

ABHINAVAGUPTA'S EXEGESIS OF TRIKA ŚAIVISM

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*ūrdhordhvam āruhya yad arthatattvaṃ
dhīḥ paśyati śrāntim avedayantī |
phalaṃ tad ādyaiḥ parikalpitānāṃ
vivekasopānaparamparāṇām ||
citraṃ nirāmbanam eva manye
prameyasiddhau prathamāvatāram |
sanmārgalābhe sati setubandha
puraḥpratiṣṭhādi na viśmayāya ||
tasmāt satām atra na dūṣitāni
matāni tāny eva tu śodhitāni |
pūrvapraṭiṣṭhāpitayojanāsu
mūlapraṭiṣṭhāphalam āmananti ||*

Having tirelessly climbed higher and higher, the intellect beholds the true nature of things — this is the fruit of the series of rungs of discernments conceived by those who came before.

How strange, methinks, how the first descent into the accomplishment of what is to be known was without support, but once found the right path, it is no wonder (to discover) that bridges and the foundations of cities (were already there).

Therefore, the views of the wise have not been refuted here, rather they have been refined. It is on (the basis of) the designs that have been firmly established earlier that (their views) are well disposed to bear the fruit of (their original) root foundation.

*etāvad etad iti kaś tulayet prasahya
śrīśāmbhavaṃ gatam anargalitās ca vācaḥ |
etat tu tāvad akhilātmani bhāti yan me
bhātaṃ tato 'tra sudhiyo na parā"nmukhāḥ syuḥ ||*

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Who can estimate with certainty that only so much is present within the venerable *Śāmbhava* (reality and its teachings)? And, moreover, words are without constraints. That which shines within (the reality) that is all things (*akhilātmani*) has manifested to me to this degree. Therefore, the wise should not be averse to it.¹

It is a fact that ceaselessly surprises how Abhinavagupta managed to do so much in a single lifetime! Moreover, when we read his works, it seems that he had already reached his full maturity at a very early age. Even so, we can trace developments in his thought and observe his growth. This is especially so in the first part of his career in which he concentrated on the exposition of *Trika Śaivism*. Although Abhinava's personal contribution is immense, he never presents it as purely personal and independent. He is not the founder of any school. Rather, he assumes the role of a teacher of doctrines that had been revealed before him. Thus, apart from a few devotional and philosophical hymns and short didactic tracts, all his works are commentaries. Having acquired the basic tools of Sanskrit learning, he begins his career with a brief commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* which is his earliest surviving work. Although he had most probably already begun the study of Sanskrit literature which culminated in his great works on dramaturgy and poetics,² he focused his attention on *Trika Śaivism*. He was, it seems, inspired to do this by his encounter with Śāmbhunātha whom he reveres more than any of his numerous teachers of this period. His earliest *Trika* work *Śrīpūrvapañjikā* to which he refers several times in his commentary on the *Parātrīśikā* was most probably unfortunately lost.³ One or perhaps two verses from it are quoted by Jayaratha in his commentary on the *Tantrāloka*.⁴ Some have opined that it may have been a very large work if it was a commentary on the whole of *Śrīpūrvatantra*, that is, the *Mālinīvijayottara*, but it was probably not so. Indeed, Abhinava himself did not seem to take it much into consideration as he refers to it only once in his subsequent works. Jayaratha quotes a *Maṅgalaśloka* from that work in his commentary on the *Tantrāloka*. In that he praises his revered teacher Śāmbhunātha as having liberated him. Thus, it appears that Śāmbhunātha was his guide right from the start of his journey into *Trika Śaivism*, which he undertook in an already fully or partially liberated state.⁵

After that he wrote the *Mālinīvijayaśloka-vārttika* (MvV), ostensibly on the first verse of the *Mālinīvijayottara* (MV). This was followed by the *Parātrīśikā-vivaraṇa* (PTv).⁶ Abhinava's aim, as he tells us in the PTv, was to present the most excellent – *anuttara*- form of *Trikaśāstra*, which he maintained is the highest form of *āgamic Śaivism*. His endeavor culminates in his *Tantrāloka*. Jayaratha points out that the

name *Tantrāloka* means both 'Light of the Tantras' and 'Light on the Tantras'.⁷ It is, in other words, the quintessential Light or illumining knowledge that radiates from the Tantras by means of which they themselves are illumined. This is a typical way in which one would name a commentary. One may also understand in the same way the names of his subsequent summaries of the *Tantrāloka*, that is, the *Tantrasāra* (Essence of the Tantras), *Tantroccaya* [the Collected (Essence of) the Tantras] and *Tantravaṭadhanika* (Small Casket of Globules from the Tantras).

In the third and last part of his career, when he wrote the *īśvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛitivimarśinī* (īPVv), he refers to the *Tantrāloka* in retrospect as a *vārtika*. There are several names in Sanskrit for 'a commentary'. A *vārtika* is defined as a type of commentary that supplies missing matter implied in the text on which it comments.⁸ This is, indeed, what Abhinava tells us he is doing when he declares right at the beginning of his *Tā* that there is nothing in it that is not explicitly stated in the *Mālinīvijayottara* or implicitly indicated (*liṅgita*).⁹ Moreover, he goes on to declare that it is the essence of the 10, 18 and 64 Śaiva scripture.¹⁰ Thus, by illumining the meaning of the MV which the ultimate *Trikaśāstra*, the *Tantrāloka* is effectively a 'light' on all the Tantras. In this way, Abhinava is not just declaring the excellence of his chosen Tantric tradition, he is declaring a return to the scriptural foundation of Śaivism that in the four generations before him had taken the second place to the independent revelation and its exegesis. This is not to say that he considered what had taken place to be of lesser importance. Indeed, it supplied Abhinavagupta with most of his primary exegetical models with which he explained *Trika* Śaivism.

To understand what I mean, we have to very briefly revise, from this perspective, what took place. It is well known that about the middle of the 9th century, Śiva is believed to appear to Vasugupta. Śiva told him that he would find the *Śivasūtras* He had inscribed on a rock on Mahadeva mountain.¹¹ Kṣemarāja, who commented on them some two centuries later, maintained that the teachings of the *Śivasūtra* sustained and reflected the oral non-dual Śaiva traditions transmitted and practised by Siddhas and Yoginīs. These were the traditions that made the heart of Vasugupta's consciousness pure and sacred.¹² Thus, it is a notable fact, often overlooked, that although certainly a Śiva's revelation, the *Sūtras* are not a part of the Śaiva scriptures. And we are, in fact, hard put if we search for their direct sources in them.¹³ This is true *a fortiori* of the *Spandakārikā* that has traditionally been considered to be a commentary on it, written, I believe, by Kallaṭabhaṭṭa Vasugupta's disciple or, as Abhinava and

Kṣemarāja affirm, by Vasugupta himself.¹⁴

Similarly, but in a different way, Somananda's *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*, probably written just before Kallaṭa's commentary (see below), was a revelation of *īśvarādvayavāda* originally taught by Śiva in the form of Śrīkaṇṭha and transmitted orally through 15 generations to Somānanda who set it down in writing in his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*. The Pratyabhijñā version of this Śaiva non-dualist philosophy, formulated by his disciple Utpaladeva, was also not directly based on scripture. Rather, Utpaladeva took care to base it on the authority of his teacher, who he declares had direct experience of it.¹⁵ In other words, he considered his work to be an exegetical one. Non-dualist Śaivism was formulated both by the introduction of a novel terminology and logical proof of its validity, framed in the standard form of philosophical debate. This does not at all mean that Utpaladeva ignored *āgamic* Śaivism in its sources, but he did not draw from it directly. Thus, for example, his formulation of the 36 *tattvas* and the nature of *mala*, which are axiomatic to *āgamic* Śaiva theology was, one could say, a higher explanation of it, rather than a direct presentation. Indeed, although not stated explicitly (which Somānanda does do) his point of reference are the dualist *Siddhāntins*. He reworks their formulations (that are based on *Siddhāntāgamas*) into the non-dualist Śaiva phenomenology of his system. Thus, he never refers directly to any scripture, although he does take time to establish the authoritativeness (*prāmāṇya*) of it.

Two other currents of Śaiva non-dualism developed alongside these two. One was the *Krama* system in the form brought to the Valley from the Uttarapīṭha (most probably located in what is now called the Swat valley) by Śivānanda alias Jñānānētra. He had received an original revelation directly from goddess Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī in the form of a local goddess of that place called Maṅgalādevī. The system he taught was variously called *Kramanaya*, *Devīnaya*, *Kramadarśana*, and *Mahārtha*. This does have directly ascertainable scriptural roots. The earliest are in the *Jayadrathayāmala* followed by a few *Krama Tantras* that developed afterwards such as the *Kāṭikulaṣaṅkaśataka* (also known as the *Devīṣaṅkaśataka*) and the *Kramasadbhāva*. However, this school also does not present itself as part of a direct transmission of the scriptures.

Then, we have two *Trika* works. One was the *Vijñānabhairavatantra* from which both Somānanda and the author of the *Spandakārikā* drew. The other was the brief *Parātrīśikā* that also existed on which several commentaries were written before Abhinava's time. The one Abhinava considered to be the best and studied carefully was attributed to Somānanda.¹⁶ But although the former affiliates itself

clearly to the *Trikabheda* of the Tantras, and the later is understood to be a *Trikasūtra* drawn from the *Rudrayāmala*, neither of them locate themselves directly in any current of scripture. In brief, the non-dualist Śaiva and Śākta traditions that began to develop in the Kashmir Valley in the middle of the 9th century were not directly rooted in the so-called Five Currents (*pañcastrotas*) of Śaiva scriptural revelation.

This continued to be the situation up to the time of Abhinavagupta despite the citation of scripture in the commentaries on the *Śivasūtra* and the *Spandakārikā*. Rather, we observe the proliferation of numerous independent tracts on non-dualist Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Kaulism and Krama. What occurs, in other words, is the flourishing of a rich non-dualist Śaiva exegetical tradition with only an indirect scriptural base. We may contrast this situation with that of the more dualist *Siddhānta*. The first known Siddhāntin exegete was *Sadyojyotiḥ* (also called Kheṭapāla), whose date has been established by Sanderson as being about 675-750 CE, and so lived a good century before Vasugupta. He wrote both important independent tracts on the theology of Siddhānta Śaivism and was also the first to write commentaries on the *Siddhānta āgamas* that is, more than a century before for non-dualist Śaivites began to comment on a scripture (i.e. the PT).

It appears that the dualist *Siddhānta* was in a strong, even dominant position, in the Kashmir Valley. While the non-dualists drew much from them and there was much common ground, they underscored their distinct character by contrasting themselves from them and even sometimes as their adversaries. Thus, according to Kṣemarāja, Śiva revealed the *Śivasūtra* to Vasugupta so that the 'secret' non-dualist Śaiva traditions may not be lost at a time when most people were votaries of public dualist Śaivism.¹⁷ It was in this spirit that he wrote his commentary on the *Svacchandatantra* to counter and improve on commentaries written before him from a dualist point of view.¹⁸

Concomitant with this lack of grounding in the Śaiva āgamas of these non-dualist Śaivites prior to Abhinava was the claim on that liberating initiation (*nirvāṇādīkṣā*) can be attained directly by realising the reality they taught by a direct act of recognition of Śiva's identity as all things and as one's own. This opened the possibility to which Abhinava repeatedly refers in various ways in varied contexts to the attainment of liberation directly from the deity without the mediation of a Guru. *Kaula* systems in general, and in this case *Krama* and *Trika* in particular, for their part insisted that realisation can

be attained instantly just by a glance cast by a fully realised teacher directed at a well prepared disciple or just a few words or a touch and the like. This possibility Abhinavagupta understood to be an extension of the claim of these early post-scriptural systems that they led to direct realisation in this way and this is in line with the higher *Trika Kaula Tantras*' teaching such as that of the *Nandiśikhā* where Śiva says to the goddess:

O beloved, a person can be liberated by initiation or by (direct personal) intuition (*pratibhā*). (The difference between them is only that) initiation depends on a teacher in order to liberate the fettered soul from bondage, while intuition, which bestows the accomplishment of the state of isolation (*kevalībhāva*) (from bondage, is the fettered soul's) own essential nature.¹⁹

Thus, at the end of his PTV Abhinava thanks the goddess for having made him into a teacher even though he also praises Śambhunātha as his Guru.²⁰ Indeed, it is not all clear there whether Śambhunātha did formally initiate him, although there is no reason to doubt it. Indeed, Abhinava declares that he received all the formal rites of initiation right up to those of a consecration of a teacher from all of the many teachers he says in the *Tantrāloka* that he served as a disciple and from whom he received 'the essence' of their tradition.

Certainly, whether he was already liberated or not, Abhinava studied the Śaiva scriptures extensively. *Trika* for him was thoroughly grounded in the scriptures and it was this return to scripture and the currents of their transmission that was the cardinal feature of his *Trika* exegesis which he developed making use of the exegetical models his predecessors from Vasugupta onwards had supplied. In this respect, he walked in the footsteps of Śambhunātha from whom he received the permission (*ājñā*) and hence the authority (*adhikāra*) to do this. Śambhunātha belonged to a lineage beginning with a certain Bhairavācārya from South India who knew the 'five currents' of the *Śaivāgama* and those of the *Pāśupata Atimārga*. He taught Sumati who in turn taught Śambhunātha.²¹ Thus, the latter did not teach Abhinava only the *Trika* scriptures.²² Indeed, Abhinava credits him with having taught him how the scriptures came together (*śāstramelana*) to constitute a single whole by virtue of their common grounding in the intuitive certainty (*prasiddhi*) which is the hallmark of the knowledge of universal consciousness. This is the fundamental nature of Śiva, the individual soul and all things. This intuitive certainty (*prasiddhi*) is the scripture which at its most lucid is *Trika* which is thus both the ultimately true scripture and all of it.²³

Abhinava paves the way for his exegesis of the *Mālinīvijayottara*,

the *Tantrāloka*, with his two great preliminary works that must be read along with it. These are the *Mālinīvijayaśloka-vārttika* (MVV) and the *Parātrīśikāvivaraṇa* (PTv). Both are commentaries on Trika scripture as all his Trika works must be for them to enjoy the authority of scripture and be, as scripture is, liberating. Thus, he rightly claims for his *Tantrāloka* that by knowing its thirty-seven chapters, one knows the whole gamut of reality at its thirty-seven levels (*tattva*). Thus, recognizing this to be his own nature as Bhairava, he is a true liberated teacher who is capable of liberating others.²⁴

Abhinava's commentaries are an integral part of *Trikaśāstra*, indeed, they reveal it in its most excellent form as *Anuttara Trika*. In this perspective, his two earlier works address themselves, amongst other things, to establishing basic, universal exegetical models that frame and pervade the *Tantrāloka* which Abhinava, true to the primary ritual and yogic concerns of his *Trika* and *Śaivāgamic* sources, presents as a liturgy (*paddhati*), that is, as a ritual manual of *Anuttara Trika*.

In order to pave the way for his ultimate exegesis of *Trika*, Abhinava establishes in the MVV that *Trika* is the emergent stream of scriptural revelation flowing out above *īśāna*, Sadāśiva's fifth and upper face. Here the revelation of the five currents of scripture uttered by his five faces culminates. The stream 'above the upper one' is uttered by the supreme energy of Sadāśiva, the Yoginī's Mouth. Like the currents of a great river all the other currents of scripture merge into this one, which flows out through the Tantras of the *Kaula* revelation of which *Trika* is the highest, pouring forth between the streams of the right and the left *Bhairava Tantras*. The first 400 verses of the MVV, which comprise a third of it, are dedicated to an exposition of this process and the collocation thereby within it of the teachings of all the scriptural traditions. At the end of the MVV, Abhinava completes the encapsulation of his exegesis by showing how the Śaiva tradition as a whole rises above the others traversing all the levels of consciousness to culminate in that of the supreme non-duality embodied in the *Trika* teachings. He repeats this ascent from various perspectives several times in the *Tantrāloka*, the first time in the beginning of it and the last time at the end.²⁵

There he outlines how the upward movement is marked by a progressive ascent through the levels of reality (*tattva*) to which corresponding schools, ranging from the materialist, Buddhist, Vedic, Vaiṣṇava and then Śaiva, lead. Finally the last uppermost phases are marked by a series of initiations through the currents of the Bhairava Tantras, the *Mata*, *Kula*, *Kaula* and up to *Trika*.²⁶ Such ladders of

ascent through scriptural traditions are routine in the Tantras. They present them in order to display themselves as being, of course, at the head of them.²⁷ Abhinava does this also but his added intention is to relate them to developing levels of seven subjectivities arranged along the rungs of the *tattvas* which are populated by the 118 worlds. Thus, he relates the layered cosmic order to degrees of revelation. This opens up, on the one hand, an integral Śaiva theology of liberation through degrees of gnosis even as it justifies his reference to scriptures of all Śaiva schools as authoritative in their respective domains for his own exegetical purposes.

Having achieved this in the MVV, in his commentary on the *Parātrīśikā* Abhinava is hardly concerned with this matter, although he does refer to the hierarchy of higher initiations in passing to establish the excellence of the *Trikaśāstra* of which he says, his is the most excellent, indeed, unsurpassable — *Anuttara*. But this is an occasional aside to encourage his students to persevere in grasping his exegesis. His main concern is theological, that is, the exposition of *Trika* (the triadic Goddess of Consciousness) as the dynamism of *Anuttara* which serves, in its immediate specific exemplary, application to explain how the *Mantra* as taught in the *Parātrīśikā* is liberating. The scope of a brief paper is too limited to see how he does this in any great detail.²⁸ Suffice it to say briefly that in order to understand his exegetical method we need to first observe a few basic distinctive features of the systems mentioned above that had evolved before.

First, and foremost, was the stress they all laid, with the notable exception of the *Vijñānabhairava*, on the dynamism of the dynamic cognitive consciousness that they all agreed was the deity's essential nature as it is of the Self, indeed, of all reality.²⁹ This notion of consciousness has parallels with Buddhist idealism which sustained a process theory of reality rather than the spatial or substantial one generally held by the *ātmavādins* including the Śaiva Siddhāntins. Indeed, these Kashmiri systems are the only ones that subscribe to it. They each did this in their own distinctive way even as they agree that consciousness is also, but not only, a pervasive sentient foundation of experience like a screen, or mirror that sustains and pervades its content like space pervades objects, thus retaining their place amongst the *ātmavādas*. Their distinctive feature is that the foundational consciousness also dynamically perceives its content within itself, as one with itself, even as it makes it appear externally in the course of doing that by virtue of its inherent power.

The *īśvarādvayavāda* of Somānanda envisages this dynamism as the flow of Śiva's energies of will, knowledge and action. It has

been suggested that, although these three energies are commonly predicated of Śiva in Śaiva metaphysics in general, in this context it is a specifically *Trika* triad, thus connecting Somānanda's teaching to a *Trika* background. However, Somānanda himself nowhere refers to *Trika* in his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*.³⁰ Be that as it may, the three constitute the flow of Śiva's energies who, free (*svatantra*) in all respects, pours everything out of himself as he contemplates himself as 'I am Śiva' (*śivo 'smi*).³¹ It is his nature to be this flow and so become manifest as all things. This takes place as an act of perception that Somānanda understands to be the transition from a state of rest which is free of thought constructs to that of conceptual representation (*vikalpa*) and its content. Somānanda explains that Śiva is perpetually at rest and content (*nivṛta*). He playfully assumes the form of all things, like a king who pretends to be a foot soldier. This is not an illusion or a deceit. Perceiving him to be a foot soldier is not a mistake. Analogously, the *Śivasūtra* declares that the Self is an actor,³² adding an aesthetic, artistic dimension to this transformation. Thus, even so, Śiva is never anything other than Himself. Even as all things flow out of him, through the operation of His energies, he continues to be Śiva. In order to catch the source of this process, it is necessary to lay hold of the first moment of the will (*prathamā tuṭiḥ*). Somānanda writes:

When, however (after resting within itself), consciousness is (in a state) of propensity (*unmukhīṭā cittā*) to instigate the emanation of the (wonderfully) various deployment of the many phenomena by the expansion of the joy of the glorious power which is the inherent attribute of consciousness, that is (then) the first moment of the will (*prathamā tuṭi*).³³

'The (omnipresent) Lord who is blissful consciousness, pulsing effulgently, is the very Self within all existing things. (He is) Śiva, whose will flows unchecked (and whose) perception and action flow (with it).'³⁴

We often find the key terms '*prasara*' – 'flow' and '*aunmukhya*' repeated in the *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*. Thus it is striking that neither of them appears in this sense in the *Spandakārikā*, although it does refer to the reality it teaches as flowing undivided through the waking and other states of consciousness that are divided from one another.³⁵ Instead we find the term '*spanda*' which is the pulse or vibration of consciousness. This too is linked to cognition and commences with an initial intention to perceive but it stresses equally the reversal back to its source. Thus here we find a pair of key terms – '*unmeṣa*' and '*nimeṣa*', literally the opening and closing of Śiva's eyes, as his expansion into manifest form and retraction back into himself. This

is the universal pulse of consciousness (*sāmānyaspaṇḍa*) that ripples through, and as, the individual pulsations (*viśeṣaspaṇḍa*) of the fundamental constitutive qualities (*guṇa*) of the cognitive apparatus of the individual soul and outer objectivity. As the universal impels the particular, it is understood to be the ‘strength’ (*bala*) which is the impelling force that activates the senses causing them to rotate like wheels as they move from the inner subjectivity out to its object and back. Thus, tacitly criticizing Somānada’s view, the SpKā says it is not the will that impels the senses rather it is their contact with this force (*bala*) of the uncreated essential nature of the Self. So we read there:

Indeed the individual soul (*puruṣa*) does not activate the impulse of the will (which directs the activity of the psychophysical organism) by himself alone, but through the contact with (his) own (inner) strength (*bala*) made in such a way that he identifies with it, (thus acquiring its power).³⁶

Moreover, as we shall see, significantly for Abhinava’s exegesis, it also impels *Mantras* in the same way to attain their goal.

The Krama school understands the dynamism of cognitive consciousness (*saṃvid*) on the model of time and procession. *Samvid* – the word for consciousness - is a feminine word and so is identified with the Goddess, in this case Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, a form of Kālī. She is a perception set to the rhythm of creation, persistence and destruction even as She abides unchanged as Eternity. Thus, the cycle of consciousness (*saṃvitcakra*) transcends all talk of either process or its absence.³⁷ True to the general *ātmavāda* view, none of these systems considers the ego to be absolute although the Krama school does get close to this idea by understanding the expansion of consciousness through the energies of the dynamics of perception as being, initially that of the ego. But there this expansion culminates in the transcendental egoless expanse of consciousness.

Utpaladeva reformulated non-dualist Śaivism as a cognitive, subjectivist, phenomenological ontology in his own terms. According to his Doctrine of Recognition – *Pratyabhijñā* - Śiva, the one reality, is the Light of consciousness (*prakāśa*) which possesses countless powers summed up in His reflective awareness (*vimarśa*) which is His freedom (*svātantrya*) to activate and deploy them as manifestations – ‘shinings’ (*ābhāsa*) – within it as its pulsing radiance (*sphurattā*). In this way, Utpaladeva moves from flows of energies to ‘appearings’ thus integrating a fundamental, new dimension to the vision of his teacher Somānanda. Thus, addressing Śiva in one of his devotional hymns, he declares: ‘Appearing on your own, you make everything

appear. Reflecting on (your own) form, you reflect on the universe. What you yourself make vibrate, according to your own desire, shines forth as the universe.'³⁸

This recurrent 'appearing' is the pulsing Heart of reality and non-dualist Śaivism, as its essence, namely, the reflective awareness of the Light, consciousness, the Self and Śiva as AHAṆ. This is the dynamic 'I' that is the supreme subjectivity of Śiva himself. Moreover, it is the Supreme form of Speech (*parāvāc*). In the following well-known verses Utpaladeva presents a summery of the kernel of his philosophy. Notice that he refers to his teacher's notion of the will as the impulse to manifestation but he understands it to be grounded in the light of consciousness as its creative reflective awareness. Moreover, he refers to the first and most ontologically fundamental aphorism of the *Śivasūtra – caitanyamātmā* and the pulse of the *Spanda* school is now presented as luminous: 'The multitude of things cannot but shine resting on the self of the Lord, otherwise the act of reflective awareness which is volition (*icchāmarśa*) could not be produced.'

The essential nature of the light is reflective awareness (*vimarśa*); otherwise light, though 'coloured' by objects would be similar to an insentient reality, such as crystal.

Precisely for this reason the Self has been defined as sentience (*caitanya*), meaning the activity of consciousness in the sense of being the agent of this activity. It is thanks to sentiency, in fact, that the Self differs from an insentient entity.

Consciousness has as its essential nature reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśa*), it is Supreme Speech (*parāvāc*) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty (*aiśvarya*) of the supreme Self.

It is the pulsing radiance (*sphurattā*) (of the Light), the great (universal) Being (of all things) unqualified by space and time; it is that which is said to be the heart (*hṛdaya*) of the Supreme Lord, insofar as it is sentience.'³⁹

Utpaladeva submits at the end of his *īP* that everything he has stated there is derived from Somānanada's teaching. At first sight this seems to be simply an expression of reverence for his teacher. But despite the many new dimensions he adds to the conception of cognitive consciousness by drawing extensively and in depth from idealist Buddhism (*Yogācāra*), this is in a sense true. He is right to see himself as an exegete. From this perspective, his system is a link in the exegetical chain that leads to Abhinavagupta and beyond to the exegetical works of his famous disciple Kṣemarāja.

Although each of these systems was strikingly distinctive in its

own way, they shared essential basic features that rendered them amenable to serve as exegetical models for one another. In other words, they came to be used to explain one another in their own terms which allowed them to perceive the vision of one another within themselves or, to put it another way, understand themselves in terms of the others. Moreover, they came to be, also for this reason, a major source of Abhinava's elevated presentation of a visionary and soteriological experience of reality with its implicit praxis. Their distinctive perspective was couched in sets of technical terms that supplied the exegete with a rich and varied vocabulary to describe a vast range of mutual enfolded visions of reality directly experienced that span from the immediacy of the perceiver and the perceived to the underlying processes of the energies of consciousness of which it is the result.

It is clear from what we have said up to now that the terms systems use to denote the realities with which they deal are of fundamental importance. We may translate them with one or more words into another language but this can never cover their full signification. Each system expresses its own concepts in its own terms that weave together in a syntax of conceptions they denote (or perhaps it would be better to say 'indicate') to form structured orders of ideas which collectively constitute the system. The presence or absence of a term thus indicates much more than the presence or absence of a way of saying something: they are diagnostic of the entire system's view. Thus to plot the vectors of Somānanda's hermeneutics and of his successors, particularly, Abhinavagupta who is the focus of our attention, we must first identify the key technical terms that constitute the primary vehicles of the systems of ideas. Next we need to observe as far as possible their usage and hence meaning in the earliest sources we can locate in which they appear. We need also to observe the formation of new key concepts and their corresponding nomenclature through which they are expressed. Finally, we can observe their application as exegetical tools the exegete applies to discover deepening layers of meaning in the scriptures and teachings of his system and so build it up and deepen it. This procedure Abhinava, unlike his predecessors, also applied to the praxis of Yogas and rituals. These he extracted from his sources as the most 'essential' for *Anuttara Trika* and as what he understood to be their most representative and significant teachings from the perspective of his exegetical project of which this process of selection was a fundamental part.

We may note in passing that preliminary searches of such primary

sources tend to indicate that in actual fact many of these fundamental terms (such as *sphurattā* and *vimarśa*) were forged in the ambit of these systems themselves and their hermeneutical application to textual exegesis. But there are exceptions. An important one is the term '*spanda*' that we do find in a few places in the *Jayadrathayāmala*. There the much more common analogous term is '*jṛmbha*' which literally means 'expanding out' or 'opening up'. In its technical sense, it denotes the unfolding of configurations of divine forms out of the Emptiness which is implicitly understood to be the pleroma of their original unmanifest nature. In the JY, these divine forms are mostly all female beings (*devī*, *yoginī*, *mātrī*, etc.). As such they are energies that become manifest by their activation.

Abhinava makes use of several exegetical models in his exegesis of *Trika* Śaivism which includes *Krama* as it already did in some of the *Trika* traditions and Tantras that preceded him, notably the *Devīyāmala*, an important source for Abhinava for this very reason. The scope of this brief overview does not require that we discuss all of them, we will reserve that for a later publication. We shall just take as an example his foremost and most extensively applied exegetical model. This is the identification of fundamental reality as pure supreme, unconditioned, all embracing, complete ('full') self-awareness of 'I' (variously termed *ahantā*, *ahambhāva*, *pūrṇāhantā*, *pūrṇāhambhāva* etc.).⁴⁰

In his *Trika* works, Abhinava identifies it, according to the context, as *Anuttara*, supreme Bhairava, the goddess of consciousness, the Self, Supreme Speech, and the highest *Mantra* and its vitality which is universal *Spanda*. He makes full use of the terminology of all the prior systems. Thus, in the PTv, he says that '*Anuttara* is the state of repose which is the reflective awareness of itself of the Light (of consciousness). It is *AHAṆ* which is the wonder of the vitality of *Mantra* which is Supreme Speech, its uncreated and innate nature.'⁴¹ Again, in the *Tā*, he writes:

As (consciousness) is reflective awareness, its spontaneous and perpetually emergent (*sadodita*) resonance (*dhvani*) (of pure self-awareness, which is the supreme level of Speech) is called the supreme, Great Heart. The self-awareness (*svavimarśa*), (from which) all things have flowed forth (*drāvita*)⁴² (and dissolved away) within the Heart (of consciousness), present in the beginning and end of perception (*bhāvagraha*)⁴³ is called, according to the (*Spanda*) teachings, the universal vibration of consciousness (*sāmānyaspanda*), which is the outpouring (*uccalana*) (of consciousness) within one's own nature.⁴⁴

The stress is always on the dynamism of consciousness. This one

sacred and dynamic reality, which is all things and all that exists, unfolds and operates on the multiple levels of its Being (*tattva, sat*) ranging from this supreme subjectivity of the supreme perceiver (*parāpramātr*) down to (or one could say, up to) the grossest level of objectivity. These levels Abhinava explains are phases of its perpetual expansion out and down and contraction up and in. In the PTV, he fills in numerous details of these phases variously understood in accord with the context in which they are set. As *mantra* it is the basis of *tantric* ritual and many of the Yogas taught in the Tantras, as it is the PT. Abhinava's foremost characterization of it is Speech. The rhythm of Supreme Speech, which is not conventional (*asamketa*) and uncreated, consciousness, moves through its levels as the Speech of Vision, the Middle One and the Corporeal. Thus, it flows out from pure thought free consciousness, through the Speech of Ideas, to that of thought and finally verbal expression. Underscoring their Trika identity they are identified with the Goddesses *Parā*, *Parāparā* and *Aparā* who are will, knowledge and action, respectively.

Supreme Speech which is absolute 'I' consciousness, identified with the Goddess, resonates as the language of *Mantra*, the grammar of which Abhinava analyses in his exposition of his higher cognitive linguistics in the PTV. The energies of *Anuttara*, that is, *AHAṆ* are the letters A to K±. These combine as both the purifying *Mantras* and the principles of existence (*tattva*) emanated from them that are the objects of their purification. Thus Abhinava explains in great detail the flow (*prasara*), vibration (*spanda*), procession (*krama*), reflective awareness (*vimarśa*) and radiant pulse (*sphurattā*) of the earlier schools as that of the Krama Goddess of Consciousness and the three *Trika* goddesses that unfold are included within Her as the Supreme Speech of the reflective awareness of 'I':

'So, the goddess, the highest power of Speech (*parāvāc*), in the form of all the phonemes beginning with A and ending with K±, expands by unfolding within herself the venerable forms of *Parāparā* and *Aparā* inherent in the Speech of Vision (*paśyantī*) and the rest about to emerge by her free will, her one essence the wonder of the oneness with awakened consciousness of the unfolding universe (*prapañca*) consisting of (all) phenomena, worlds and the gross elements fashioned without contradiction by being encompassed within her. She is ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) consisting of that kind of wonder experienced by the emergence of the Supreme Lord Bhairava. She is the power who is the great emanation consisting of the oneness of (all) the endless number of emanations and withdrawals made manifest in the pure mirror of her own nature'⁴⁵

Many more examples can be drawn from Abhinava's works of how he integrates the perceptions of the dynamism of consciousness taught before him with his own vision which revels in the relish (*āsvāda, carvaṇa*) of its aesthetic quality (*rasa*) experienced as wonder (*camatkāra*) and astonishment (*vismaya*). The *Śivasūtra* had already taught that 'the stages of Yoga are wonder'.⁴⁶ Utpaladeva characterizes consciousness as 'wonder', the capacity for which distinguishes it from dull insentience. The proto-*Krama Matatantra* and fully developed *KālīKulakrama Tantras* as well as the oral transmission of Śivānanda had already extensively adopted the terminology of aesthetics. They had already supplemented it by applying it to the phenomenology of the higher states of consciousness advanced yogis experience. It is described so vividly and beautifully in places that we can justifiably refer to it as a distinct form of language we may call 'visionary' along side the 'mythical' (mythos), 'symbolic' and 'metaphysical' (logos) These are all intended to express non-mundane realities and their connection to mundane ones in sacred myths, geographies, ritual, yogic physiology and in theological and philosophical discourse.

Thus, the master of language (which includes *Mantra* and reflective awareness) Abhinava, presents an exegesis that is novel and yet never leaves the firm moorings of scripture and the teachings of the masters. They are stable and correct because they are consciously grounded in the one essentially subjective consciousness which illumines its own nature through the brilliance of its divine illumining intelligence (*pratibhā*). It is the reason for the omniformity of the transcendental deity of consciousness who becomes everything by a creative act that issues from the unlimited imagination of its artistic genius (*pratibhā*). It is also the ground of reason and essence of the saving knowledge which is scripture and the grace (*anugraha*) that empowers the fettered consciousness to break free from its confining ignorance, desire and Karma and to expand back to its original unconditioned nature. This then is the third source of knowledge and, indeed, the foundation of the other two – scripture and the Guru. This innate personal, intuitive insight that arises spontaneously shines forth as both revelation and its explanation, that is, its translation into liberating insight through application of the teachings of the scriptures and the oral tradition properly understood. For we act in accord with our understanding, and we understand in accord with our actions. What makes a Guru a Guru is that, ideally, he is both liberated (= he knows) and is a liberator of others (= he acts) by virtue of the knowledge which is the teaching of the scripture. This knowledge is the insight into

his true nature, that of the universe and deity. This makes him a true and sound exegete of scripture and his Guru's words, whose exegesis is the process that has led him to liberating insight and which leads others who participate in that same process which is both instantaneous and lifelong. This is one of Abhinavagupta's pet themes to which he repeatedly returns and perceives is in line with the teachings of the full range of Śaiva scriptures. Thus he quotes two scriptures at each extreme, one *Saiddhāntika* and the other *Trika Kaula*, to justify his exegetical method:

The knowledge proved trustworthy by oneself (attained) by putting into practice the procedures laid down in the scriptures (*śāstrakrama*) and attending to the wisdom (*prajñā*) of a teacher who knows them, is full (and perfect) (*pūrṇa*) and so leads to the realisation of one's authentic identity as Bhairava (*bhairavāyate*).⁴⁷ This is the reason why it is said in the venerable *Kiraṇāgama* that this knowledge is (obtained) from the teacher, scripture and oneself and (also) in the *Nisāṭanatantra*⁴⁸ that it has three sources of conviction (*pratyaya*). Again (this insight), manifests (variously) according to whether (these three operate) in unison, in the reverse order⁴⁹ or individually.⁵⁰

Elsewhere, he quotes the *Kiraṇāgama*, dovetailing, as he often does, his explanation to make it an integral part of it. In this case he does so in order to stress the primacy of personal insight which is enlightening for one's self as well as for others: 'It is said in the *Kiraṇāgama* that '(insight comes) from the teacher, the scripture and oneself.'⁵¹ Of these, that which comes later in this series is primary (*mukhya*), whereas that which comes earlier serves as a means to that which follows.⁵²

Abhinava explains this line in a long concluding section of the MVV stressing the primary importance of the teachers and scripture and how the validity of both is essentially based on the same insight that arises spontaneously within consciousness. The teacher – exegete and scripture – the object of his exegesis, are essentially the same consciousness which reveals itself in this way so that it may liberate itself through itself:

'The principle (fundamental nature) of one's own consciousness is made clear from the teacher, the scripture and oneself. This effort has been primarily made (this way). The teacher depends on the common practice (*vṛtti*) of the scripture and that is grounded in his own consciousness. Thus all this is accomplished (and proved) by one's own consciousness. It is not indeed without help (from consciousness). ... Those whose hearts have awakened constantly are so by the practice of that scripture and that scripture is one's own consciousness and that is

not dependent (on anything). If one explains it that way, one should say that it is (intrinsically) an authoritative means of knowledge in itself (*svataḥ*). Those who desire liberation should reflect on that scripture with effort. May they not waste away their life uselessly on the injunctions in other scriptures. Whatever non-dualist or even dualist views there may be, they attain completion here and so one should reflect on that (scripture). (MVV2/267-270).

To the degree that the coherence (of the scriptures) (*ekavākyatva*) (thus) produced (*pravṛtta*) has been attained and persists by the wonderful diversity formed by its primary and secondary parts (the wise) know that this (scripture) is the one *Trikaśāstra*. The nature of the teacher here (in this) case is non-dual and his words are not different from that. But even though there are parts of the scriptures in which sections clearly belong to divisions that are affected by delusion, even so, the ultimate fruit (of them all) is the attainment of Śiva.⁵³

Notes

1. PTv p. 279.
2. Abhinava tells us in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* that he had learnt its meaning from a Śaiva perspective from Bhaṭṭendurāja, who is thus the earliest teacher to whom he refers in any of his works. He appears again, after Abhinava had completed his main works on Trika Śaivism, as his teacher of poetics whom he praises at the beginning of his commentary (*alocana*) on ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*. There he writes:

*bhaṭṭendurājacaraṇābjakṛtādhivāsa-
hṛdya śruto 'bhinavaguptapadābhidho 'ham |
yat kiṃcid apy anuraṇan sphuṭayāmi kāvyā-
lokaṃ svalocananīyojanayā janasya ||*

'I am the one called Abhinavagupta who, having taken residence at the lotus feet of Bhaṭṭendurāja, have listened (to his teachings) with deep feeling. Even though just some of it (continues to) resonate (within me), for the sake of (all) people I clarify (ānandavardhana's) Light of Poetry by applying my own (illuminating) commentary (*locana*) to it.'

It is quite probable that Abhinava was learning poetics from Bhaṭṭendurāja (whom he mentions as his teacher in the *Tantrāloka*) while he laboured on producing his Trika Śaiva works. This would account to some degree for the already well-developed theory of aesthetics he has occasion to apply in his Trika works.

3. PTv p. 23 ff, p. 57 and 148.
4. Tāv ad 23/75 and also, perhaps, in Tāv ad 1/13.
5. *tādṛkṣvabhyastavijñānabhājordhvapadaśālinā ||
anuddhṛtasya na śreya etadanyagurūddhṛteḥ |
ata evāmbujanmārkadṛṣṭānto 'tra nirūpitaḥ ||*

'If he is not rescued by (the first teacher) who possesses the upper plane and is endowed with that kind of well exercised knowledge, but is rescued by some other teacher, it is of no good to him. Thus the example of the sun and the lotus is described here (in this regard).' Tā 23/74cd-75

Jayaratha comments: This example 'is described' in the commentary, that is, in the *Pūrvapañcikā*. As is said there:

'A lotus that has closed because the rays of the sun are weak or absent, does not blossom even in the presence of the great energies of (many) other planets. In the same way, the lotus of the disciple's heart without the teacher's feet, closes and blossoms again (only) (by the rays of grace) that fall from them.'

Abhinava refers to several teachers in his *Tantrāloka* but only Śambhunātha is described as having made the lotus of his heart bloom. In this poetic way, Abhinava is referring to his own liberation which is a state of fully expanded or 'blooming' consciousness (*pūrṇavikāsa*). It is only in that state that Śiva can be truly worshipped.

śrīśambhunāthabhāskaracaraṇanipātāprabhāpagatasāṅkocam |
abhinavaguptahṛdambujam etad vicinuta maheśapūjanahetoḥ ||

'In order to worship Maheśa (the Great Lord), discern (*vicinuta*) this, the lotus of Abhinavagupta's heart that has blossomed by the light falling from the feet of the sun-like Śambhunātha.' Tā 1/21

6. Scholars generally believe that the PTV was written before the MVV. In the introduction to my forthcoming annotated translation of the *Tantrāloka*, I advance arguments that it was written after the MVV.
7. Jayaratha writes: '*Tantrāloka* is like the light (*āloka*) of the Tantras of the Supreme Lord or else it is also (the light) which illumines them.' (Tāv ad 1/245). In the penultimate two verses of the Tā, we can discern both meanings. In the first, Abhinava declares that he worked hard to extract 'the essence' of ancient scriptures. Thus he implies that his work is redacted from that essence which is, clearly, their illumining 'light'. In the following he declares that people will find it easy to practice their teachings once acquired the light of his work which is thus both the light of the Tantras and on them. See, Tā 37/82-83.
8. *Tantrāloka* is quoted seven times in the iPVv. He refers to three *Tantrāloka* as a *vārtika* twice. First in 1, 33 (*yathoktaṃ mayaiṅva śrīṣaḍardhaślokaḥvārtike tantrāloke* and quotes Tā 2/39). Then again in 3, 259 (where he says referring to the Tā: *vārtike etat vyākhyātam*). The other references are in 1, 159, 164, 165, 168 (these four are quotes from chapter three of the Tā concerning *pratibimbavāda*) and 3, 279. Hannerer (1998: 33-34) notes: 'according to popular definition we would expect a *vārtika* to examine what is taught, what is not taught or taught imperfectly in a work. If we look at the most famous *Vārtikas* on the traditional Indian syllabus, those by Kātyāyana and Kumārila, this definition seems justified: both include a critique or at least clarification of their sources, namely the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and the *Śabarabhāṣya*. This cannot be applied to an *āgama*, if one holds the view that it is in some sense the source of knowledge. The only method a commentator can adopt is to make explicit a hidden sense, which one could justify by the abbreviated form in which the *āgama* has come down or by the secrecy of the doctrine.' In the case of the *Tantrāloka* also the usual definition of a *vārtika* would be justified as 'a commentary that could find its way through conflicting statements about Śaiva practice by rejecting some,

namely provisional rules, like the injunction to perform a specific worship, and by providing the arguments that can establish a hierarchy of these conflicting injunctions.' As an example of this approach see Tā 4/212-278 with regards to MV 18/74-81.

9. *na tad astīha yan na śrīmālinīvijayottare |
devadevena nirdiṣṭaṃ svaśabdenātha liṅgataḥ ||*

'There is nothing here (in the *Tantrāloka*) not taught by the God of gods in the venerable *Mālinīvijayottara* (*Tantra*), whether (directly) in His own words or (indirectly) by allusion (*liṅgataḥ*).' Tā 1/17

10. *daśāṣṭādaśavasv aṣṭabhinnam yac chāsanam vibhoḥ |
tatsāraṃ trikaśāstram hi tatsāraṃ mālinīmatam ||*

'The teaching (*śāsana*) of the pervasive Lord is divided into (groups of) ten, eighteen and eight times eight (*tantras*), the essence of which is the Trika scriptures (*śāstra*) and the essence of that is the *Mālinīmata*.' Tā 1/18

11. See Dyczkowski 1992: 11-12

12. *pārameśvara-nānāyoginī-siddhasatsaṃpradāya-pavitrahṛdayaḥ |* Introductory remarks to the *Śivasūtravimarśinī*.

13. An exception may be the first *Śivasūtra-caitanya* *ātmā* (the Self is consciousness) of which we find a parallel in the *Netratantra*:

*paramātmāsvarūpaṃ tu sarvopādhivivarjitam |
caitanya ātmano rūpaṃ sarvaśāstreṣu kathyate ||*

'The Supreme Lord's essential nature is devoid of all limiting adjuncts. It is said in all the scriptures that consciousness is the nature of the Self.' NT 8/28

14. Dyczkowski 1992: 21-24

15. Utpaladeva writes in the concluding verses of his *īśvaraṃpratyabhijñā*: 'Thus this new, easy path has been explained by me as the great master who expounded it in the *Śivadṛṣṭi*. Thus he who, putting his feet on it, brings to light in the self the nature of the creator of the universe whose essence is the nature of Śiva, and is uninterruptedly absorbed in it, attains perfection.' iP 4/16 In his *vṛtti* he explains: '... this new path, devoid of complexity was indicated in the treatise that bears the name of *Śivadṛṣṭi* by the venerable Somānanda, who had direct experience of the form of the blessed Parameśvara; I have here furnished a logical justification of this path, thus causing it to enter the hearts of men.' Note, by the way, that contrary to common scholarly opinion the 'new path' to which Utpaladeva refers is not his *Pratyabhijñā* but that of the non-dualist Śaivism first set to writing in the *Śivadṛṣṭi*. If the 'new path' were to be his, it makes no sense for him to humbly say that he is simply extending his master's teachings. In other words, he too, like Abhinava, considered himself to be just an exegete. Indeed, one could say that all of the traditions in Asia that maintain the preeminence of the relationship between teacher and taught are hermeneutical chains derived from the founder's original teachings

16. There is no direct evidence in Somānanda's *Śivadṛṣṭi* that he belonged to a Trika lineage or taught Trika doctrine. So it is possible that the Somānanda who wrote the commentary on the PT was actually not the same person.

17. *kadāccica asau dvaitadarśanādhivāsitaṃprāye jīvaloke rahasyasaṃpradāyo mā vicchedi ityāśayataḥ anujighṛkṣāpareṇa paramaśiveṇa swapne anugṛhya unmiṣitaṃpratibhaḥ |* Introductory remarks to the *Śivasūtravimarśinī*.

18. *nāmmaiva bhedadṛṣṭivīdhutā yenāsvatantratātattvā
śrīmatśvatantrantraṃ bhedavyākhyāṃ na tatsahate |*

*bhedadarśanasamskāratantusantatamādītaḥ
svacchasvacchandacitsvātmāsattvaṃ nekṣate janaḥ ||
gatānugatikaproktabhedavyākhyātamo.āpanut |
tenādvaitāmṛtasphītaḥ svacchandodyota umbhītaḥ ||*

‘The dualist view which is in reality devoid of freedom has been shaken off even in name. Extended with the thread of the latent trace of dualism, from the very start, people do not perceive thereby the reality of their own nature which is pure, free consciousness. May (this commentary I have) fashioned (called) the Radiance of Svachchanda, which is abounding in the nectar of non-duality, remove the darkness of the dualistic commentaries of those who have gone before.’ Verses 3 and 4 of the concluding verses of the *Svacchandodyota* commentary on the *Svacchandatantra*.

19. Quoted in Tā13/168-169.
20. ‘O goddess, your beautiful and ingenious continued existence abides within that configuration (*taccakra*) (which is the Seed of the Heart). Assigning (to me) the status of a teacher, it is you who have employed me in the act of exposition etc. Therefore forgive this capriciousness of my speech and mind.’ PTV final verses 20
21. In Tāv ad 1/213 Jayaratha quotes from an unknown source: ‘A certain venerable and powerful (*vibhu*) Bhairava, living in a sacred seat (*pīṭha*) in the South, gave (out the teachings) in the scriptures of the five currents along with (those that are) the wealth of the Atimārga (of Pāśupata Śaivism). Sumati was in the world and then, as is well known, arose his foremost disciple, the venerable Śāmbhu who came from the sacred seat (*pīṭha*) of Jālandhara.’
22. Abhinava acknowledges Śāmbhunātha as having imparted a good number of teachings orally. Some of these are explanations of matters found in scripture, many are not found in scripture. A striking example of the latter, an important one for Abhinava, was the teaching concerning the six Blisses. This first appears in the MVV 2/35-42ab. Abhinava carries it over to Tā 5/44-52ab.
23. The whole of chapter 35 of the *Tantrāloka* is dedicated to discussing and defending this view. Abhinava ends it by saying: *itthaṃ śrīśāmbhunāthena mamoktaṃ sāstramelanam ||* ‘The venerable Śāmbhunātha taught me the coming together of the scriptures in this way.’ Tā 35/44cd
24. *iti saptādhikāṃ enāṃ triṃśataṃ yaḥ sadā budhaḥ ||
āhnikānāṃ samabhyaset sa sāksād bhairavo bhavet |
saptatrimśatsu sampūrṇabodho yad bhairavo bhavet ||
kiṃ citram aṇavo ’py asya dṛṣā bhairavatām iyuh |*

Thus, the wise man who constantly (and assiduously) practices these thirty-seven chapters becomes Bhairava Himself in person (directly visible) (*sākṣāt*). He whose awakened understanding of the thirty-seven (chapters) is perfectly complete (and His perfectly full consciousness (pervades) within the thirty-seven (principles)) is Bhairava, what wonder is it if by his (mere) glance, individual souls (also) attain Bhairava’s state? Tā 1/284cd-286ab

Elsewhere, in his *Tantrāloka*, Abhinava makes a more modest claim: *tataḥ prātibhasaṃvittyaśāstram asmatkṛtaṃ tv idam |yo ’bhyaset sa gurur naiva vastvarthā hi vidambakāḥ ||*

‘Thus whoever practices (the study) of this treatise (*śāstra*) I have written in order to (attain this) intuitive consciousness (*prātibhasaṃvitti*) becomes a (true) teacher. Facts (*vastvartha*) are not conceits.’ Tā 13/160

25. Jayaratha understands Tā 1/33 in this way and comments on it accordingly. See, for example Tā 4/21 ff and *ibid.* 35/26-34.
26. 'Mata' is broad category of Bhairava Tantras. It includes the early *Picumata* also called *Brahmayāmala* of the far left Kāpālika and the considerably milder *Siddhayogēśvarīmata* which is the first Trika Tantra and its approximate contemporary. The Mata Tantras culminate in the *Jayadrathayāmala* that presents a fully fledged cult to the goddess who in various forms presides over the Mata namely, Mātēśvarī. Fostering a manifold of Kālī cults of numerous forms of Kālī, that of Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī survived into the Kālikula that developed initially within it to then finally emerge as an independent scriptural tradition. Analogously, Trikakulas developed within the folds of the Trika Tantras that succeeded the SYM marked by the emergence of independent Trikakula Tantras such as the *Sarvaṅvira*, the *Trikaśāra* and the *Kularatnamālā*. The *Tantrasadbhāva* with its incorporation of whole chapters from the *Svacchandatantra* and its milder cult could be said to be in an intermediate place as was probably the *Trīśirobhairavatāntra*. The latter is most notable for its advanced Yogas that included cognitive Yogas. The compact systematic redaction of the MV suggests a relatively later date. However, although it is advanced enough to consider ritual to be Yoga, it is not dominantly Kaula in the way, it seems from Abhinava's citations, other Trika Tantras such as the *Virāvali* were. By placing Trika above the more literally radical Kula schools, the more internalized Kaula, and identifying that Trika with that of the MV, we may say that the ultimate level of transgressive sacrality that the range of Tantras from Mata to Kaula teach attains a level of balanced moderation. It is a synthesis in the centre between Left and Right that encompasses them even as it moves beyond them individually.
27. To some degree the upward development of these ladders of scriptures reflects the historical development of the *āgamic* corpus. We know, for example, that independent Kaula Tantras developed after the Siddhānta. The extended hierarchy of scriptures they present reflects that. Viewing these levels from the perspective of their most evolved hierarchies, we observe that as we progress upwards, the feminine becomes progressively more dominant. Concomitantly, spiritual development is understood as degrees of purifying liberating empowerment. Ritual worship of the Goddess involves the offering of bodily constituents. Thus the cult appears with respect to the mainstream Vedic, Vaiṣṇava and Saiddhāntika Śaiva to be transgressive.
28. I hope to present a more extensive analysis of this and the other points made in this paper in the introduction to the annotated translation of the *Tantrāloka* and Jayaratha's commentary which is in the course of preparation.
29. Many of the 112 *dhāraṇās* of the *Vijñānabhairava* are cognitive Yogas relating to perception and mental representation leading to the realization Bhairava consciousness. The foundation and goal of all the practices of the VB is to attain a state of free, unconditioned consciousness devoid of thought constructs. This the VB, by its very name, identifies with Deity – the Bhairava of Consciousness. Devoid of thought constructs, that consciousness is frequently presented as Emptiness (*śūnya*, *vyoman*, *ākāśa* etc). Moreover, it emphatically teaches in several places that the world is an illusion 'like the dream of Māyā' and a 'magic show' (*indrajāla*) (VB 9). It is by knowing that that one attains ultimate tranquility (133, 136). The purpose of the *dhāraṇās* is to overcome this illusion by Śiva's power which is, ultimately, the means (*śaivī mukham*). A cardinal feature of the other Kashmiri non-dualist schools, one that

distinguished them from all other forms of non-dualism that developed in the subcontinent including, indeed, above all, the Buddhist ones, is that the universe of perceptions and their objective content albeit ideal is real, just as it appears to be. It was because the VB was very influential in the non-dualist Śaiva ambience of Kashmi, that this not insignificant detail is overlooked, despite the fact that the VB reiterates in several places that the world is an illusion. Ānandabhaṭṭa, whose commentary on the VB is the earliest surviving one, appears to many to be betraying the phenomenological stance of the non-dualist Śaiva Kashmiri tradition and tending towards the illusionist views of Advaita Vedānta. However, Ānandabhaṭṭa is in actual fact closer to the VB's actual view than the later Śivopādhyāya. Moreover, Ānandabhaṭṭa's position is best characterized as being similar to that of the Yogavāsiṣṭha which, although sustaining that the world is illusory it is also a real product, in a sense, of the power of consciousness. This is not the Māyāśakti of post-Śaṅkara Vedānta, which is the power of ignorance. Here Māyāśakti is the power of consciousness. These differences are not minor; they cannot be set aside as simply manners of speaking. On the contrary, they are emblematic of the systems to which they belong, contributing fundamentally to their distinctive identities even as they are a result of them.

30. The concluding passage of the *Śivadṛṣṭi* (7/112-122ab) outlines the descent of the non-dualist Śaiva teachings from Śrīkaṇṭha to Somānanda. Abhinava presents a reworking of the same account in the iPVv 3, p. 402. In the *Tantrāloka*, Abhinava supplements this geneology of non-dualist Śaivism, which is said to pass through Trayambika, by presenting along side him Amardaka and Śrīnātha as the first propagators of dualist and dualist-cum-nondualist Śaivism, respectively. They are said to be the founders of three Śaiva *maṭhikas*. To them is added a fourth called *Aradhatriyambikamaṭhika* that is said to have been founded by Tryambika's daughter through which Trika was propagated (Tā 36/11-14). Although this account is commonly accepted by the Kashmiri tradition and scholars, one wonders whether it does actually reflect any historical reality. Āmardaka does appear regularly in Siddhāntāgamas and even inscriptions as the founder of the Saiddhāntika *āmardakamaṭha*. However, the identity of Śrīnātha is hard to pinpoint. In the account found in the ŚDṛ, Tryambaka preceeded Somānanda by five generations. What about the descendents in his daughter's lineage? The details of Abhinava's account are unknown elsewhere and he makes no reference to his source. Although it is tucked away towards the end of the of his *Tantrāloka* (36/11cd-14ab), convention would not have allowed him to omit a reference to it. Again, its ideal format is further suggested by a corresponding symmetry with the classification of the three categories of ten, eighteen and sixty-four Śaivāgamas as dualist, dualist-cum-nondualist and non-dualist, respectively. Although sustained by the *Śrīkaṇṭhī*, these distinctions are unknown in most of the āgamic corpus itself. It is even unclear whether Abhinava himself accepts it, although he does refer to the division of the Śaivāgamas into three groups (Tā 1/18). Jayaratha's extensive commentary based on the *Śrīkaṇṭhī* is our source for the ulterior identifications. He presumes, quite possibly correctly, that this was also Abhinava's source. Either way, it is hard to resist the view that geneology and canon are both equally ideal constructs made for exegetical purposes. Thus it seems that Abhinava's project to unify all of Śaivism into Anuttara Trika was not only advanced by textual exegesis but also by touching up the historical record.

31. *śivo 'smṛti madicchātaḥ sarvabhāvavpravartanam ||
ata eva śivaḥ sarvam iti yogo 'tha cetasi |*
32. '(By reflecting that) "I am Śiva" all things come forth by my will. Thus everything is Śiva. (This is) the Yoga (practiced) within the mind.' ŚDṛ 7/83cd-84ab
nartaka ātmā ŚSū 3/9
33. ŚDṛ 1/7cd-8. Jayaratha quotes this in Tāv ad 3/72 where the letter 'I' is explained to stand for the reflective awareness (*parāmarśa*) of the pure will, unsullied as yet by an object of desire. This is just one of many examples of how the concepts and terms of Somānanda's non-dualist Śaivism serve as exegetical tools.
34. ŚDṛ 1/2.
35. SpKā 3: 'Even when division prevails due to the waking and other states, it extends through that which is undivided from that (*tadabhinna*) because the perceiving subjectivity (always) remains true to its own nature.'
36. SpKā 8. Kṣemarāja quotes the same verse on *Śivasūtra* 1/13: 'the power of the will is the virgin Umā' (*icchā śaktir umā kumārī*). He thus wishes to identify this 'strength' or 'propensity' to the fundamental and supreme power of Śiva consciousness which Utpaladeva came to call 'the power of freedom' (*svātantryaśakti*) of Śiva the light of consciousness (*prakāśa*). Refraining from rising to that higher exegetical level, he is content to cite the *Netratantra* to establish its supremacy as the higher spiritual will which is the Goddess who is the consort of Śiva and embodiment of his universal power:
'She is my will' (says Śiva), 'the supreme power who born of my own nature is not separate (from Me). She is known to be like heat of fire, the rays of the sun. That power is also the cause of all the universe.'" NT 1/25cd-26
37. *kramābhāvān na yugapat tadabhāvāt kramo 'pi na ||
kramākramakathāṭītaṃ saṃvittattvaṃ sunirmalam |*
'Again, because there is no succession (of differing elements), there is also no simultaneity (between the appearance of differing elements) and as there is no (simultaneity) there is also no succession. The principle of consciousness, extremely pure, transcends all talk of succession and its absence (*kramākramakathāṭīta*).' Tā 4/179cd-180ab
38. ŚSt 13/15 quoted in Utpaladeva's commentary on ŚDṛ 1/7cd-8.
39. iP 1/5/10-14
40. See my article 'Own Being and Egoity' where I establish that this is an original formulation that should be accredited to Utpaladeva. Dyczkowski 2004: 29-49.
41. *ātmavimarśaviśrāntirūpatvaṃ prakāśasya hi svābhāvikākṛtrimaparavā"nmantravīr
ya-camatkāṛātma aham iti anuttaraḥ* PTv p. 55.
42. The word '*drāvīta*' literally means 'melted' by which Jayaratha understands both 'flowed forth' and 'fallen away', which are also possible meanings of the word. Accordingly, I have supplied both in the translation.
43. I have translated *bhāvagraha* as 'perception'. The literal meaning is 'the grasping of existence'. Perception takes places in three stages. At the beginning and the end there is a pure awareness, free of thought constructs, of 'I' consciousness which is its universal activity (*sāmānyaspaṇḍa*). In between a determinate perception, such as 'this is blue' develops, which is a thought construct.
44. Tā 4/181cd-183. Cf. MVV 1/184 ff.
45. PTv p. 112.
46. *vismayo yogabhūmikāḥ ŚSū 1/12*

47. Cf. Tā 13/158 and 247cd-253ab.
48. See Tā 13/197-198 and the commentary there where the passage from the *Niśāṭanatantra* is quoted in full. See also, Tā 26/5-6.
49. In the context of what he is saying Abhinava is referring here to one who, even though he has the knowledge that develops from himself, needs to confirm it by consulting teachers and the scriptures.
50. Tā 4/77cd-79.
51. Kiā 1/9/13cd. Abhinava is fond of referring to this set of three throughout the *Tantrāloka* in various contexts. Indeed, this seems to be a common view found in Tantras of various traditions. So we read, for example, in the *Kubjikāmata* (13/58):
 ‘If one has seen (directly and understood) all things from the teacher, the scripture and oneself then (such a one) is said to belong to the tradition (*kramika*) or else he is (himself) equal (in value) to the tradition.’
52. Referring again to this line in the *Kiraṇāgama* in Tā 13/162, Abhinava then goes on to paraphrase a long section of the *Nandiśikhatantra* (13/163-195) where it is explained at length. He then goes on to refer to the *Niśāṭanatantra* which he tells us states the same (13/197). Abhinava focuses on this passage also because in it he finds scriptural authority for the view that external initiation is not essential. An extraordinary few can achieve spontaneous realization.
 Tā 4/41cd-42ab.
53. MVV 2/267-268, 269-270 and 278-280.

References

iP	<i>īśvaraṇṣṭyabhijñāṅkārīkā</i>
iPVv	<i>īśvaraṇṣṭyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśinī</i>
Kiā	<i>Kiraṇāgama</i>
Tā	<i>Tantrāloka</i>
Tāv	<i>Tantrālokaṅgaveka</i>
NT	<i>Netratantra</i>
PT	<i>Parātrīśīkā</i>
PTv	<i>Parātrīśīkāṅgavaraṇa</i>
MVV	<i>Mālinīvijayavārtika</i>
VB	<i>Vijñānabhairava</i>
ŚDṛ	<i>Śivadṛṣṭi</i>
ŚSū	<i>Śivasūtra</i>
ŚSūvi	<i>Śivasūtravimarśinī</i>
ŚSt	<i>Śivastotrāvali</i>
SYM	<i>Siddhayogeśvarīmata</i>
SpKā	<i>Spandakārīkā</i>

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