

Jewel in the Crown— Archetypes of Shakti in Kashmir Shaivism

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Shaivite traditions and emblems of Indus Valley and Mohenjo Daro can be seen as testimonials that point towards *Kasmira/Kashmir* as the ancient, spiritual and intellectual epicenter of the entire Northern belt of the Himalayan ranges, moving beyond the boundaries imposed later, till the Hindukush into Nepal, Tibet and China. Trans-Himalayan crossings and inter-connections can be traced through aesthetic, historical and indigenous links of the ancient *Pashupatas* and *Kapalikas* traditions. Research also uncovers evidence to show the presence of these prehistoric tantric cults based in the mother goddess archetypes, which spread from India covering almost whole of Asia. In Nepal, Pashupati Nath or Siva and Sri as Shakti or the Universal feminine energy are worshipped by the indigenous people. Clay Figurines and Seals of the Terracotta Fertility Goddess found in the excavations of the Indus Valley Civilization, (3500-2500 BCE) also show vital cultural inter-connections of a primordial Shakti cult in the Swat region of the pre-colonized Indic sub-continent.

Semiotics of art and culture through daily rituals of indigenous living traditions also reflect the rich tantric, metaphorical imagery and symbolism throughout, spreading across the entire Himalayan Belt. The mystical concepts expressing the inner divinity through outer expressions in early Indo-Tantric indigenous art thus formed the yogic perception or unified transfusions in Himalayan art.

Initially, we select elements of experience that are specially potent and powerful. In the process, certain archetypal elements are isolated. Archetypal elements of experience are those that have a very deep-seated mode of being within both an individual consciousness and our collective consciousness.¹ The archetypes of mystical rituals based in feminine worship and expressions of Indo-Tantric indigenous art formed the substratum

of the Kashmiri yogic perception. This Himalayan spiritual ethos has been by and large considered archaic or not worthy of proper documentation. For example the *Srividya*, *Kamakalahasya shastras* and *mandalas* of the esoteric rituals of mother worship, which were the earliest among this lineage, developed later into more sophisticated visualizations of the Goddess archetype.

The traditions of *Siva-Sakti* worship in Kashmir developed a hybrid and multifarious language through rituals, which got obscured and nearly obliterated by the iconoclastic Moslem invasions and the holocaust of the Hindu *Pandits* who were the main custodians of this treasure. To retrace some key features of Kashmir *Darshan* may thus create an awareness of its renaissance and profound impact on the entire development of the Himalayan civilizational identity through the Jewel of *Trika*.

The treatises and revelations made by the great sages and visionary exponents of Kashmir *Trika Shaivism*, especially Guru/Acharya Abhinavaupta, are an invaluable, historical, cultural and ever — green resource for both Western and Indian scholars working in the field of Tantric philosophy, literature, spirituality, science and last but not the least — visual and non-visual aesthetics. Historians, largely male, tend to stress the common figurative or rather the Western perception as depictions of the feminine. *Trika* philosophy or the triadic exegesis was developed by the great Kashmiri sage and genius Abhinavagupta who reintroduced the feminine repertoire and took it to the highest level through the concept of Kali/Krama or the obscured system of Yogini Kulas ie. Goddess centric schools of Shakta tradition within the expansive fold of the Kashmir Shaivism in his Magnum Opus *Tantraloka* or *Light of the Tantras*.² Abhinavagupta, the great Guru of Kashmir Shaivism puts aesthetic experience at the level of Sakti, the Great feminine principle of universal energy as the nature of consciousness or capacity of awareness of the self. He defines aesthetics as the 'Science and Philosophy

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of Fine art and Fine art is the art which represents the Absolute in Sensuous garb.³

The feminine primordial power has always been revered and worshipped through fascinating metaphorical references and mystical sounds or *seed mantras* archetypal expressions, geometric visualizations taking on multifaceted adaptations as cosmic *mandalas* as well as geographic and hybrid iconographies that evolved over centuries. *Nilamata Purana* describes 'Kasmira' with the life-giving river as the land of *Uma*, the Mother Goddess manifesting as the sacred geography in the veneration of sacred trees, rocks, springs as the primal elements of worship. The rivers i.e., *Vitasta* or *Jhelum*, the sacred spring as *Sharada Devi*, the pond at *TulMul* — representing *Ragnya Devi* presently known as *Kheer Bhawani*, mountain of *Hari Parbat* as *Parvati* consort of *Shiva*, *Sharika Devi*. These are all places of pilgrimage and worship even today. The Indic sub-continent had always been viewed as sacred geography, in the form of a *SriYantra/Mandala* with *Srinagar* as the spiritual centre, the capital of *Kashmir* named after of the Goddess seated in the *Sri-chakra* or the geometric diagram with the symbolic archetypal central red dot or *Bindu* as the Highest most sublime form of *Para Devi* representing Cosmic power. This Tantric iconography is an integral part of the process of liberation and enlightenment for the great sages and seekers since thousands of years.

To apply memory, artistic imagination for deciphering and decoding symbols, is important for gaining access to layers of spiritual, cultural and bio-genetic local histories that convey emotions, ideas and narratives through performance, gesture, symbols and ritual. Using indigenous frames of reference, archetypal analogies and semiotics, help us to move beyond falsely imposed prescriptions of extremist and colonized identities. As a host to many of the oldest civilizations, the expansive Indian sub-continent was the fertile land which birthed a variety of indigenous and matriarchal communities, arts, culture and tantric philosophy, that thrived and developed their own uniqueness and hybrid idioms while living together over several millennia. *Bhattacharya*⁴ defines 'Etymological evidence of the word *Tantra*, found in ancient and other texts, point towards a non-religious connotation, meaning an act –process, a method of doing. Some scientific treatises were also called *Tantras*. In spite of all sorts of Brahmanical interpolations, grafting and mishandling, *Tantra* clearly rejects the caste system and patriarchy and all external formalities in regard to spiritual quest.'

The essential links to the arts, femininity, cosmology, science and humanism are embedded in the Tantric way of life. In *Tantra*, literally meaning extension or expansion, reality is viewed as self-reflective consciousness

manifesting the world as its play or sport; limitations or constraints of a human being and his situation are self-willed; he is the master of his own destiny; freedom of knowledge and action is his nature and essence; there is no dichotomy between body and mind; the self within and the objective world outside can interact as one whole; social and religious distinctions of castes, creeds, creeds and sex, sacred and profane are imperfections which should be transcended in recognizing the essential unity and divinity of the self and the not-self, the subject and object, matter and spirit; the dynamism of reality comprehends and includes everything within, evolution and revolution, order and chaos; it is an inclusive consciousness as there is nothing beyond it and outside it.⁵ This view of reality admitted into an integral whole the religion, philosophy and culture of the high and low. *Tantra* became a meeting point of, and bridge of understanding between, warring philosophical and religious opinions of Vedism, Puranism, Buddhism, Jainism and various sects and sub-sects.⁶ Tantric imagery is based on psychological symbolism in order to articulate Tantric philosophy. It functions as a skillful means by which the Tantric adept is assisted in his appropriation and realization of the divine vision. Thus, Tantric iconography is an integral part of the process of liberation and enlightenment. Tantric artists adopted diverse and hybrid techniques while being completely absorbed in *Sadhana* or spiritual practice.

The Indic Tantric or *Shakta* visualizations had a profound influence upon the early development of Tibetan Buddhist art, notably those in Gandhara, Kashmir and Bengal. The styles of Gandhara and Kashmir were distinguished by Hellenistic motifs such as the use of elaborate floral and other motifs for filling up empty spaces in murals and frescos, which found ready acceptance in the school west of Tibet. Concrete evidence of the movement of these stylistic elements from Kashmir to Tibet is provided by the murals at *Alchi* in *Ladakh*, which are said to have been executed by artists who accompanied the translator *Rin-chen-bzan-po* on his return to Tibet from *Kashmir*.⁷

Founded by medieval Indian *mahāsiddhas*, *Vajrayāna*, *Mantrayāna*, *Ghuyamantra*, *Tantrayāna*, are terms referring to the various esoteric Buddhist traditions associated with *Tantra* and 'Secret Mantra,' which developed in medieval India and spread to Tibet, East Asia, Mongolia and other Himalayan states. Between the eighth and twelfth centuries the transmission of the tantric fusion of *Vajrayana* Buddhism flowed from India into Western Tibet through the Vale of *Kashmir*, and into Southern Tibet through the *Kathmandu Valley*. And from the Valley's three royal cities of *Kathmandu*, *Patan* and *Bhaktapur* respectively came the finest *Newar* painters, statue-makers and wood-carvers, whose enduring influence on Tibetan art was profound. *Newars* were the direct inheritors of

the esoteric tantric lineage of the late Pala Dynasties of Eastern India, which were ruthlessly destroyed at the end of the twelfth century by the iconoclastic armies of Islam. An example of this style can be seen in the beautiful Shiva Seated with Parvati, as the divine couple known as *Umamaheshvara* from the Thakuri period of the eleventh century.⁸

Vedic knowledge, conflicting Indic streams of Tantra, Buddhism and Shakta rituals were harmonized and reached their highest pinnacle through the ever-scintillating Jewel of Anuttara Kula Trika philosophy or the triadic exegesis developed by the great Kashmiri sage and genius Abhinavagupta. The Kula system of Sakti worship within Shaivism was originally introduced in Kashmir in the beginning of the fifth century C.E by Srimacchandana. As time passed this teaching began to fade away. Then, in the beginning of the ninth century it was reintroduced in Kashmir by the great sage Sumatanatha. The disciple of Sumatanatha was Somanatha, and his disciple was Sambhunatha. Abhinavagupta was the disciple of Sambhunatha.⁹The Sanskrit word *Kula* means 'totality.' Kaulism or the Kula system, one of the earliest traditions also became known as the Krama tradition that flourished between the VII and X AD. The Krama is traced to Oddiyana in the valley of Swat, three hundred kilometers north-west of Kashmir, and its main scriptural authority is the *Devayajamalatantra*.¹⁰

In Kaliyuga, the primordial *agamic* Tantras passed orally through the Kashmiri or the entire upper Himalayan belt called the *Uttarayana*/Northern transmission got lost. However, it was revived through Srikanthanatha as the manifestation of *Bhairava* or *Siva* to *Durvasa Rishi* at Mount Kailash. At the beginning of Satya Yuga, Lord Siva appeared in the form of *Svachchandana*, with five heads and eighteen arms. His five heads came into manifestation through his five great energies — *Citsakti* — Supreme Power of consciousness, *Ananda Sakti*- Power of Bliss, *Ichhasakti* — Power of Will, *Jnanasakti* — Power of knowledge, and *Kriya sakti*- Power of action. These five Energies, emitting from the five mouths of Siva, were known as *isana*, *tatparusa*, *aghora*, *vamadeva* and *sadyojata*. All five mouths had equal power, illuminating in a simultaneous flow of emission called the *Bhairava tantras*. These form the base of Kashmir Shaivism and are sixty four in number. This knowledge got transmitted from him to his *manasputri* or mind born daughter called *Ardhatryambika* and *manasputra* son *Tryambaknatha*. These sages were not born through sexual contact. They were mind born and were Siddhas or immortal spiritual beings.¹¹

Ardhatryambika heads the lineage of Yoginis called *adhyustapitha* or the three and a half tradition

encompassing what is termed as the Kula tradition. Kaulism, the meditative tradition of Yogini worship as, *Shakti/female Energy*, earth- mother/*Prakriti*, *Para Devi*/supreme Goddess is at the heart of Tantras. High levels of meditation were attained, that include insights into the mysteries and secrets methods of Goddess contemplation. To understand the significance of the female worship and symbolism in Kashmir Darshan we might perceive the aspect of the *Yoginikula*¹²tradition as a centrifugal idea in both ritual art making as well as the underlying principle governing the philosophy and culture through historical transitions, that dominated most of the pre colonized Indian sub-continent.

Because of its original association with simpler people, popular cults and rituals became an integral part of the Tantric way of life. This brought the cult of the Mother Goddess and the fertility rites associated with its original conception, into close relationship with Tantra. The magical rites performed to obtain greater fertility of land, which really underlay elaborate Tantric rituals, were not the creations of fancy or the fruits of leisure. Rather they served as a guide to action, as an illusory technique complementary to the deficiencies of real techniques. By this illusory technique, which consisted of the miming of an incident, or symbolical representation of a coveted object, primitive man thought he could secure what he desired. This was the basis not only of magico-religious art, but also of ancient drama, thematic songs and symbolism of words, and so on — all that had characterized the earlier ingredients of Tantra.¹³

The Goddess-honoring indigenous traditions of *Sakti* worship in Kashmir developed a hybrid and multifarious language that is both semiotic and ritual based. It is in this denotative context and intellectuality, that the two diametrically opposite dualities of perception unify and flow into an abundant and rich metamorphoses i.e., that of nature and spirit, metaphysical and physical. The indigenous artist is never superior to Nature, the divine mother earth as *Prakriti* is the supreme Force.¹⁴Woman as connected to Nature, as a source of Fertility and Veneration, an inherent subject matter and theme in the Kula Tradition, thus formed the substratum of Tantra. Though in modern times Tantra has become male-dominated, there is reason to believe that it once belonged to females. As explained by Bhattacharya¹⁵ in his section on the primitive substratum of Tantra, 'According to the *Kulanavatantra*, every woman is born in the *Kula* or the great lineage of the Great Mother and that is why they should be treated with utmost consideration. In practice it is the exclusive cult of Sakti (or the Kula Kundalini) as the female principle with the rituals of the five M's, which include the use of *madya* (wine), *mamsa* (flesh), *matsa* (fish), *mudra* (cereals) and *maithuna* (sexual union). This is

however a secret worship to be performed only by advanced practitioners or Kauls of the Kula school which originated in the province of Kashmir in Northern India, also known as Kaulism.

The Kaula Kali Cult, i.e., the Northern Transmission *Uttarayan* comprised three Kaula variants of the Kali cult: the Mata, the Krama and the Cult of *Guhyakali*, of which the most significant for T.A 29 is the Krama. It is important to note that the Kula and Krama are the same according to scholars. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Krama tradition is also called Kālīkula or Kramakula in the agrarian sources referred to by numerous Kashmiri authors. Thus, although the Krama tradition appears as an independent school (with many subdivisions in its scope), it cannot be distinguished from the Kaula tradition, but is in fact one of its ramifications.¹⁶ *Yoginikula* or the Kula tradition has its roots in the primordial tantric *Shakta* traditions or goddess worship cults around the beginning of the sixth century, which predates the later more sophisticated developments of the Kashmir Shaivism. These were esoteric and passed down through Yogini kulas or the primordial lineage of enlightened female masters. According to the sage Niskriyānanda, Kramastotra, manifested in the world, the nectar Kula that had once been uttered by a *yoginī*, thus revealing the Mahākālīkrama tradition.¹⁷

The *kula* also refers to the family or grouping of *yoginis*, as the divine Mothers. It is taken to mean the corporeal body, the totality of things so that by entering into a family, a *kula*, the worshipper enters into the totality of cosmic powers, the *kula*. The Kula or totality of manifestation appears in three forms, viz, gross as *Apara/sthula*, subtle as *para-para/suksma* and the highest sublime is the *para*. In practice it is the exclusive cult of *Kaulini Sakti* or the *Kula Kundalini*, the Supreme feminine energy within the human body, as the Universal life force which lies in a dormant state in a three and half times coiled form at the base of the spine or the lowest chakra called *muladhara*. This *Kundalini* energy is subsequently activated by the Grace of an enlightened master. The seeker, in his own body, is the embodiment of the 'Mothers' and of the whole of reality. By piercing all the circles or *cakras* of his body, he becomes a master of the totality and attains the Absolute or Bhairava state, identified with the true self of the worshipper, his 'blissful inner consciousness,' of which the Mothers are projections.

In India, there is evidence to show that women participated in tantric practice alongside men and were also teachers, adepts and authors of tantric texts, furthermore,¹⁸ Alexis Sanderson notes that the Vajrayāna Yogini Tantras draw extensively from the material also present in *Shaiva Bhairava Tantras* classified as *Vidyapitha*. Sanderson's comparison of them shows similarity in

'ritual procedures, style of observance, deities, mantras, mandalas, ritual dress, Kapalika accoutrements like skull bowls, specialized terminology, secret gestures, and secret jargons. There is even direct borrowing of passages from Shaiva texts.'¹⁹

Feminine deities and forces are also increasingly prominent in Vajrayāna transmission of tantric deities. In the Yogini tantras in particular, women and female yoginis are given high status as the embodiment of female deities such as the wild and fierce *Vajrayogini*. The *Candamaharosana Tantra* (viii:29–30) states:

Women are heaven, women are the teaching (dharma)
Women indeed are the highest austerity (tapas)
Women are the Buddha, women are the Sangha
*Women are the Perfection of Wisdom.*²⁰

The central deity of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, which according to scholars like Gray and Alexis Sanderson appropriated numerous elements from non-dual. *Mahakala* represents his triumph over self. Vajrayana deities hold a bell or sword of wisdom with which they cut through the web of Maya or ignorance and delusion and as metaphors for the unity of skilful means and wisdom, appearance and emptiness/liberation -*samsara* and *nirvana*.²¹

Vajrayana adopted deities such as *Bhairava*, known as *Yamantaka* in Tibetan Buddhism. In Vajrayana iconography we also find deities drinking from skull cups filled with blood, which represents afflictions. By drinking this blood, the deities symbolically show their ability to assimilate and neutralize afflictions. Again, we find the Vajrayana deity *Mahakala* standing on a corpse. The corpse represents self, ego, and substance.

Tantrism shows a preference for a dynamic Feminine concept of Cosmic Unity, which implies a harmonization of all differentiations and paradoxes. After the state of great dissolution, Kali alone remains, as *Avyukta Prakriti*, un-manifested nature in a state of potential power, the supreme *sakti*, the Eternal.²² The Krama tradition has assumed, over time, a significant role among traditions of Tantric origin, both for the *śaivas* groups and for the *śāktas* groups. With their secret rituals (*rahasya-vidhy*) directed to the cult of femininity in the figure of the Goddess Kālī, they inaugurated an era of self-knowledge and spiritual transcendence based on the feminine spirituality against the Absolute. The Krama system has a triple meaning: first, it is a Tantric system; second, it is a monistic *śaiva* system; Third, it marks the emergence of the *śākta* tendency in *śaiva* philosophy. This system, therefore, developed within a complex synthetic concept that brought together *śaiva* philosophy, *śākta* esoterism and a synoptic Tantric look of life. The Krama tradition is thus not only a system of pure philosophy revealed in

an epistemic and ontological debate, but also an esoteric discipline of spirituality which constitutes an important fraction of the extensive tantric culture.²³

*I am Kali, the primal Creative Force!*²⁴

The glow of Kālasaṅkarṣiṇi is like a cloud full of water. She roams into the crematorium. She is sitting on the dead body on the pyre of a burning fire. Her open hair extends to the heel and that hair is as beautiful as a burning fire. She has three red eyes. She has extremely scary human skeleton as her ornaments on her body.²⁵

In Krama system, *Mahakali* is equated with the manifestation of the world of vibration [*spandaḥ*] in the heart of consciousness and bliss, realized when a meditator dissolves in the earth leaving the ego through the contemplation that the agent, act and object of knowledge are cognition in essence; visualized as an amazing black goddess, surrounded by a halo of fire of her own radiance, adorned with skulls and corpses of deities, devouring the tattva lords, dancing wildly at the time of universal annihilation; together with devotees intoxicated on wine in skull bowls, with sacrificial animals drinking the blood of the victims. Around her are twelve Kali, their forms identical. The inner power of the *mandala*, the ultimate initiation in *Trika*, is when the most significant group of deities of Krama, Kālasaṅkarṣiṇi are reflected in the twelve Kālīs — nameless as all-pervading, all-consuming non-duality in a dynamic cycle: object, act and agent of knowledge.²⁶

Abhinavagupta explains — In this respect, the intense nature of the Lord as consciousness in the Art of its fullness and the power of the lord is nothing more than the state of fullness. This power is called by the sacred texts by different names in the order of the meaning of its effects, such as- *kula* — group, efficacy — *samarthyā*, wave — *urmi*, heart — *hrdya*, essence — *sara*, vibration — *spanda*, magical power — *vibhuti*, queen of three — *trisika*, *Kali karsani* — enchantress, passionate one — *chandi*, voice — *vani*, enjoyment — *bhoga*, sight — *drk*, eternal — *nitya*.

This *sakta* tradition within the fold of Krama Shaivism is known as Kalinaya. It was originated by Sivanandanatha, who passed it to his three female disciples named Keyuravati, Kalyanika and Madanika. Information on the origin and spread of Kalinayashas been provided by Jayaratha in his commentary on *Tantraloka* (III.192-203). He bases his info on *Kramakeli* by *Abhinavagupta* and quotes *Tantraloka* (Chapter V.192-93). Passages in *Kasmira-apabhramsa*, quoted by *Abhinavagupta* in his texts of the great *Tantrasara* and *Paratrisikavivarna*, may have been drawn from the sayings or works of the three female preceptors. These three highly respected *yoginis* may have preferred to teach in the common language, as did

Lalleshwari, the great poetess saint of Kashmir in the fourteenth century.

The term Kalinaya is understood as a doctrine, and Kali in Kashmir Shaivism is a name given to the power of the Absolute God. This power is called Kali because it conducts *Kalana* is the manifestation of the divine activities of God (*kalana* is different from *kalpana* which is imagination), while *kalana* is a kind of transmutation brought about by the divine essence of God.²⁷ It is the outward manifestation of an inwardly existing phenomenon. Each of these aspects of the dynamism of the Twelve Kālīs is to be contemplated in relation to the activities of creation, preservation and absorption. This way the number increase to Twelve constituting the *sakti cakra* or the wheel of divine powers. (*Tantrasara* 28) These kalis, personified as Goddesses, have been eulogized in *Siddhanathas Kramastrotra*

In *Tantrāloka*, the deity chosen to meditate on is represented by the Goddess *Kālasaṅkarṣiṇi*. This is the same goddess *Kālasaṅkarṣiṇi* in her highest state, which *Abhinavagupta* equates further to the syllable goddess of *Trika*, 'the *Mālinī*,' She is the fourth *Paratita* beyond the triad, as the supreme Goddess of scintillating Point of Light or *Bindu*. This point has the nature of absolute Consciousness *Parā-saṃvit*, as the sublime unification represented by the non-dual nature of Light *prakāśa* or Siva and Self-reflective consciousness or Sakti as *vimarśa*.

Bhagwān Abhinava prays in *Kramastrotra* to Goddess *Paramarka-Kālī* (as *Bhargaśikha*):

*I bow to the infinite Paramarka-Kali, which in its pacified flame contains 12 suns, completely dissolved. It is in Her that the ego ahamkara successfully dissolves its own light and pacifies, just as a flame is pacified in a quenching fire.*²⁸

Tracing the scriptures we have the following names: Kālī of Creation (*Śṛṣṭikālī*), Kālī of Persistence (*Sthitikālī*), Kālī of Destruction (*Samhāarakālī*), Kālī of Passion (*Raktakālī*), Kālī Benevolence (*Sukālī*), Kālī of Control (*Yamakālī*), Kālī of the Death (*Mṛtyukālī*), Kālī Auspicious (*Bhadrakālī*), Kālī of the Supreme Sun (*Mahāmārtaṇḍakālī*), Terrible Kālī (*Rudrakālī*) and Great Kālī (*mahākālī*). *Kumārī* is worshiped in the center of the circle of these twelve powers.²⁹

In Kashmiri Shaivism, practitioners imagine themselves to be the master of the wheel of divine powers. They visualize all powers in their stages of phenomenal existentialities, as the trinity of subject, object and the means of knowing — *pramatir*, *prameya* and *pramana*. A complex and esoteric worship of Kali in many forms eventually merges into One supramental Non-dual reality. Thus, Krama practice of kalinaya is an integral part of the *Saktaupaya* or the Feminine method of realization and inner *kaula* ritual of *Trika* system.³⁰

In the ŚrīKālīkākrama School, groups of female deities are worshiped, whose activity unfolds in cyclical phases (krama) and whose impulse simultaneously provides life of the cosmos with the vital activity of consciousness. These phases are: descent (*sr̥ṣṭi*), maintenance (*sthiti*), absorption (*saṃhāra*) and inexpressible (*anākhyā*), also called the Kali phase (*kālī-krama*), the phase where that, which formed the previous phases, disappears in the pure omnipresent consciousness. To this is added the fifth phase, completely transcendental, the phase of pure Light (*bhāsa-krama*). The Krama cult included the worship of sixty-four *yoginīs*. What makes it all the more interesting is the idea of the cosmic cycle that is inherent in all Shaiva Hinduism presented in the Himalayan region, because this cycle is carried out not by the main deity, but by Kali groups, and that it appears as both human and cosmic as the *Yogini Kula*.

Goddess honoring indigenous traditions of Sakti worship in Kashmir thus developed a hybrid and multifarious language that is both semiotic and ritual based. The indigenous artist as an accomplished yogi, is forever humble and never superior to the Divine Mother Nature or *Prakriti* as the Dynamic Force. It is in this denotative context and intellectuality that the two diametrically opposite dualities of Shiva and Shakti—male and female unify and flow into an abundant and rich metamorphoses i.e. that of nature and spirit, the metaphysical and the physical.

The Great Mantra consisting of sixty-four wombs (*yoni*) of Bhairava, rises and dissolves in sacrifice. In the center of the floor of the Sun (*bhānavīkuṇḍa*) is the Wheel of Dissolution which is its true nature (*svasvabhāva*). Destroying both Being and Not-Being, he is the Fire of Consciousness personified as the goddess *Kulakṛṣodarī*. All this is the Supreme Brahman in his true nature (*svasvabhāva*).³¹ By being initiated into a Mother, the yogic practitioner enters into one or other level of his own body and becomes master of the powers identified with it. This feminine principle as the sacred mother in her universality and form, is worshipped and extolled through ritual representations, intrinsic to the Shaiva exegesis. The Non-dual principle of Divine Union/yoga of the Shiva-Shakti *mahamelapa* is at the very Heart of *Trika Darshan* of Kashmir. Arthur Avalon (1863) elucidates this concept through the texts of *Kulanavatantra*:

Why creation takes place cannot be explained in the ultimate sense. It is the play (*Līla*) of the Mother.... In *Kulachudamani Nigama*, Bhairavi (Goddess) addressing Bhairava (God) says, 'By the union of Shiva and Shakti, creation comes. As all in the Universe is both Shiva and Shakti (*Shivashaktimaya*), therefore, oh! *Maheshwara!* thou art in every place and I am in every place. Though art in all and I am in all.' The creative World thus saw Its seed in its own womb.

Jewel in the Crown

*The eternal dance of Union-
In the Heart Seed of Love's outpouring... Sauh
Conjoined in Siva – as the primal Bindu... You are Primary
Vibration
Visarga as Ananda Sakti!
The Vimarsha of Pure Light- As Gyana shakti
Dancing in all of manifestation- as Kriya Sakti,
The Supreme Energy—Chiti!
You are Born of Light
You are the Seed of Knowledge. Action, Creation
You are the Primordial Truth
You are the Red One
You are my Very Self, my soul,
You, become my body... Play hide and seek as Maya!
Dip me in the ocean of human existence,
Entice me through your myriad forms!
Your wondrous beauty in a kaleidoscope of magical sounds and
colors...
Mesmerizing in anhatta's dhvani of Nada, Conch shells,
Tinkling bells, Thunderous claps ...
I pray to you mother, O Kula Kundalini
You are the shimmering jewel in the Crown
Pulsating in the thousand-petalled lotus -
In the Very Heart of Siva!³²*

Notes

1. ©Dissertation Field notes, Teachers College, Anita Ghei Malhotra, independent researcher, 2007
2. ©Dissertation Fieldnotes, Teachers College, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2007
3. Aesthetical Relation with a Work of Art.' Chapt 4 Jaidev Singh, Abhinavagupta.
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8. Nepal (Kathmandu Valley) Copper alloy Samuel Eilenberg Collection, Ex Coll.: Columbia University, Purchase, Rogers Fund, 1987, Accession Number: 1987.218.1 <https://www.tibetanart.com/NewarArt.asp>
9. The Secret Supreme, P.98 Joo
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32. Copyrights, Author, Anita Ghei Malhotra, 2007.