varṇas and tattvas, phonemes and levels of reality. Finally, his hermeneutical thrust lies always in leading everything, multiplicity at all levels, back to advaya samvid, to

24. Sarvānyeva ca saṁvedanaṁ vastuto 'hami ti paramārthāni vimarsaṁayānyeva, — p. 68.
25. Here the Vivaraṇa is clearly in contrast to the Laghuvrīti, where Anuttara receives only a brief treatment.
non-dual consciousness, what A. Padoux calls his “emanationist non-dualism” (Vāc, p. 231). We find a wonderful expression for the ingenious combination and unity between Āgama (revelation), reasoning (yukti) and spiritual experience, so characteristic of the author’s approach: After quoting from Somānanda’s Śivadarśī he summarises the point thus: ityādi etadāgamasarvasva prāṇatayaiva yuktīyuktyā hṛdayāmāṃgamikṛtam (p. 63), in Jaideva Singh’s translation: “This treasure of Āgama has been accepted on account of its reasonableness as one’s very life” (p. 169), or alternatively: “Because this treasure of the Āgama is the very life itself, it has been absorbed in the heart by fitting methods of reasoning.” All the elements are present here in a balanced way, and therein lies the unique greatness of his method.

Given Abhinavagupta’s universalistic approach, e.g. with reference to language and consciousness, it would be tempting to attempt a comparison with similar themes in other traditions, e.g. the Kabbala mysticism of language or the Logos of St. John’s prologue and its mystical and theological exegesis in Christianity. But this remains outside the scope of the present work. However, in spite of the difficult and often esoteric nature of the Vivaraṇa, this text has a great potential for philosophy of language on the one hand, and for spirituality on the other. The task of the interpreter is then also to extract these themes which do have a universal meaning.

Many aspects of the Vivaraṇa could not be dealt with in the present discourse, as for instance, the relation of the cosmic spheres (aṇḍa) with the tattvas and phonemes, as derived from the Āgamas. The purpose of the present work has been primarily to bring out the essential themes, giving examples of specific and central topics of the hermeneutics of Abhinavagupta, in order to render such a difficult text accessible. After all, the purpose of the text is samvīdō vimarśanam (p. 4), “reflective awareness on Consciousness,” and Abhinavagupta reminds us time and again that this has to be done in a personal way and by spiritual practice.

I am conscious of the shortcoming of my venture, because, as Abhinavagupta himself confesses, words are hardly adequate in expressing the mystery of Anuttara. However, there is a consoling simile which he uses in the Mālinīvijayavārttika:

Even a small amount of water on the ground is invariably drunk up by the rays of the sun, and through rain flows again into the ocean. [In the same way] all knowledge and action in this world merges, either directly on its own, or gradually through other [stages] into the ocean of Śiva.\textsuperscript{27} —MVV I.382

Ultimately everything, as also my humble endeavour at understanding, merges into the great ocean of Śiva, whose shores I have only touched — hoping that one day I will get merged in it.

\footnote{27. Tr. J. Hanneder, \textit{Abhinavagupta’s Philosophy of Revelation}, p. 121.}
Appendix I

Verses of the Parātrīśikā

अथ

श्रीपारात्रीशिकायन्त्य:

Variants from the edition by R. Gnoli (G.)

श्रीदेवी उवाच

अनुतरं कथं देव सदा: कौलिकसिद्धदमः।
येन विज्ञातमार्गं खेत्रोपसात्तं व्रजेत॥१॥

एतद्गुणं महागुणं कथयस्य मम प्रभो।
हृदयस्या तु या शक्ति: कौलिकी कुलनाथिका।
तां मे कथय देवेश येन तृतिय लघायथम्॥२॥

श्री श्रीराव उवाच

शूणु देवि महापाते उत्तरयोपत्तमस।॥३॥
कौलिकोवर्भं विधिदेवं मम हृदययोम्यवस्थित:।
कथयाति सुरेशानं सदा: कौलिकासिद्धदम॥४॥
अथाधास्वत्वं: सर्वं स्वरं विभवसानाम॥
तदन: कालयोगम सोपसहस्रं प्रकीर्तिते॥५॥
पृथिव्यादीन तत्वानं पुरुषानां भक्तसु।
क्रमात् कादिपु वर्गेण मकारानोषु सुकसो॥६॥

1. Single line.
2. यदसं कौलिको विधिर्मय, G.
3. न संदेह:, G.
4. योगेश्वर, G.

5. Here the counting of the verses differs, Gnoli takes three lines in verse 18 = verse 19 in Jaideva Singh.
अदृश्यप्रतिलोपयें यः कचिदेवं तत्त्वः
स सिद्धान्तोपवेत्रियं स योगी स च दीक्षितः॥१९॥

अनेन जातमात्रेण जायते सर्वशास्त्रिकपि:
शाक्तिकृतकुलसापायो भवेद्योग्यं विनापि हि॥२०॥

अविधिःो विधानजो जायते यजनं प्रति॥२१॥

कालाद्यानादितः कृत्वा महायानं ब्रह्मदेहगः
शिको विधायत्वनांतः परं शाक्तिर्य मतम्॥२२॥

तदावृत्ति यत्किर्तिवचु युद्धमाणैः व्यवस्थितम्
अपुर्वेऽपूर्वमार्त्यं रज्जनमेतः॥२३॥

तच्चोदकः शिवोज्जेव सर्वजः परमेशरः॥
सर्वगी निमितः स्वयंसरूपः स्त्रायतनः शृचि॥२४॥

यथा न्यायोधीबोधस्यः शाक्तिर्य महादुमः॥
तथा हदय्योजस्यं जगदेतत्वसाचारम्॥२५॥

एवं यो वेतः तत्त्वेन तत्स्व निर्वाचणापायंनी
देशा भवत्सर्वधिमथा तिलात्त्वधितवर्तिता॥२६॥

मूर्तिः वकने च हदये गुहो मूर्तिः तथैव च।
न्यासं कृत्वा शिखरं बद्धण्य वर्द्धितशिशिरमिन्त्रितम्॥२७॥

एकैः के तु दिर्शः बद्धं दशानामपि योजये।
तालात्त्रं पुरा दल्चा सन्धवं विहनशाराये॥२८॥

शिखरसारणाभिज्ञस्ते तौयेराध्यशुक्यायेतुः ततः
पुष्पादिकेऽक्रमवेक तिर्धं वा स्थाण्डलेऐथ वा॥२९॥

चतुर्दशशास्त्रिज्ञेन पुष्पमानसन्यत्वा।
तत् सृष्टिः यजेद्वः पुनरेवासनं तत॥३०॥

शृष्टिः तु संपुष्टीकृतः पश्चाद्याजनमार्जेत।
सर्वसत्त्वसंसूरणं सर्वाभासाभृतिताम॥३१॥

6. One line counted as 20 by Gnoli.
7. शिवोज्जेवः, G.
Abhinavagupta's Hermeneutics of the Absolute

यजेदेवी महेशानी साक्षांतिरत्नान्तरः
ततः सुपपित्त्वायैस्मु यथाशालं समर्थेति।
पूजयेत्यर्थव भक्त्या आत्मानं च निवेदयेत्।
एवं राजस्वाहात्मायत्मानिकार्येऽप्रयः विधि।।

कृत्यानाविधि: साधकः समर्नः बीजः प्रसिद्ध्यति।
आध्यात्मिकं बीजं विकसर्वीर्यमध्यगृहूः
हत्वद्विनार्गं ध्यायेत् सोमाणि नित्यध्यायेत्।

यायान्तरिका कार्मिकायालं कृष्णम्राणवेयाल!।
अस्मात्त्वक्षतामेति सर्वजनं न संशयं।।
एवं यज्ञवाचोवाचित्तेऽर्थः सद्यायंल!।
एतद्व्यासतः सिद्धः सर्वजनमायि।।
Appendix II

List of Quotations in the Parātrīśikā Vivaraṇa

(Page numbers from Jaideva Singh’s edition)

akāraḥ śiva ityukta-
ajñānācchaṅkate mūḍha-
thāsmākaṁ jñānaśakti-
adhipi yanna viditam
anantaiḥ kuladehaistu
anāñdare śaśṭhī
anuttaram tad hṛdayam
anekamekadhā kṛtvā

... aparasthitau

api tvātmabalasparśāt
apravṛttasya hi praiśe
‘a’ bījaṁ śuddha śivarūpaṁ
aśṭāṣṭakaviḥhedena
asmadrūpasamāviṣṭaḥ
ātmānāśrūyate āstu
ātmāiva sarvabhāvēsu
ādyadhārikayā vyāptam

Somānanda (Vivṛti)
Śrī Sarvācāra

ŚD 2.1
Pa 2.3.38
Trikasārasāstra

ŚD 1.20
SpKa 1.8
Vākyapadīya 3.7.12
Somānanda (Vivṛti)
Śrī Trikaratnakula

ŚD 1.1
SvT 2.146
ŚD 1.2
MVT 2.50
ānandaprasararḥ pūjā
āyudhānāṁ ca saktīnāṁ
ālāpād gātrasaṁsparśāt
iti vā yasya saṁvittiḥ
ityetanmātṛkācakram
ityevaṁ sarvamāsanam
idamityasya vicchinna
iyamevāṁtāprāpti-
tīśvaram ca mahāpretam
uccāţane kākavaktraḥ
udetyekaḥ samālokaḥ
upāsādyāḥ samāpatti-
e-okāragatam bijaṁ
ekacintāprasaktasya
ekameva hi tattattvaṁ
ekvāram pramāṇena
ekāṁ vastu dvidhā bhūtaṁ
ekāṁ śṛṣṭimayaṁ bijaṁ
evam sarvāṇusaroṁghāta-
aunmukhyābhāvatastasya
... karaṇānīva dehināṁ
kāmena kāmayet kāmān
kalobhayāparicchinnena
kulaparvam na jānanti
guruśisyapade sthitvā
glānirvilunṭhikā dehe

Trikatantrasāra
Śrī Trikaḥṛdaya
SpKā 2.5
Śrī Vājasaneya Tantra
MVT 8.68
APS 15
SpKā 2.7
MVT 8.68
IPVV, III
Vākyapadiya 1.83
SpKā 3.9
ŚD 7.6
Kulacūḍāmaṇī śī vi p. 58
MVT 3.34
ŚD 1.25
SpKā 2.10
Vākyapadiya 4.46
Vādyatantrarāḥ, 16
SvT 8.31
SpKā 3.8
ghaṭādigrahakāle 'pi
ghaṭo 'yamityadhyavasā
chandogānāṁ sātyamugri-
jñānaṁ kriyā ca bhūtaṁ
ejñeyāḥ saptaikādaśārṇā
tatkarmanirvṛtiprāpti-
tatra vijnānakevalo
malakayuktāḥ

... tatsaratprakṛtiḥ śivaḥ
tathāpi citrakarmārtha-
tathodīrya paśoh prāņā

... tadāsti paramārthataḥ
tadākramya balam mantrāḥ
tadunmēsaviluptam cet
tasya nābhuyutthitaṃ śakti-
tasyāpi śaktīṃśtpinda-
tā eva devadevasya
tuṭipāte sarvajñatva-
taistairālingitāḥ santah
tyaja dharmamādharmāṁ ca
trimśakārthastvāya proktaḥ
trailokye 'pyatra yo yāva
darsanam tu para devi
didṛksayeva sarvārthān
duḥkhe 'pi pravikāsena
dravāṇāmiva sārīram

ŚD 1.24
IPK 1.5.20
Mahābhāṣya
IPK 1.14
MVT 3.60
ŚD 1.60
MVT 1.22, 23
ŚD 3.94
ŚD 7.9
Guhyayoginītāntra
SpKa 1.5
SpKa 2.10
MVT 8.69
Śrīkallaṭa
MVT 3.28
MBh 12.316.40
Śrītantrasāra
StC 61
SpKa 3.11
ŚD 5.9
dharayanti paso pāśān
na tairvinā bhavecchabdo
na puṁsi na pare tattve
nara-śakti-śivāvesi
na sā gīryā na hṛdayaṁga-
maṇḍāminī
nijottamaṅgacchāyātattvam
nityaṁ visargaparamah
nirodhinīmanuprāptaḥ
nirvrksagiribhittyādau
nīlīnāsakti
nīskale padamekāraṁ
paṅcavidhakṛtyatatpara-
paṅcaviparyayabheda
padamādyāṁprṛthak sarvam
paravyavasthāpi pare
... parātpararatram trikam
parāparāṅgasambhūtā
parāṁṛtarasāpāya-
paraiḥ saṁśrāyate yastu
paśurnityo hyamūrto ājñō
paśyatanyacchṛṇatyanyat
pītheśvaryo mahāghorā
peyāpeyāṁ smṛṭā āpo
prakāśamānābhāsaiva

Śrītantrasāra
quoted by Jayaratha
on TĀ V.116
Śrītantrasammuccaya
Abhinavagupta
Śrītantrasāra
Trikahṛdaya

VBh 60
ŚD 7.28
MVT 4.11
Somānanda (Vivṛti)
SaKā 47
Vākyāpadiya 2.2

MVT 3.59
SpKā 3.14
SvT 2.147
Kiranāgama 1.12
Śrīkānthapāda
Timiroddhāra, Nityāsod p. 28
Śrīsarvācāra
Śrīsiddhasantāna
prakāśasyātmavishrānti-
pranavordhvārdhamātrato
preyo 'pi sa bhavedyasya
phe dharatattvamuddītāṁ
bijamantra śivaḥ śakti-
būjyonyātmakādbhedaād
brahmādistambaparyante
bhagavatyā ratasthāyāḥ
bhagavadbhaktyāvesād
bhāvanākaraṇābhivyām kim
bhidita tu yadā tena
bherīkāṁsyaninādo 'pi
manuṣyadehamāsthāya
mano 'pyanyatra nikṣiptam
mantramahēśvareśatve
mantrāṇāṁ koṭayastisrah
mama yonirmahad brahma
malamajñānamicchanti
māyāvidye ubhe tasya
māyopāri mahāmāyā
māyorbhve śuddhavidyādhah
mṛcchailadhāturatnādi
yata icchati tajñātum
yataḥ sarvaṁ . . .
... yatra trikānām tritayam samasti
yatra sthitam sarvam
yatsadāśivaparyantam
yathecchābhyarthito dhātā
yatheṣṭaphalasamsiddhyai
yadā tvekatra saṁrūḍha
yannakīṃcana mameti dīnatām
yasca sarvamayo nityam
yasmātkṣaramatīto 'ham
yasminsarvam
yah sarvam
yena rūpam rasam gandham
radanamulamekeṣām
raśrutisāmāṇyaadvā siddham
lehanāmanthanākoṭaiḥ
vahnerviṣasya madhye tu
vāmajanghānvito jīvāḥ
vāmamārgābhīṣikto 'pi
vāmamārgābhīṣikto 'pi
vijñānakevalānāṣṭau
vitata iva nabhasyavicchidaiva
viśvatra bhāvapātale
viṣayeśveva samlīnā
vīravrataṃ cābhinande

Abhinavagupta

SpKā 1.2
SvT 5.5.48
SpKā 3.1
MVT 3.35-36
SpKā 3.19
Abhinavagupta
MBh 12.36.18
Bhg 15.18
MBh 12.36.18
MBh 12.36.18
KaṭhU 2.1.3.

Puṣpadanta

Vbh 70
Vbh 68
MVT 3.54
Śrīniśācāra
Śrīsarvācāra
MVT

Abhinavagupta (Stotra)
Abhinavagupta
MVT 3.31
Śrī Bhargasikā
vedācchaiva tato vāmāṁ
vyatireketarābhyaṁ hi
śaktyo 'syā jagatkṛṣṭnam
śaktisāṅgamasamkṣobha
śabdaraśisasamutthasya
śabdārthapratyayānāṁ
śivaśaktisamāpattyā
śisyenāpi tadā grāhya
śatītrimsacchodbhanyāni
sakramatvaṁ ca laukikyāṁ
sa tayā samprabuddhaḥ san
... sarvataśca yaḥ
sarvabhūtasthamātmānaṁ
sarvaśāstrārthagarbhīṇyā
sarvārthasamkarṣanasyamasya
sarvesāṁ cāpi yāganāṁ
sarvo mamāyaṁ vibhava
sa yadāste cidāḥlāda
sarva pañcātmakam devi
sa visargo mahādevi
sambodhanādikāḥ prātipādikārthāḥ
samrudhya raśmicakram svāṁ
samhatyakāritvāt
sā tu saptadaśī devī
sā trikoṇā mahāvidyā
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sā buddhiryatpunaḥ sūkṣmaṁ
sārṇena tritayam vyāptam
sārṇenaṇḍatrayam vyāptam
sārdheṇaṇḍadvayaṁ vyāpta-
sukhe duḥkhe vimohe ca
sunirbharatarāhlāda-
susūkṣmaśaktitritaya
. . . snehāt kaulikamādiset
spṛṣyāspṛṣyau smṛtau
svatantraḥ paripūrṇo 'yam
svaṛūpāvaraṇe cāsyā
svaṭantryāmuktamātmānam
hayo heṣati yadvacca
havisarjantīyāvurasyāvekeṣām
hṛdaye yaḥ sthito granthih
hṛdi ayo gamanam jñānam

ŚD 1.27
MVT 4.25
MVT 4.25
MVT 4.24
ŚD 7.105
ŚD 7 (not found in the edited text)
ŚD 1.4
Śrīsarvācāra
SpKā 3.15
ĪPK 1.5.16
Guhyayoginītantra
Trikasārasāstra
Somānanda (Vivṛti)
Appendix III

Stotra Fragments of Abhinavagupta quoted in the Vivarana

KSTS, pp. 22-23; J.S., p. 8,

Thin rain falling incessantly is not perceptible in the vast expanse of the sky — but it becomes clearly visible in the background of trees of the forest and the roof of houses.

Even so the Supreme Bhairava, who is extremely subtle never appears within the range of experience. But when associated with space, form, time, order and state that experiential awareness is generated in a moment in those whose Divine Awareness was dormant.

The thought “nothing is mine” makes insentient beings miserable — but (the same thought) “nothing is mine” means to me “I am everything.” Thus I have attained a lofty position.

KSTS, p. 59; J.S., p. 20

The thought “nothing is mine” makes insentient beings miserable — but (the same thought) “nothing is mine” means to me “I am everything.” Thus I have attained a lofty position.
In joy I bow to the Devi
whose wondrous delight blossoms everywhere
without break in the multitude of objects.
She is the I in the Fullness of being,
lustrous and illuminating all round.
Her abode is in one’s own self.

Those whose mind is made utterly pure
by total immersion in Your Love
their heart is clearly established in that state
in a moment.
Appendix IV

Comparison between the PT version of Vivaraṇa and Laghuvaṛtti*

\[ V = \text{KSTS Vivaraṇa} \]
\[ L = \text{KSTS Laghuvaṛtti} \]
\[ S = \text{Jaideva Singh} \]
\[ G = \text{Nilkanth Gurtu} \]
\[ R = \text{KSTS Lakshmirama (Vivṛti)} \]

\[
\text{anuttaraṁ katham deva [VSG sadyah] [L svatāḥ]}
\text{kaulikasiddhidham ā}
\text{yena vijñatamātrenā khecarīsamatāṁ vrajet II 1 II}
\text{etad guhyam mahāguhyam [VL kathaya sva] [S kathayasva] [G kathaya-sva] mama}
\text{prabho ā}
\text{hṛdayasthā tu yā Śaktī [VSG kauliki] [L kaulinī] kulanāyikā II 2 II}
\text{tāṁ me kathaya deveśa yena tṛptīṁ [VGS labhāmyaham] [L vrajāmyaham]}
\text{śrībhairava uvāca ā}
\text{śṛṇu devi mahābhāge uttarasyāpyanuttaram II 3 II}
\text{kauliko 'yam vidhirdevi mama hṛdyomnyavasthitah}
\text{kathayāmi [VSG sureśāni] [L na sandehāḥ] sadyah kaulikasiddhidham II 4 II}^1
\]

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*I am grateful to Mrinal Kaul for assisting me in compiling this comparison.

1. In L the order of verse 4 is changed. It reads \text{kathayāmi na sandehāḥ sadyah kaulikasiddhidam ā}
\text{kauliko 'yam vidhirdevi mama hṛdyomnyavasthitah ā}
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**athādyāstithayah [VSG sarvē] [L sarvāḥ] svarā [VSG bindvavasānagāḥ] [L bindvavasānakāḥ] ||

tadantah kālayogena somasūryau prakārtitaau || 5 ||

prayōdīni tattvānī puruṣāntāni pañcasu ||
kramātādiśu vargēsu makārāntesu suvrate || 6 ||

vāyagnisalilendrāṇāṃ dhāraṇānāṃ catuṣṭayam ||
tadurākeśādi vikhyātaṃ purastād brahmapāṇcakam || 7 ||

amūlā [V tatkramā] [L tatkramā] jñeyā kṣantā sṛṣṭirudāḥtā ||
sarvesāṃ [V eva] [L caiva] mantrānāṃ vidyānāṃ ca yaśasvini || 8 ||

iyāṁ yoniḥ samākhyātā sarvatantreṣu sarvādā ||
caturdāyayutaṃ bhadre tithīśāntasamanvitam || 9 ||

tṛtyaṁ brahma suśroṇi hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanah ||
etannāyoginijāto nārudro labhatे sphaṭam || 10 ||

hṛdayaṁ devadevasya sadyo [V yogavimuktidam] [L yogavimokṣadam] ||
avyoccaere kṛte samyaṁ mantramudraṅgano mahān || 11 ||

[V sadyas] [L sadyaḥ] [V tanmukhatāmeti] [L sanmukhatāmeti] svadehāveśalakṣāṇam ||
muhūrtam smarate yastu [V cumbakenābhimudritāḥ] [L cumbake nābhimudritāḥ] || 12 ||

sa badhnaṁ tada [V sarvaṁ] [L deham] mantramudrāgaṇaṁ naraḥ ||
attānāgatānāarthān prṣṭo ’sau kathayatyapi || 13 ||

praharādyadabhipretām devatārūpamuccaran ||
sākṣat paśyatyasandigdhamākṛṣṭaṁ rudraśaktibhiḥ || 14 ||

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2. In L the line iyāṁ yoniḥ samākhyātā sarvatantreṣu sarvādā occurs as a part of verse eight. The
ninth verse ends in: tṛtyaṁ brahma suśroṇi hṛdayaṁ bhairavātmanah which forms the first line of
verse ten in V.
praharadvayamātreṇa vyomasthō jāyate smaran ।
trayeṇa mātaraḥ sarvā [V yogīśvaryo] [L yogēsvaryo] mahābalāḥ ॥ 15 ॥
vīrā vīresvārah siddhā [V balavānchākinīgaṇah] [L balavān śakinīgaṇah] ।
āgatyā samayaṁ dattvā bhairaveṇa pracoditāḥ ॥ 16 ॥
yacchanti paramāṁ siddhīṁ phalaṁ yadvā samīhitam ।
anena siddhāḥ setasyanti sādhayanti ca mantriṇāḥ ॥ 17 ॥³
yatkimcicbhairave tantrē sarvamasmāt prasiddhyati ।
adṛṣṭamāndalo 'pyevam .................. ॥ 18 ॥⁴
adṛṣṭamāndalo 'pyevam yaḥ kaścidvetti tattvataḥ ।
sa siddhibhāgabhavennyāṁ sa yogī sa ca dikṣitāḥ ॥ 19 ॥⁵
anena jñātamaṅgreṇa jñāyate sarvaśaktibhiḥ ।
śākinīkulasāmānyo bhavedyogam vināpi hi ॥ 20 ॥
avidhiṁjīno vidhānajīno jāyate yajanaṁ prati ।⁶
kālāgnimāditaḥ kṛtvā māyāntaṁ brahmadehagam ॥ 21 ॥
śivo viśvādyanantāṁ param śaktitrayaṁ matam ॥ 22 ॥
tadantarvarti yatkimcicchuddhamārgaḥ vyavasthitam ।
aṇurviśuddhamacirīdaiśvaram jñānamaśnute ॥ 23 ॥
taccodakah śivo jñeyah sarvajñah parameśvaram ।
sarvago nirmalaḥ svacchāstṛptaḥ svāyatanaḥ śucih ॥ 24 ॥

3. In L. Verse 17 has only one line.
4. Here L has rather retained the text of 18cd: mantravṛtyasamāvesaprabhāvānna niyantraṇā । The KSTS edition of L also records the variant reading as mantravṛtyasamāvēśe na kadacimmīyanaṇā ।
6. V gives this line as verse 20 having only cd.
7. Verse 22 ends here in V. The overlapping of lines continues. We follow the counting in V (S).
yathā nyagrodhabhājasthāḥ saktirūpo mahādrumaḥ
tathā hṛdayabhājastham jagadetaccarācaram 25

evam yo vetti tattvena tasya nirvāṇagāminī
dīkṣā bhavatyasandigdhā tilājyāhutivarjita 26

mūrdhni vakte ca hṛdaye guhye mūrtau tathaiva ca
nyāṣam kṛtvā śikhām badhvā saptaviṃśatimantritām 27

[V ekaikam tu] [L ekaikena] diśām bandham daśānāmapi
[V yojayet] [L kārayet] tālatrayām purā dattvā saśabdam vighnaśāntaye 28

śikhāsambhābhijaptena toyenabhuyakṣayettataḥ
puṣpādikām kramātsarvām [V līṅge] [L līṅgaṁ] vā [V
staṇḍile 'tha] [L staṇḍilaṅca] vā 29

caturdaśābhijaptena puṣpeṇāsanakalpanā
tatra srṣṭim yajed vīrah punarevāsanām tataḥ 30

srṣṭim tu samputīkṛtya paścaḥyajanamārabhet
sarvatattvasaṃpūrṇā [V sarvābharaṇabheṣitām]
[L sarvāvayavaśobhitām] 31

yajed devīm [V maheśanīm] [L mahābhāgām] saptaviṃśatimantritām
tataḥ sugandhi [V puṣpāṣtu] [L puṣpaṁca] yathāśaktyā samarcayet 32

puṣjayet parayaḥ bhaktyā [V ātmānām] [L svātmānām] ca nivedayet
evam yajanaṁākhyātamagnikārye 'pyayaṁ vidhīḥ 33
kṛtapūjāvidhiḥ samyak smaran bījam prasiddhyati II 34 II

ādyantarahaṁ bījam vikasattithimadhyagam I

hṛtpadmāntargatam dhyāyet [V somāṃśam] [L somāṃśum]

nityamabhyaset II 35 II

yānyān kāmayate kāmāṃstāntāṃchīghramavāpyuyāt I

[V asmā] [L ajñāḥ] pratyakṣatāṃeti sarvajñatvam na samśayaḥ II 36 II

evam mantraphalāvāptirītyetadrudrayāmalam I

etadabhasyataḥ siddhiḥ sarvajñatvam [V avāpyate] [L avāpnuṭyaṭ] II 37 II

[L samāptā iyamanuttaratattavimarsini parātrīṣikālaghūvṛttiḥ]

8. Only one line in V. L has the two lines as 33: evam yajanamākhyatamagnikārye 'pyamāṃ vidhiḥ

kṛtapūjāvidhiḥ samyak smaran bījam prasiddhyati
Appendix V
Abhinavagupta’s Anuttarāśṭīkā
Eight Verses on the Unsurpassable

अनुत्तराश्टिकाः¹

संक्रामोऽत्र ॥ न भावना ॥ न च कथामुक्तिः ॥ चर्चा ॥ न च ध्यानः ॥ वा ॥ न च धारणा ॥ न च जपाध्ययास्पदाः ॥ न च ॥
	तत्किं नाम सुनिश्चितः ॥ वद ॥ परें सत्यं ॥ च तत्त्वमात्राः ॥ न न्यागी ॥ न परिव्रही ॥ भज ॥ सुखं ॥ सर्वं ॥ यथावतः ॥।।

संसारोपसित ॥ न तत्त्वमात्रानुगृहा ॥ बन्धस्य ॥ चार्तेन ॥ काः ॥

बन्धो यस्य ॥ न जातु ॥ तस्य ॥ वितथा ॥ मुक्तस्य ॥ मुक्तिक्रिया ॥

मिथ्यामोहकृः ॥ देश रज्जुभोजच्छायापिषाचरे ॥

मा ॥ किचिदन्यात ॥ मा ॥ गृहाण ॥ भिलस्य ॥ स्वस्तोऽ ॥ यथावतः ॥।।

पूजापूजकपूज्यप्रेमसचिवारण: ॥ केवल ॥ कथानुतरे ॥

संक्राम: ॥ किल ॥ कस्य ॥ कस्य ॥ कस्य ॥ कस्य ॥ को ॥ वा ॥ प्रवेशः ॥।।

माधवेयं ॥ न ॥ चिदंत्यातपत्रत्या ॥ भिज्ज्य: ॥ यहो ॥ वर्तते ॥

सर्वस्वानुभवस्वाभविनमतं ॥ चिन्ता: ॥ वृथा ॥ मा ॥ कृथा: ॥।।

आनन्दोऽत्र ॥ न ॥ तत्पद्वपेताः ॥ तत्त्वमात्र: ॥

deepa-kekunaditya-prabha-akaravanu naiv prakasha-oday:।

हर्ष: संमूहधोक्षिनसुखमुमसारवतारोपम: ॥

साधित्यपदस्य विसृष्टिनि: ॥ प्रति: ॥ प्रकाशोदयः:।।

ranga-devesh-sukhama-pramado-vratyah-pradnya-adoy: ॥

ये भावा: ॥ प्रविभाति ॥ विश्वविश्व: ॥ भिज्ज्या: ॥ न: ॥

व्यस्तं: ॥ परमेयनित्यं ॥ यस्य ॥ यस्य ॥ सहसा ॥ तत्तदेकात्मता- ॥

साधारणवेष्टकम् ॥ किं ॥ न ॥ रमसे ॥ तद्दृशवाननिम्ने:।।
References

1. First published by K.C. Pandey, Abhinavagupta, Appendix C.
2. संकामो न न MSS.
3. जयाध्याय: प्रयासो MSS.
4. विहर MS.A.
5. संसासिकिल MS, B.
6. चिद्रष्णो राजसे MSS.
Abhinavagupta: Anuttarāśṭikā

English Translation

Tr. Bettina Bäumer

1. There is no need of spiritual progress, nor of contemplation, disputation or discussion, nor meditation, concentration nor even the effort of prayer. Please tell me clearly: What is supreme Truth? Listen: Neither renounce nor possess anything, share in the joy of the total Reality and be as you are!

2. In reality no world of transmigration exists, so how can one talk about bondage? To try to liberate one free already is futile, for he was never in bondage. All this just creates a delusion like that of the shadow of a ghost or a rope mistaken for a snake. So neither renounce nor possess anything. Enjoy yourself freely, resting in your self, just as you are!

3. What words can describe the Unsurpassable? In the Absolute can there be any distinction between the worship, the one who worships and the object of worship? How and in whom can there be spiritual progress? What are the degrees of absorption? Illusion itself is ultimately the same
as non-dual Consciousness, all being the pure
nature of the Self, experienced by oneself —
so have no vain anxiety!

4. This bliss is not comparable to that which is experienced
through riches or wine or even union with the beloved.
The dawning of that Light is not to be compared
with the light of a lamp or that of sun or moon.
The joy that is felt when one is freed from the burden
of accumulated differences can only be compared
to the relief felt while setting on the ground a heavy weight.
The dawning of the Light is like finding a lost treasure:
the state of universal non-duality.

5. All states of mind like love and hatred, pleasure and pain,
arising and disappearing, to you appear distinct.
They are, however, part of the universal body,
their nature is not separate. Whenever you observe
any one of them arising, at once become aware
of their oneness, contemplate in them the form of pure Consciousness.
Filled with this contemplation, will you not experience joy?

6. The non-existent suddenly is brought into existence;
such are always the states of being in this world.
How, being intermingled due to deformation
of the intermediate state, can they possess any reality?
How to find reality in the unreal, unstable,
in multiplicity of worldly things, a dream’s confusion
or in deceptive beauty? Transcend the impurity
that causes doubt and fear and awaken!

7. It is not the Innate Being that gives rise to these various
states. They appear, created by you. Though unreal,
they become real through a momentary confused perception.
The glory of this universe is born from your will.
It has no other origin. Therefore your glory shines in all the worlds. Though one you have many forms.

8. Both the real and the unreal, the simple and the complex, the eternal and the temporal, that which, due to illusion, is impure and also the purity of the Self—all shine in the mirror of Consciousness. All this is seen as having the nature of pure light, as consciousness arises in self-awareness. Recognising your glory rooted in your own experience, share in the universal power of the Lord!

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1. I thank the late Mrs. Mary Rogers for giving poetic form to my translation.
2. Bheda: divisions, separation, duality.
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