The Notion of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism

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अभिनवरूपा शक्तिस्तद्गुप्तो यो महेश्वरो देवः।

तदुभययामलरूपमभिनवगुप्तं शिवं वन्दे।। (भ.गी.सं.)

अनर्गलस्वात्ममये महेशे तिष्ठन्ति यस्मिन् विभुशक्तयस्ताः।

तं शक्तिमन्तं प्रणमामि देवं मन्थानसंज्ञं जगदेकसारम्।। (क्र.स्तो.)

For the notion of Śakti the period around early thirtees seems to be crucial with the publication of his *Śakti or Divine Power* in 1934. S.K. Das[1] was perhaps the first modern scholar to draw the attention of Indian academy to the inspirational role the Vedic literature played in shaping the notion of Śakti as a definitional concept of the Kashmir Śaivism. More or less synchronously, K.C. Pandey[2] pointed out to the inadequacy of hitherto explanations of Rasa-experience and looked upon the Śakti category as offering a coherent metaphysical rationalization of the aesthetic experience on an entirely different note. The celebrated Hindi poet Prasad[3] in his great epic *kāmāyanī* and insightful essays visualized the underlying joy and beauty on the one hand and a resolute potent will to assert identity on the other as characterizing the entire Indian speculation and creativity-- *ānandavāda* and *ātmavāda* or *pauruṣavāda*– both rooted in the seminal structure of value so forcefully articulated in the notion of Śakti by the Kashmir Śaivists.

Towards 1963, Potter[4] came up with his famous paradigm of *Freedom from* and *Freedom to* offering an entirely new perspective to our understanding of the notion of

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[1] *Śakti or Divine Power (A Historical Study Based on Original Sanskrit Texts),* by Sudhendu Kumar Das. Das carried his researches during 1923-25 at the School of Oriental Studies, London under L.D. Barnett whose English translation of the *Paramārthasāra* appeared in 1910.

[2] *Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study* and *Comparative Aesthetics,* Vol. 1: *Indian.* Pandey's studies were initially intended to focus primarily on Abhinavagupta as an aesthetician, the philosophical studies being essentially preparatory. Later on, other aspects became equally important.

[3] In fact Jai Shanker Prasad's whole literature is surcharged with this insight. Of all his works, the *Kāmāyani* is a poetic reconstruction of the philosophical ethos of Kashmir Śaivism. His brief but thoughtful essays are published under the title *Kāvya aura Kalā tathā Anya Nibandha,* first published in 1933.

[4] *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* by Karl H. Potter. Potter intended this paradigm to be constructive and reconstructive both. The Western philosophy which elevates rationality at the expense of power is distinguished from the Indian that puts power over rational morality. In Potter's

power but it suffered from an inherent weakness as it failed to take the tantric systems, specially Kashmir Śaivism, into account. However Potter's formulation was complemented from an unsuspected quarter when Sanderson[5] clearly gave a bolder orientation to the whole problematic by putting forward *purity* and *power* as constituting the fundamental structure of values that was responsible for the duality of poles represented by the orthodox and heterodox streams of thought seeking depersonalized purity and unhindered omnipotence respectively. This emerged as a rationalization of the orthodox's temperamental disdain for the sensual spontaeinity and immunity from emotional involvement leading to the regime of strict self-control. The heterodox internalized even the impure and ugly boasting maximum incluvistic tendency as a natural and instantaneous outflow of the self's own creativity. Consequently in behaviorical dialectics the former found the latter as impure and morally transgressive, the latter saw the former as impotent and escapist. Interestingly this dialectical value structure was already foreshadowed long before by Gopinath Kaviraj, albeit on a metaphysical plane, when he characterized the tantric culture as all-encompassing and inclusivistic in contrast to the Vedic/non-Tantric as exclusivistic.[6]

These developments prompt us to look into our current understanding more closely and undertake a fresh appraisal of the concept.

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In the substantive classical tradition of Indian philosophies one comes across two types of approaches. One approach, which is categorial in spirit, dilates upon Śakti as constituting a category of being. Here it is only the Prabhākara School of

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understanding Truth is that recognition of which leads to freedom. *Freedom from* relates to bondage (in the nature of transmigration) caused by attachment and *freedom to* reflects the ability to master freedom, by renouncing fruits, from attachment. Though innovative, this paradigm failed to bring out the actual potential of the *freedom to* because in the ultimate analysis it remained passive, consisting as it did in the renunciation (of fruits). The paradigm was revolutionary in the sense that it addressed, in principle and in concept, the Kashmir Śaivist's formulation of freedom in terms of power, Śakti.

[5] "Purity and power among the Brahmans of Kashmir", Alexis Sanderson. The article was written from socio-anthropological perspective rejecting Mauss' views on the category of person, targeting the tantric pandits of Kashmir.

[6] "Kāśmīrīya Śaiva Darśana Kī Kucha Viśeṣatāyeṅ", in *Kalyāṇa: Śivāṅka,* and his Presidential address , captioned *Tantrika Saṁskṛti* on 8th March, 1965 to the *Tantra Sammelana,* Sanskrit University, Varanasi.

Mīmāṁsā which views Śakti as an independent category. Other systems either subsume it under one of their accepted categories or reject it altogether. One might ignore this line of approach. But the other approach, which does not address the issue directly, may be gleaned from the respective cosmological world-views and it is this aspect that concerns us significantly. Notwithstanding their diametrically divergent positions, Sāṁkhya, Nyāya, Vedānta, Buddhism and Mīmāṁsā, show striking commonality in treating reality as falling outside the domain of Self. In Sāṁkhya-Yoga the reality-world (Prakṛti) is external to the Self (Puruṣa). In Nyāya-Vaśesika the self is a part reality in the sense that is one of the reals/categories and is dependent upon other reals, external to it, for its socalled functioning. In Vedānta the outer world is a projection. The Buddhists are even more radical. The external world is not only external to the self, the self itself is a logical construct. In theistic Vedānta, even in those systems which swear by some kind of non-dualism, the world logically and in some cases even the individual self remains alien to the Divine Self despite the absolute control exercised by the latter. In Mīmāṁsā we do come across such self as may be called subject or agent of sacrificial causality in its own right internalizing the ritual world, but as Sanderson rightly notes, its agentiality remains depersonalized and external being subjected to and manipulated by the authority of the Vedic injunctions.[7]

As against this, it is only in the pre-classical phase that we have a cosmological perspective of Śakti but that is sporadic, disorganized and happens to be in the evolutionary phase. In classical systems, as we noticed above, whatever serious discussion we meet with on the issue relates to the linguistic aspect to the exclusion of the cognitive, ontological and soteriological aspects. Even in this linguistic domain, the school of grammar does stand out alone unlike other linguistic theoreticians in viewing reality or world of discourse internal to the self, external reality being the self-differentiation of the self, technically the Word-Self. Śakti is projected as the sole instrument that brings about both differentiation of the self as well as internalization of the differentiated reality. This is perhaps the reason as to

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[7] Op. cit.

why the school of grammer constitutes one of the most formative influences on the Kashmir Śaivist formulation of Śakti.[8]

In a visible contrast, thus, to the classical Indian philosophies, the tantric systems as a rule nurture the concept of Śakti as a signature characteristic. Even within the tantric fold the Kashmir Śaivists betrary an uncompromising zeal in embracing Śakti as determining their identity. Abhinavagupta on three different occasions makes unequivocal statements to this effect. In the first[9], elaborating Utpala's usage of *viśeṣadarśaneṣu*, "(among) special systems," he identifies them as those which subscribe to the predominance of Śākta non-dualism, where the adjective *viśeṣa*, "special", denotes Śakti as a defining feature demarcating it from the *sāmānyadarśaneṣu*, "(among) general philosophies", which profess pure consciousness as constituting the transcendental reality. In the second,[10] he singles out Śakti– the source of supreme bliss– as exclusively Śaivist phenomenon emphatically rejecting any Sāṁkhya or Vedāntic connection thereof. In the third[11], he is even prepared to barter his absolutism with the Vedāntins, provided the latter is ready to transform its *avidyā* into Māyā-"Śakti" of the Lord.

Śakti or power, as a result, emerges as a distinctive mark of the tantric vision of reality and the tantric world-view having been conceptualized as a single tool to account for the total range of our experiences, cognitions, modes of being and spiritual/soteriological realizations. The unfolding and enfolding of power is the ultimate abstraction to which everything could be reduced. Even on a peripheral analysis, such a perception of Śakti could be seen as etymologically resounding the semantic nuances of the word tantra. Derived from the root *tan* which conveys both

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[8] The tantras, in general, and Kashmir Śaivism in particular, address all these concerns in their treatment of Śakti. Even the 'linguistic' context is enlarged to the 'semantic' extent affording in fact a novel exegetical orientation to and appropriation of the Mimāṁsā concepts of *niyoga, bhāvanā* and *vidhi.* This phenomenon is most forcefully conspicuous in inner convergence that runs through conceptualization of meaning as a self-transcending self-transfiguration of word, whether it be by way of *dhvani* (suggestion) or objective/cosmogonic self-differentiation.

[9] विशेषदर्शनेषु इति शाक्ताद्वैतप्रधानेषु, विशेषः शक्तिलक्षणः आत्मनो दर्श्यते।... शुद्धचैतन्यमिति सामान्यदर्शनेषु सर्वोत्तीर्णैकतद्रूपवेदकेषु। –IPVV, III, p. 331.

[10] ''विसर्गशक्तिः षोडशी कला'' इत्येषा हि न सांख्येया नापि वैदान्तिकी दृक् अपितु शैवी एव, विसर्गशक्तिरेव च पारमेश्वरी परमानन्दभूमिबीजम्। – PTV, p. 181.

[11] अस्मिन्स्तु सति..... ब्रह्मवादे अविद्यां मायाशक्तीकृत्य...सिध्यति एष जनः। –IPVV, III, p. 405

expansion as well as contraction, the word *tantra* finds its parallel in Śakti which too, actualizes both of these meanings.

The monolithic formulation of the Śakti notion was necessitated by the Śaivists' search for an integrated response to the conflicting and diverse pressures they were put to. Historically the Kashmir Śaivists, the proponents of the Pratyabhijñā school in particular, were the product of a multi-polar transition in the cultural, intellectual and social milieu of Kashmir and as such were duty bound to devise (i) a definitive Pratyabhijñā logic; again historically they had to (ii) relate to the other absolutist systems and yet underline the precise line of separation in concrete terms, (iii) transcend the Siddhānta Śaivism, their ideological predecessor, and internalize it, (iv) dislodge the Buddhist scepticism resulting from its doctrines of non-self and non-endurance, (v) identify and resolve the internal demands in the wake of enunciating their version of absolutism, (vii) devise an intra-school framework to support their individual statuses and at the same time retain their basic ideological oneness, (viii) preserve their root tantricity, (ix) find an ontological ground for the recognitive epistemology, (x) found the incluvistic all-integrating system of thought encompassing within itself strands of aesthetics, language, devotionism, yoga, spiritual praxis, tantric ritual, pragmaticism and, on the top of it, (xi) uncover a spiritual vision or an ultimate soteriology. The synoptic exegesis of Śakti was deployed by the Śaivists to achieve all these ends by a single tool.

A quick survey might give us insight into the Śaivists' modus operandi. Jayaratha in his *Viveka* on the *Tantrāloka* describes the Pratyabhijñā line of thinkers, from Somānanda to Abhinavagupta, as Pratyabhijñā logicians (*tarkasya kartāraḥ*).[12] This Pratyabhijñā logic is specifically formulated in Śakti-terms. Recognition of the Self-Absolute is nothing but the discovery of His powers (*śakti*).[13] Similarly the object of (re-)cognition, that is, the objective reality of our day to day discourse, is nothing but the expression of Śakti.[14] The latter strategy also seeks to establish the ontological base of the recognitive epistemology. The combined effect of this two-way strategy

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[12] TAV, II, p. 30
[13] शक्त्याविष्करणेनेयं प्रत्यभिज्ञोपदर्श्यते। – IPK 1.1.2
[14] शक्तिप्रकाशेनेशादिव्यवहारः प्रवर्त्यते। – ibid. 2.3.1.7

is the emergence of the absolutistic metaphysics which visualizes reality as a dynamic absolute, called *śaktimān* in technical parlance, and Śakti as its integral dynamism also duplicating as its intrinsic mechanism, in a mode of ongoing mutual realization. In this way the Kashmir Śaivist is able to architect a radically absolutist alternative. Thus it is in point of Śakti that the Śaivist finds his fundamental difference from the other absolutist systems specially Vedānta, which he designates as *sāmānyadarśana,* as against his *viśeṣadarśana.* We have already seen this in a slightly different context. What Abhinavagupta wants us to appreciate is the impact caused by infusion of Śakti as the defining element of reality. He spells out two fundamental differences. While reality's nature as consciousness remains common feature between the two schools, the purity, that is inactive or powerless character, of consciousness prompts one to view the absolute as simply transcendent. Similarly the state of the absolutic realization happens to be literally an all-transcending, that is discreet, disconnected, experience. For the sake of contrastive clarity, Abhinavagupta calls it *vyatireka-turyātīta* (lit.,"the trans-fourth marked by exclusion"). Back to Śaivism, because of its Śakti-nature, i.e. the inner dynamism, the absolute is considered immanent as well as transcendent. Accordingly the corresponding state of the absolutic vision, even though transcendental, is marked by inner continuity and is viewed as culmination or ultimate flowering of the lived reality[15]. Abhinavagupta aptly terms it *avyatireka-turyātīta*[16] (lit.,"The trans-fourth marked by non-exclusion"). The acute significance of this formulation may be gauged by the fact that Abhinavagupta seeks to explain the finer of the two states of Rasa-experience with reference to *avyatireka-turyātīta* realisation[17]. Abhinavagupta further exploits this Śakti-connection to distinguish the Śaiva absolutism from the Yogācāra absolutism, popularly reckoned as the subjective idealism (*vijñānavāda*). Abhinavagupta firmly believes if *vijñāna*, "subjective consciousness", could be

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[15] विशेषदर्शनेषु इति शाक्ताद्वैतप्रधानेषु विशेषः शक्तिलक्षणः … तुर्य इति एतद्शासमापत्तिपर्यन्तरूपा अपि तुर्यातीतता तत्रैव उक्ता, व्यतिरेकेण तु शून्यादेरवस्थापने बोधस्य तुर्यातीतता तत्रैव उक्ता.. इति सामान्यदर्शनेषु सर्वोत्तीर्णैकतद्रूपवेदकेषु दर्शितेति सूचयति। – IPVV, III, p. 331

[16] इति अव्यतिरेकतुर्यातीतसमता एव। – ibid, p. 328

[17] With reference to the IPVV (II, pp. 178-179: ….. ततोऽपि काव्यनाट्यादौ तद्व्यवधानशून्यता तद्व्यवधान-संस्कारानुवेधस्तु। तत्रापि तु तथोदित व्यवधानांशतिरस्क्रियासावधानहृदया लभन्त एव परमानन्दम्।) Prof. K.C. Pandey (vide Comparative Aesthetics, Vol. I, pp. 134, 142) connects the higher phase of rasa-experience with *vyatireka-turyātītā* which in all fairness to the systemal cogency ought to be *avyatireka-turyātīta.*

alternatively interpreted to mean Self who is also Īśvara (note, sovereignity or *aiśvarya* consists in Śakti), there would remain only nominal difference between the two.[18] Logically implied in this is the Śaivist rejection of the doctrine of flux of the discreet moments with inter-momentary continuity being logically determined, owing to his avowed adherence to the kinetic reality ensuring change with continuity represented by the abiding subject/Self/Absolute. With this reasoning the Śaivist is able to dispel the Buddhist cynicism caused by his belief in the doctrines of non-endurance and non-self.

One of the biggest challenges the Śaivists had to contend with was from their own ranks, -- those who, unlike others, admitted Śakti–, that is, from the Siddhānta Śaivists. The gravity of the challenge increases manifold, because of their āgamic origin. In addition, both of them plead allegiance to the same set of āgamas to a large extent. The formal architecture of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism is a discernible legacy from the Siddhānta dualism. It was incumbent on the Śaivist to objectively lay down the premises he thought demarcated his system from the Siddhānta Śaivism. Abhinavagupta knew it too well that it was the dualistic orientation of the Siddhāntin's exegesis of the āgamas that created the divide and therefore called for its demolition.[19] For notwithstanding all professions of the divine perfection dressed in largely identical terminology on the basis of inalienable Śakti-connection, the Siddhāntin's admission of the separate categories of Paśu and Pāśa put the outer reality, the world, outside the real immanence of the Self rendering the Siddhāntin's absolute, the Godhead, as purely transcendental.[20] Kashmir Śaivists even faulted the so called identity of Śakti with Śiva,[21] *samavāya* ("inherence") being explained away as *tādātmya* ("self-sameness"), because this unity is that of a property inalienably residing in its substratum, which when subjected to reductionist logic, would point out to Śiva's logical transcendence over Śakti.

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[18] अस्मिन्स्तु सति....विज्ञानाद्वयम् आत्मेश्वराभिप्रायेण निरूप्य सिध्यति एष जनः। – IPVV, III, p. 405

[19] अस्मिन्स्तु सति आगमेषु द्वैतव्याख्यानमपास्य…सिध्यति एष जनः। – ibid.

[20] Cf. नापि सिद्धान्तदृष्टिवत् विश्वोत्तीर्णमेव परं तत्त्वं इत्येवंरूपम्। – Sp. S., p. 24

[21] अनन्यान्या शिवात्। – Pauṣkarāgama 1.39, cited in *Śaiva-siddhānta-darśana*, p. 59; also see pp. 57-58.
    The Siddhāntin, supposedly more faithful to his source āgamas, does not seem always comfortable in his delineation of the precise relationship between Śiva and Śakti. The Kashmir Śaivist formulations are attempts towards removing this ambivalence.

The Śaivism was faced with the challenge of a different kind. This was again internal and incidental to finding and creating a truly updated and integrated Śakti-theorization. In stead of overcoming the alien viewpoints, it was now required to utilize and process the formative data offered by the Vedic literature consisting of Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas, and Upaniṣads (specially the *Śvetāśvatara*); classical philosophies like Sāṁkhya and Yoga; other philosophical traditions such as grammar and cognate sources such as āgamas and āgamic theologies such as Śaiva Siddhānta. The Śaivist was supposed to give voice to what remained unstated/unexplained, clarify the vague, discard the inconsistent, take the potential to its logical conclusion and appropriate the relevant data, so analysed, towards constructing a rationally congruent holistic model. Since this needs more space we might defer its consideration for a while.

The biggest challenge the Śakti-thesis was required to answer was the fulfilment of demands the Kashmir Śaivism made on itself. In the first place, Śakti was deployed by way of the most effective strategy for promoting an all-affirming (i.e., transgressive and inclusive both) model of non-dualistic absolutism.[22] In order to legitimatize its claim to be called non-dualism in an all-affirming scenario, it must satisfactorily account for the socalled riddle of the "other"[23] as contraposed to "self" and eliminate the gap of any kind between consciousness and matter, sentient and insentient.[24] In the second place, recourse was taken to Śakti-theorization in order to account for the inter-school micro-differences among the broad fold of the Kashmir Śaivism. Interestingly this appeared to be a contrarian approach, because Śakti until now was viewed as a unifying factor in between the subschools. This operation took place in two ways. At macro level it divided all the monistic streams under Kashmir Śaivism into two broad groups– the Śiva-centric and the Śakti-centric, depending upon whose centricity or supremacy they believed in. Thus Pratyabhijñā, a dominant section of Kula, Trika and a sizable following of Spanda belonged to the former genre, likewise those who placed Tripurā, Kālī, Kubjikā etc., in the centre

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[22] प्रथमतः संवित्तत्त्वं भगवता शिवरूपं केषुचिद् आगमेषु सर्वोत्तीर्णताप्राधान्येन, अपरेषु सर्वमयतास्वीकारेण, अन्येषु उभयरूपविस्फारणाय उपदिष्टम्। तत्र प्राथमकल्पिके इह उपदेश्ये संविन्मुखेन आदौ अद्वयम् उपदेश्यम्। – IPVV, II, p. 74

[23] ऐश्वर्यशक्तेश्च स्वपरविभागप्रतिभासहेतोः....। – ibid., p. 114

[24] भगवतः शक्तिविशेषो यन्न्यूनतातारतम्यकृतं...जडत्वम्, यदुत्कर्षतारतम्यकृतं च... प्रबुद्धत्वम्। – ibid., I, p. 270

were affiliated to the latter. At the micro level, within the Śakti-centric domain, the modal variations and conceptualizations of Śakti were responsible for their inter se distinction. It is primarily on this ground that *Kālasaṁkarṣiṇī* is distinguished from *Vāmeśvarī*, *Parā* or *Kaulikī* and vice versa. A similar phenomenon is duplicated within the Śiva-centric domain.[25] Going down deeper within the micro-level even the intra-school internal differentiation is traced to the same source[26]

One major concern of the Kashmir Śaivism or its constituent systems was to retain its connection with the original tantric background, not only at the level of philosophical speculation with its ever-growing intellectual sophistication but also at the level of practice and ritual. This showed itself into an empowered valuation of the female reflecting a radical shift of emphasis from the passivity of a female partner in the Vedic ritual to the active participation of a willing player in the tantric praxis. Its significant impact was seen in the altered orientation of the hermeneutics of Śakti– from power, dynamism, movement, capacity, capability, it came to be associated more with creativity, generation, potency. The institution of *dūti,* "female messenger," as a vehicle of spiritual transmission and ritual praxis;[27] visualization of Bhairava as surrounded by the family of Yoginī (*yoginī-kula*);[28] determination of the identity of an adept (*sādhaka*) on the basis of his affiliation to a particular 'family',[29] are patent manifestations of this tendency on a more visible plane. To this list may be added the "primal rite" (*ādiyāga*), a euphemism for ritual intercourse, marking active involvement of both the partners. What is important here is to note that the female here represents convergence of gnosis and praxis within herself[30] and that

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[25] Cf. TA 1.110-111

[26] तासामपि च भेदांशन्यूनाधिक्ययोजनम् ।
तत्स्वातन्त्र्यबलादेव शास्त्रेषु परिभाषितम् ।। −TA 1.109

[27] (i) कुलप्रक्रियायां दूतीमुखेनैव शिष्यस्य ज्ञानप्रतिपादनाम्नायात् । − TAV, II, p. 35
(ii) कुलप्रक्रियायां हि दूतीमन्तरेण क्वचिदपि कर्मणि नाधिकारः । − ibid., p. 32

[28] पूजयेद्भैरवाख्यां योगिनीद्वादशावृताम् । − TA 3.254

[29] तादात्म्यप्रतिपत्त्यै हि स्वसंतानं समाश्रयेत् ।।
भुञ्जीत पूजयेच्चक्रं परसंतानिना नहि । − ibid. 4. 268-269

[30] प्रविकस्वरमध्यपदा शक्तिः शास्त्रे तथा कथिता ।
तस्यामेव कुलार्थं सम्यक् संचारयेद्गुरुस्तेन ।।…
तन्मुख्यचक्रमुक्तं महेशिना योगिनीवक्त्रम् ।।
तत्रैष सम्प्रदायस्तस्मात् संप्राप्यते ज्ञानम् । − ibid. 29.122-125

Śakti's equation with creativity, with a feminist undertone. gave a fillip to the series of philosophical and aesthetical reformulations and fresh abstractions.[31]

Unlike other Indian philosophers whose sole obsession seems to produce a *mokṣaśāstra*, a soteriology, Abhinavagupta's obvious priority is to evolve a complete system of thought, much on the lines of his western counterparts like Aristotle, Hegel or Kant, which takes life as a whole and thereby covers all aspects a human being, a living entity to be more precise, is concerned with– soteriological, metaphysical, psychological, aesthetical, social, religious etc. Abhinavagupta's this obsession flows from his seminal postulate that life is a continuum, a compresence between twin poles consisting of the world and the transcendent, enjoyment and salvation, which throw up multiple lived-in universes subserving our different concerns. The integral system of thought, Abhinavagupta is so passionate about, is sought to be built up through the twofold mechanism of Śakti: power-proliferation (*Śakti-saṁvardhana*) and power-retraction (*śakti-samākarṣaṇa*). Abhinavagupta gives beautiful vent to it.[32] However this inclusivism or integrality of thought does not deter Abhinavagupta from pursuing a truly integrating affirmist spiritual vision and, for the matter of that, tracking a soteriological path, because spiritual sciences are expected in the main to seek a harmonious valuation of the dialectics of the pure and impure subjectivity[33] in their essential stride.

In describing non-dualism (*advaita*) as *mahādvaita* or *pūrṇādvaita* the Kashmir Śaivism brings home its definition of non-duality as *pūrṇatā* which means fullness, totality, integrality and perfection, all included. What must interest us is that *pūrṇatā,* abstracted as Śakti in the system,[34] is typically presented as *yāmala* ("pairing"), *sāmarasya* (harmony/synthesis) and *saṁghaṭṭa* (friction/rubbing) of *Śakti* and *Śaktimān*, in a triple predicative construction.[35] Thus Śakti, which happens to be

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[31] Attention may be drawn to the conceptualizations of *vimarśa* as *visarga,* and *sahṛdayatā* as *vīrya-vikṣobha* and so on.

[32] तत एव हि शक्तिसंवर्धनक्रमेण अंतःसंकुचितविमर्शशक्तिसमाकर्षणेन तथैव भोगापवर्गोपयोगिना उपयुज्यमानः परमेश्वरेण सृष्टस्तर्कसंसारः काव्यसंसारवद् अपर एव। विचित्रा हि अमी संसाराः। – IPVV, III, pp. 95-96

[33] प्रमातुर्हि शुद्धाशुद्धरूपं वितत्य वक्तव्यम् अध्यात्मविद्यासु अस्यैव अर्थस्य मुख्यत्वेन विस्तारणार्हत्वात्। – IPVV, III, p. 313

[34] पूर्णतैव अस्य शक्तिः। – TS, Āh. 4.

[35] तयोर्यद्यामलं रूपं स संघट्ट इति स्मृतः। – TA 3.68

the very "nature", "being"[36] or "self" of Śaktimān, does so in a very special way, underlining as it does the reciprocity of inter-penetration, a participatory interaction, a self-dissolving fusion between "being" and its "substrate". Short of metaphor it implies that reality in Kashmir Śaivism is not a simple reality, but a reality full of content, Śakti itself constituting that content. This explains the logic behind the oft-repeated injunction of *śaktyāviṣkaraṇa*[37] forming the gateway to reality, to knowledge. Abhinava sets the record straight: it is not the discovery of Śaktimān alone, it is the discovery of Śakti as well and as a process it amounts to discovering Śaktimān via discovering Śakti.

The Śaivists take resort to two seminal reductions in order to explicate the definitive formulation of Śakti in the system. The first is:[38]

(One's) self is the Supreme Lord (*Maheśvara*)[39],
Supreme Lordliness (*māheśvarya*) consists in possessing all powers (*sarvaśaktitva*)[40],
Possessing all powers is (nothing but) Self-affirmation (*ahaṁvimarśa*).[41]

This equation has implications of far-reaching importance. Rationalizing *sarva-śaktitva* as *ahaṁ-vimarśa* is Utpala's extremely innovative formulation. By identifying the individual self with the Supreme Lord the way is paved open to elevate the individual subjectivity, that is, the individual consciousness, to the level of the Supreme Self-affirming Awareness. The intervening equation which is etymologically explained by deriving *māheśvarya* (that is, *mahān aiśvarya* = Great/Supreme Lordlines) as "being endowed with the Supreme Power" automatically creates space for reckoning *sarvaśaktitva* in the nature of self-

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[36] शक्तिर्हि नाम शक्तिमत एव स्वं रूपम्। – TAV, II, p. 465

[37] शक्त्याविष्करण is to be analysed in two ways (i) शक्तेः आविष्करणम् (ष॰ तत्पु॰) and (ii) शक्त्या आविष्करणम् (तृ॰ तत्पु॰) : करण-भाव-साधनत्वेन आविष्क्रियमाणा शक्तिः तत्कृतश्च दृढनिश्चयः। – IPVV, I, p. 87
Accordingly Abhinavagupta construes *pratyabhijñā* as *jñāna-kriyā-śaktirūpā*.– Loc cit.
Here attention may be drawn to two different, though complementary, interpretations of *āviṣkaraṇa*. In the Pratyabhijñā circles it is rendered into gnostic terminology (i.e. *abhijñānakhyāpana*: IPK Vṛtti on IPK 1.1.3) and in the Spanda echelons into dynamical terms (i.e., *ātmabalaprayatnaviśeṣa*: Sp. P, p. 119 on Sp.K. 36)

[38] स्वात्मा महेश्वरः,
माहेश्वर्यं सर्वशक्तित्वम्,
सर्वशक्तित्वं (नाम) अहंविमर्शः।

[39] कर्तरि ज्ञातरि स्वात्मन्यादिसिद्धे महेश्वरे। – IPK 1.1.2

[40] आत्मैव ईश्वरत्वात् सर्वशक्तिः। – IPVV, II, p. 37

[41] प्रकाशने स्वातन्त्र्यम् अहमिति महत्संरम्भात्मा प्रतिघातशून्यो विमर्शः, तदेव च अस्य सर्वशक्तित्वम्। – ibid., p. 8

affirmation.[42] The notion of self-affirmation which conceptually implies self-objectification in the self-reposing awareness lies at the very root of all linguistic, mantric, literary, aesthetic and metaphysical formulations.

In the second reduction "possession of power" (*śaktitva*) is equated with the power-holder's (*śaktimān's*) autonomy,[43] or 'freedom to'– to revert to Potter's phrase. The notion of subjective autonomy or agential freedom again plays a very crucial role in our understanding the structured relationship in between the major components of the system. The Śaivist solely depends upon the notion of autonomy, on the one hand, to account for the world of our daily encounter and interaction and on the other, to account for the autonomy itself. The second point needs some elaboration. What is it that sustains the ultimate reality in transcendental state when outer world stands retracted? It is the autonomy, the self-dependence, that sustains reality. This idea clearly comes out if one looks into the derivational genesis of the term *svātantrya*. One is called free if one remains grounded within oneself,[44] or one is called free if one expands oneself.[45] Thus the word *svātantrya* gets semantically very close to the word *tantra* and to the notion of *ahaṁvimarśa.*

This unique conception of autonomy forms the foundation of three important theses of the system. In typical parlance of the system they may be presented as: (i) *saṁvid-brahma-vāda,* (ii) *paramārtha-vastu-vāda* and (iii) *sarva-sarvagatatā-vāda.* In fact these are the terms employed by the system to describe its unique identity. The first avers that the ultimate reality, that is Maheśvara, is conscious and not inert, unlike Vedāntin's Absolute who, for the sake of distinctive clarity, is depicted as *Jaḍabrahma,* "inert absolute," implying thereby that the Brahman lacks the dynamicity which is supposed to be essential character of Parama Śiva. This dynamicity may either be understood as *spanda,* "vibration," or as *ābhāsana-sāmarthya,* "manifesting potency", leaving no room for the admission of any external force such as the alogical Māyā. The second characterization aims at ensuring the

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[42] तेन… अहमिति चमत्कारात्मना महान् ईश्वरः यतो देवस्य एते एव ज्ञानक्रिये… योऽयं विमर्शो नाम। – IPVV, II, p. 435

[43] (i) शक्तिमतः शक्तित्वं नाम स्वातन्त्र्यम्। – S.Dṛ., fn. 2, p. 97

  (ii) परमेश्वरशक्तिरेव स्वातन्त्र्यापरपर्याया भवति। – *TS*, p. 11

[44] स्वस्मिन् तंत्रे वर्तमानः ।

[45] स्वं तनोति विस्तारयति इति। – *Śabda-kalpadruma*, pt. 5, p. 468

fundamental reality of the manifested objectivity even in the phenomenal stage without injuring its ideal oneness with the absolute. The third[46] is a forceful restatement of the rigorous non-dualism in the sense that each unit of manifestation is said to contain the whole world, microcosm replicating macrocosm in the very real sense.

In the notion of autonomy, we find four factors working together as constitutive of the concept in its totality– (i) non-dependence on the 'other' (*anyanirapekṣatā*)[47], (ii) self-repose (*ātma-viśrānti*), (iii) omnipotence (*sarvakartṛtva*) and (iv) lordliness (*aiśvarya*). The first brings out the beauty of the divine autonomy as it includes within or homologizes the 'other' or the 'different'. Thus it spells out the all-inclusive jurisdiction of freedom. The second, by transcending all dependencies, focuses on the foundational nature of reality as repose of the self in the self,[48] necessarily leading to the idea of self-affirmation. The third brings out the absolutic causality, and the fourth underscores the inherent potential for actualizing the infinite possibilities.

Inner Structure of Śakti

Owing to the enormous importance of the Śakti-concept, the Śaivists have taken up the problem for a minute scrutiny. It will be therefore in fitness of things if we now have a look into inner structuring of Śakti as conceived by them as under:

(i)   For Kashmir Śaivists Śakti is both a singular concept as well as a plural one. As a singular concept, it stands for the ultimate reality or its defining character, whereas as a plural it represents the phases or modes of the ultimate. Here too the Śaivist's usual approach of interweaving the two apparently discordant threads in a compact pattern may be easily noticed.

(ii)   *Svātantrya-śakti* is viewed as 'the' power, the ultimate power or the over-arching power. It could definitively be construed as pure agentiality on the

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[46] This is the Śaivist's appropriation of the original Sāṁkhya thesis.

[47] इत्थं पुराणशास्त्रादौ शक्तिः सा परमेश्वरी।
निरपेक्षैव कथिता सापेक्ष्वे ह्यनीशता।। – MVV 1-698

[48] उक्ता च सैव विश्रान्तिः सर्वापेक्षानिरोधतः।
स्वातन्त्र्यमथ कर्तृत्वं मुख्यमीश्वरतापि च।। – APS 23

ontic front and as a *priori* judgement on the cognitive and subsumes the entire power-universe within.[49]

(iii)   As per unique conceptualization in the *Parā-trīśikā-vivaraṇa*[50] the defining character of the Supreme Power must be considered *anugraha* which is visualized as enveloping the Absolute totally and thereby transfiguring His essential being into *anugraha*, because *anugraha* as unifying perception consists in not distinguishing Śakti from Śiva.[51]

(iv)   Śakti's differentiation into the variety of forms is not intrinsic but only provisional. The one is taken to be many because the potential objects of desire etc. act as the differentiating adjuncts,[52] their designations reflect the pragmatic behaviour depending upon the endresult. Hence a category, whether of experience or of being, essentially remains Śakti-determined (*śakti-nibandhana*) and not object-determined (*vastu-nibandhana*).

(v)   In the similar vein, in a cognate formulation, gradation or succession of Śaktī is sought to be explained. Śakti is a continuum being one and unitary, but the same is deemed to be successive because of the functional diversity (*kṛtya-bheda*). The four-function or the five-function theories (*krama-catuṣka/krama-pañcaka*) in the Spanda and Krama Schools are the direct outcome of such a perception of reality.[53] In the system, specially in these two schools, the recognition of the self as agent of these four/five acts is what is implied by the notion of *śakticakra-vikāsa* etc.

(vi)   In one of the most cohesive enunciations of the *pūrṇatā*-doctrine, Śakti, in contrast with the self-affirmative formulation, is also conceived as self-

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[49] तत्र कर्तृत्वलक्षणा स्वातन्त्र्यशक्तिः विश्वशक्तिश्रेणीसमाक्षेपेण वर्तते। सैव विमर्शरूपा। – IPVV, I, p. 247

[50] Because of its unique formulation we have avoided translating the term. Here *anugraha,* which may be rendered as "post/repeated/total" (*anu*) "acceptance/grasp/reception" (*graha*), needs be distinguished from *anugraha-kṛtya* (i.e. Godly act of dispensing grace) or *anugraha-śakti* (i.e., Godly capacity to grant such dispensation). It also needs be differentiated from twofold division of Godly acts into *anugraha* informing divine manifestation and, *nigraha* (also called *vilaya*) encoding all the five Godly acts. एवंरूपप्रथा च अनुग्रहः स्थितिसृष्ट्यवान्तररूप एव च विलय इति कृत्यपञ्चकप्रपञ्चनशक्तिसारो भगवान् इति तात्पर्यार्थः। – IPVV, III, p. 27.

[51] परमेश्वरः पंचविधकृत्यमयः सततम् अनुग्रहमय्या परारूपया शक्त्या आक्रान्तो वस्तुतो अनुग्रहैकात्मैव, नहि शक्तिः शिवात् भेदमामर्शयेत्। – PTV, p. 3

[52] तत्तदेषणीयाद्युपाधिवशेन नानात्वेन व्यवह्रियते। – TAV, II, p. 108

[53] भेदैश्चतुर्भिरेकस्यां शक्तौ यत्क्रमणं क्रमात्।
सृष्टिस्थितिलयानाख्यैः स क्रमः परिवर्तितः।। – M.P. (S), p. 45

negating functionality.[54] Alternatively, this may be viewed as *nigraha*-formulation as apposed to *anugraha*-formulation seen above. The phenomena of differentiation (*bhedana*), othering, ignorance – defilement/coating (*mala*) in the tantric phraseology and judgemental imperfection (*akhyāti or apūrṇakhyāti*) in the gnostic –, and Śakti as a second cosmogonical category (*śakti-tattva*) are all sourced to this aspect. In the theological construction it is designated as the Veiling Power (*tirodhāna śakti*) and its function as the Veiling/Concealing Act (*tirodhānakṛtya)* isolating or differentiating "what in fact cannot be isolated or differentiated"[55] and as such is said to represent one aspect of the absolute. However, the nigraha-formulation is not confined to veiling alone, it ought to go beyond, otherwise the absolutic immance (*viśvamayatā*) might become a logically weak proposition.

(vii)　There are two conceptualizations of Śakti – absolute and relative. When it is viewed as the defining essence of the transcendental reality it is presented in the absolutic terms, but the moment it relates to the manifested world because the world or creation is nothing but an aggregate of the absolutic powers, it becomes relative.[56] Among the relative powers, higher the one the more inclusive it is, subsuming as it does the lesser powers.[57] Thus inclusivism is the determining parameter of Śakti's extent of permeation and closeness to its source. It is why the absolute power is deemed to be all-inclusive. Abhinava finds great virtue in hierarchization of powers since, according to him, it furnishes a cogent normative structure to assess the relative merit of the multiple religious approaches advocated in the scriptures.[58]

(viii)　Besides the dualistic (*bheda*) and non-dualistic (*abheda*) postulations the Kashmir Śaivists formulate a difference-unity (*bhedābheda*) perspective. Accordingly in the realm of manifestation Śakti is virtually rendered in terms

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[54] स्वस्वरूपापोहनात्माख्यातिमयी निषेधव्यापाररूपा। – PSV, pp 10-11
[55] Śakti or Divine Power, p. 382
[56] स्वशक्तिप्रचयोऽस्य विश्वम्। – S.Sū 3.30
[57] अधिका शक्तिर्न्यूनशक्तिनिबन्धिनी। – IPVV, I, p. 287
[58] काचित्तु शक्तिरनन्ताः शक्तीराक्षिप्यैव वर्तमाना नेदीयसी भगवतः, अन्यास्तु दूराल्पतमा दवीयस्तमा इति उपासना विचित्रा आगमेषु दर्शिताः। – IPVV, III, p. 265

of *bhedābheda*.[59] This perspective helps resolve the riddle of one Śakti becoming many, the intermediary divergences being explained away as caused by the alternating emphases on difference or non-difference.[60] In this connection some of the stipulations merit our attention as under:

a. The very idea of manifestation (*avabhāsana*) has, of necessity, to be explained in terms of *bhedābhedana*, "non-differentiating the differentiated", since its immediate purpose is to account for the ontic status of the manifested. Let us be clear. As a process, the manifestation, that is, creation must refer to the self-differentiation of power, but as a product, which is technically considered to be an *ābhāsa,* "manifestation", it must involve some kind of non-differentiation (bordering on unification, synthesizing).[61] Thus the same thing may be depicted as *śakti*[62] when treated as subjective propensity or urge (*saṁrambha*), as property (*dharma*) when viewed as a kind of crystalised form (or a form of the substance), as quality (*guṇa*) when viewed as something dependent upon that crystalised form or substance, and as an operation or activity (*vyāpāra*) when viewed as prior and posterior both.[63]

b. In an exclusive formulation based on *bhedābheda,* Śakti is conceived as the "pure determinate idea" (*śuddha vikalpa*). Apparently sounding like a contradiction in terms, the 'purity' of logical construction is devised as a tool to bridge the gap between the logical constructions that mark our daily existence (depicted as *aśuddha-vikalpa* "impure thought construction") and indeterminate ideality (*avikalpā saṁvit*). The purity lies in the 'refinement' of or the 'absolution' from the impurity of a mental

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[59] भेदाभेदौ हि शक्तिता। – TA 1.120

[60] भेदाभेदप्राधान्येतरताकृतस्तु अत्र विवेकः। वस्तुतः चिदात्मैव तथा भाति इति अक्रमतैव अत्र इत्युक्तम्। .... इहैव च स्वतन्त्रशिवाद्वयदर्शने एकस्य अर्थस्य अनेकत्वं संगच्छते। – Sp.S., pp. 9-10

[61] One must understand, there are two tiers or two stages to this differentiation, namely the objective and the subjective. The first tier refers to our apprehending an object, a manifestation as a configuration, or a sort of gestalt, to borrow a term from psychology. The second tier refers to the subjective synthesis and repose. Though the two are invariably present in every cognition, the reference is to the first tier in the present case.

[62] In pragmatic usage.

[63] तेन अतिरिक्तानतिरिक्तरूपत्वमेव तत्त्वं ज्ञानादीनाम्। निर्भासनसारं हि वस्तु। तथा यद्भाति तदेव शक्तिरिति संरम्भरूपतया, धर्म इति सिद्धरूपाकारभेदतया, गुण इति तत्परतन्त्ररूपतया, व्यापार इति च पूर्वापररूपतया व्यपदिश्यते। – IPVV, II, p. 269.

construction that is, recognizing the essential 'I-ness' of the 'not-Iness' in manifestation. Mental constructs, by virtue of their being the properties of mind, are to be taken as powers: This is the crux of the argument.[64] Equipped with such a formulation the Śaivist, on the one hand, is now empowered to propagate the *upāya* theory of redemptive knowledge, more particularly the *śāktopāya*,[65] totally focussed on the 'purity' of determinate idea, and the corresponding mode of self-realization, *śākta samāveśa*[66] in the technical language of the system, both forming the gnostic soteriology of the system. On the other hand, he is able to garner metaphysical support to account for Rasa-experience in terms of *śuddha vikalpa.* Aesthetic experience is thus conceptualized as mental visualization,[67] mental perception (that is, mental operation akin to perception, *anuvyavasāya*)[68] having been freed from, absolved (cp. *śuddha*) of the individualizing conditions of time, place and personal dispositions.[69]

(ix)   In the cosmic reflection[70] Śakti turns out to be its efficient cause, besides continuing to remain the material cause. Thus in point of the precise functioning, Śakti is distinguished from *upādhi*, "adjunct". When something depends upon another thing for its revelation, this other-caused revelation is called *upādhi*, whereas a self-caused revelation is termed Śakti.[71] In a statement ascribed to Utpala by Jayaratha (not traceable to the printed texts),

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[64] अत एवाविकल्पत्वध्रौव्यप्राभववैभवैः।
  अन्यैर्वा शक्तिरूपत्वाद् धर्मैः स्वसमवायिभिः।। – T.A. 1.198

[65] एवं वैकल्पिकी भूमिः शाक्ते कर्तृत्ववेदने। – T.A. 1.218

[66] उच्चाररहितं वस्तु चेतसैव विचिन्तयन्।
  यं समावेशमाप्नोति शाक्तः सोऽत्राभिधीयते।। – MVT 2.22

[67] काव्यार्थविषये हि प्रत्यक्षकल्पसंवेदनोदये रसोदयः इत्युपाध्यायाः। – A.Bh., I, p. 290

[68] तस्मादनुव्यवसायात्मकं कीर्तनं रूषितविकल्पसंवेदनं नाट्यम्।– A.Bh., I, p. 37
  Here *anuvyavasāya* is conceived differently from its namesake in the Nyāya.

[69] This explains the 'pure determinate' (*śuddha-vikalpātmaka*) character of rasa-experience. It is not 'determinate' (*savikalpaka*) as Larson tends to take it while scrutinizing affinity of rasa-experience with the absolutic relish (*brahmāsvādasavidha)* vide "The aesthetic (*rasāsvāda*) and the religious (*brahmāsvāda*) in Abhinavagupta's Kashmir Śaivism", p. 378

[70] This is a conceptualization different from that of manifestation (*ābhāsana*).

[71] स्वप्रकाशस्य हि परस्य (i.e., अन्यस्य) प्रकाशस्य परकर्तृका व्यक्तिरेव उपाधिः, शक्तिः पुनरभिव्यक्तैव तदञ्जने उपायः। – TAV, II, p. 465

an *upādhi* is said to lend its form to the object, but it is the autonomy of consciousness that is responsible for the forms of consciousness.[72]

(x) a. In its internal contexture Śakti is always a twin-layered concept in the sense that it reveals itself and also, in addition, implies or refers to its relation with something else. This 'something else' may either be its container/holder/substrate, or concomitant attribute or cognate power or the effect brought about by it. For example, take the case of *jñānaśakti*, "knowledge power". It connotes knowledge itself as a power, and also knowledge as a vehicle of the Lord's (or holder's) power.[73] Likewise, in the case of fire, it reveals itself as power and because it burns, it implies action also.[74] In a somewhat different situation when it is said that 'Śakti does/makes' (*saktiḥ karoti*) it presupposes possession of corresponding capacity to do or make. Here, it may be noted that *śakti* assumes the mantle of a possessor of power (*śaktimān*) and implies association with power other than itself (*śaktyantarayoga*).[75] In any case, it does not entail any duality because there is no transgression of Śakti's essential nature.

b. In a different but innovative formulation Abhinavagupta further brings out the twin-layered dimension of Śakti. These two layers, that go together, are constituted by the essential nature (*svarūpalakṣaṇa*) representing the first layer and the auxiliary/cooperative causality (*sahakārilakṣaṇa*) representing the second layer. However, one should not take Śakti's independent conceptualization to mean separate external existence different from the object brought about by that power. Because Śakti is so called only when it dwells in an object that serves as its locus after having been brought out, thereby leaving no space for its separate location. One may therefore

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[72] ''तत्र त्वर्पकाद् उपाधेस्तदाकारत्वम्, चित्तत्त्वस्यैव तु निजैश्वर्यात् ।'' – cited in TAV, II, p. 424

[73] तेन उभयथापि ज्ञानशक्तिपदं तत्र तत्र विग्रहीतव्यम् – ज्ञानमेव शक्तिः तत्र च अस्य शक्तिरिति। – IPVV, I, p. 288

[74] अग्निः शक्तिः, संदहति इति च अबाधितप्रत्ययाभासाद् आभाससारपरमार्थवादिना शक्तिश्च क्रिया चेति उभयमपि उपगम्यम्। – loc. cit.

[75] शक्तिः शक्ता करोतीति तु शक्तेः शक्तिमदात्मना सृष्टिरिति शक्तेः शक्त्यन्तरयोगे अनवस्था इत्यपि न किंचित्, भावस्वभावानधिकत्वाच्च। – loc cit.

conclude that occasioning an object here represents auxiliary causality and subsisting as essential nature represents *svarūpa*.[76]

(xi) Śakti and Śaktimān, power and its prius, are conceptual abstractions, calling for different linguistic appellations, having a single referent in reality, because of their quintessential qualitative homogeneity. Thus, insentience which at the bottom of its gradual diminution is represented by a fixed post or a motionless hill and awareness which at the zenith of its gradual excellence by Parama Śiva constitute two ends of the same power-reality.[77]

(xii) Śakti and Śaktimān are at the most linguistic formulations because of their constitutive homology depending upon the subjective intention. If the referrer primarily intends plurality, it would be called Śakti and if he intends to allude to one alone, it would be called Śaktimān.[78]

(xiii) Śaktimān, as the locus of Śakti, needs not be taken at its face value. In the Śaivist's formulation, the word substrate, prius, locus (*āśraya*) is to be construed in a significantly different way. Śaktimān as a locus does not act as a physical support, but as an active free agent. Thus the container-contained relationship or property-substrate relationship (*dharma-dharmi-bhāva*), as propagated by Nyāya and other schools is ruled out here.[79] For Maheśvara, or for that matter even an individual subject, holding or supporting means freedom to unify, analyze, separate, repose, reject, manifest and/or manipulate the power/s as per will in glaring contrast to an insentient object such as fire, which is though substrate to several powers like burning, cooking, heating, sweating etc,[80] has no freedom of independent action.

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[76] तदियं शक्तिर्भावस्वरूपमुपनीय आसीना शक्तिरुच्यते, न तु पृथगवभासा इति स्वरूप-सहकारि-लक्षणैव (स्वरूपसहकारिलक्षणैव, emended to स्वरूप-सहकारि-लक्षणैव) उभयी पदार्थस्थितिः शक्तिरित्यपि न कांचिदस्मन्नते क्षतिमावहति। – loc cit.

[77] भगवतः शक्तिविशेषो यन्न्यूनतारतम्यकृतं स्थावरान्तं जडत्वम्, यदुत्कर्षतारतम्यकृतं च परमशिवान्तं प्रबुद्धत्वमिति वक्ष्यामः। – IPVV, I, 270

[78] बहुत्वपरामर्शप्रधानतायां शक्तिव्यवहारः, तदेकपरामर्शप्रधानत्वे तद्वद्व्यवहारः। – ibid., p. 287; also cf;

बहुशक्तित्वमप्यस्य तच्छक्त्यैवावियुक्तता॥
शक्तिश्च नाम भावस्य स्वं रूपं मातृकल्पितम्।
तेनाद्वयः स एवापि शक्तिमत्परिकल्पने॥ – TA 1.68-69

[79] परमेश्वरशास्त्रे हि न च काणादिदृष्टिवत्।
शक्तीनां धर्मरूपाणामाश्रयः कोऽपि कथ्यते॥ – ibid. 1.158

[80] स च तच्छक्तिसंयोजन-वियोजन-विश्रमण-तिरस्करण-प्रथनादिस्वाच्छन्द्यसारतया महेश्वररूपो न तु दहन-पचना-ऽऽस्वेदनादिशक्त्याश्रयजड-प्रायहुतवहस्थानीयः। – IPVV, II, p. 338

(xiv) The Śakti-Śaktimān paradigm is seminal to the intrinsic structure of all concepts and theses in the Kashmir Śaivism.[81] Whichever concept one may choose to analyse, this paradigm would be evident by its translation into the very mechanism of the concept. This paradigm is secondarily reduced to the equation of *upāya-upeya* with *śakti-śaktimān* in that order.[82] This issue has already been dilated upon in detail earlier, hence we shall focus only on hitherto untouched aspect from Utpala's[83] suggested equation of the Godhead (*Parameśvara*) with the inner individual self (*pratyagātmā*). Abhinavagupta contends, one is bound to reduce consciousness-power (*citiśakti*) ultimately to the supreme agency (*parākartṛtā*). Reinterpreted in causal terms, the Śaktimān is viewed as agent and Śakti (i.e., *citiśakti*) as (his supreme) agency. What is to be noted is that the Lord, who is the primary cause as the agent, serves as the *upāya* (of Śakti/agency) and agency, which is an effect, becomes *upeya* (of the agent). In a reverse reduction, when one wants to grasp reality, Śakti becomes *hetu*, "(reason/minor term)" and Śaktimān *hetumān*, i.e. *sādhya* ("major term").[84] In this case Śakti is to be treated as *upāya* and Śaktimān as *upeya* in an epistemic relationship. From this it is easy to gather that this means-goal relationship is a reversible proposition between Śakti and Śaktimān whose roles are interchangeable pointing to their intrinsic oneness. In either case, the net outcome remains the same.

(xv) The abovenoted paradigm has some additional perspectives to it. In the manifested world this paradigm is variously interpreted. Between Maheśvara and Śakti, indisputably they exist on the *śaktimān-śakti* axis, but what happens between two Śaktis or between Śakti and the manifested world. In one perspective we have seen that the higher and more inclusive power, even while retaining its Śakti character, enters the role of Śaktimān for the limited purpose of holding the lower or lesser powers within. To this, however, a

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[81] शक्तिश्च शक्तिमांश्चैव पदार्थद्वयमुच्यते।
   शक्त्योऽस्य जगत्कृत्स्नं शक्तिमांस्तु महेश्वरः।। – attributed to the *Mataṅgaśāstra*
[82] शिवप्राप्त्युपायतया शक्तिरेव अतश्च शक्तिशक्तिमतो उपायोपेयभावात्मा क्रमः। – IPVV, I, p. 114.
[83] Vide IPK 1.5.18
[84] यतः प्रत्यगात्मा वृत्तौ परमेश्वर इति कथितः, ततश्चितिशक्तिरिह परा कर्तृता मन्तव्या, विपर्ययेण वा हेतुहेतुमत्ता योज्या। फलं हि तुल्यम्। – IPVV, II, p. 218

new perspective may be added. Between the two Śaktis in a hierarchical scale or between the causal Śakti and the reflected multitude the relationship might be viewed as one between (*śakti*) power and *vyakti* (emanation or manifestation).[85] Within this reflected manifold the primary paradigm reappears, where the consciousness-element constituting the subjective part represents *Śiva* or *Śaktimān* and the insentience-element constituting the objective part represents Śakti.[86]

(xvi) Exegeting *Parā vāk* as *Śakti* per se Abhinavagupta comes out with an immensely innovative and complex formulation of the Śakti-Śaktimān relationship.[87] Śakti is conceived as the absolutic immanence having enfolded within Herself the totality of meaning-world comprising subject and objects in a sequenceless form and is to be distinguished from Śaktimān, that is Parama Śiva, who is characterised by the non-emergence of variety of any hue. Thus He represents the absolutic transcendence. Now this mode of the absolutic being as Śakti, embodying totality in enfolded form, is conceptualised as His "relishing" (*camatkāra/āsvāda*) of His own self. In this formulation Śakti is visualized as relish, joy, that is, *ānanda* and Paramaśiva as its abode. Śakti in this way constitutes the all-enfolding mode of reality and the factum of all-enfoldment itself constitutes the self-referential relish. With this innovative valuation of Śakti Abhinavagupta allows his metaphysics to slide into the domain of aesthetics laying the ground for his much acclaimed rationalization of rasa-experience in terms of Śakti.

(xvii) The same logic is extended to the realm of the religious language, in fact to the realm of the language as such. The state of the absolutic being where there are no referents except the absolute since there is nothing which could be reflected upon, is called, Bhairva. This Bhairava, as Śaktimān, is called *śabdarāśi*, "word-mass", embodying together all the fifty phonemes of the

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[85] संविद्दर्पणप्रतिबिम्बरूपे भावकलापे अभ्युपगम्यमाने शक्तिव्यक्तिविभागः संविच्छक्तिचित्रितनिमेषणोन्मेषणपरमार्थ उपपद्यते न अन्यथा। – ibid., p. 312

[86] येऽपि प्रतिबिम्बरूपा ग्राहकास्तेषां चिद्भाग शिव एवेति उपपाद्य अचिद्भागोऽपि वेद्यात्मा तच्छक्तिरेव। – Ibid., III, p. 271.

[87] तत्सर्व क्रोडीकृत्य अवतिष्ठमाना; न तु शक्तिमद्रूपपरमशिवदशा इव अनुन्मिषितग्राह्यग्राहकादिवैचित्र्या, अतएव भगवतः स्वाभोगं प्रति य आस्वादश्चमत्कारो निजाभोगपरामर्शात्मा, तन्मयी। – IPVV, II, p. 190; तया च योऽसावानन्दमहिमा परस्वातन्त्र्यात्मा उल्लासनीयः, सा भगवतः परा वागिति दर्शितम्। – op.cit., p. 197

alphabet. The very same absolute is reckoned as Śakti, and is also regarded as *mātṛkā* ("matrix/mother") when it comes in contact with the objects of reflection, represented by letters each embodying a reflection, a judgment.[88]

Thus on recapitulation, as noted by B.N. Pandit,[89] we come across three formulations of Parama Śiva, depending upon the angle from which we approach Him:

a. As transcendent: He is dense awareness (*cidekaghana*),

b. When inclined towards emergence of world specially from the perspective of full- ness of joy: He is identified with the *Śiva* category,

c. When the blissful or joyous perspective towards world- manifestation is overtaken by will-penetration :   Parama Śiva is (called) Śakti.

(xviii) The Kashmir Śaivists have consistently hammered upon one point that the first and the foremost condition of any Śakti conceptualization is *abheda*, i.e., absolute non-dualism. That is, in a non-integral environ it would be logically impossible to even think of Śakti, and for that matter, of Śaktimān. It is the absolutist's argument against difference, duality or otherness (*vyatireka*). Somānanda asks: If Śakti be deemed different from Śaktimān, who is it that works in the state of difference?[90] A thing can distinguish one object from an other only when it has a proven separate existence, but in the case of Śakti-Śaktimān, what is it that is sought to be differentiated and by whom[91]? Moreover, if the two are believed to exist independently, the consequent dependence on the 'other' will demolish the very doctrine of the autonomy, sovereign majesty (*Īśitā*, lit. Lordliness), of the Lord?[92] Similarly in the eventuality of the Śaktimān's separate existence the Śakti appellation would

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[88] एकामर्शस्वभावत्वे शब्दराशिः स भैरवः।
   आमृश्यच्छायया योगात्सैव शक्तिश्च मातृका।। – T.A. 3.198
[89] Cf. Koṣa, vol.2, p. 650
[90] भेदे हि शक्तिः किं कार्यं करोत्युत च शक्तिमान्। – S. Dr. 1.4.
[91] पृथक्सिद्धं वस्तु वस्त्वन्तरं भिनत्ति, नहि शक्तेः शक्तिमदतिरेकेण पृथक्सिद्धिरेवास्ति इति किं केन भेद्यम्। – T.A.V., II, p. 111
[92] ....सापेक्षत्वे ह्यनीशता। – MVV 1.698

turn out to be a linguistic anarchism,[93] it could be anything else – property (*dharma*), quality (*guṇa*), attribute (*viśeṣaṇa*), but Śakti. Even the analogy of reflection here does not help. Because in reflection even though difference (between the reflected image and its archetype) is non-existent yet it shows, but in the case of Śakti, even this socalled showing of difference too is not there, since this would virtually amount to a contradiction in terms.[94] So Śakti-Śaktimān phenomenon is clearly a case of the absolutic dialectics. This is brought out by Utpala again in a highly imaginative construction, without even making a direct reference to Śakti and Śaktimān, while equating *pratibhā* ("intuitive awareness/intelligence/genius/re-imaging") with *Maheśvara*.[95] In the whole Śaiva tradition Pratibhā is identified with Śakti.[96] Abhinavagupta in the very beginning of the *Tantrāloka* goes to the extent of treating it as *Bhairavayoginī*.[97] It is no coincidence that in the whole of Indian poetics Śakti has become synonymous with Pratibhā.[98] Against this backdrop, in his exegesis of Utpala[99] Abhinavagupta brings out his master's intention eloquently in no uncertain terms in the notion of Pratibhā, that is, the absolute unity, identity, oneness of Śiva and Śakti: Pratibhā is Maheśvara.

Historical evolution

The idea of Śakti has evolved over time within the system. However, this paper can only briefly look into that aspect. Among the āgamas that are usually associated with the Kashmir Śaivism, the *Mālinīvijayottara* representing as it does our earliest

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[93] भेदस्थितेः शक्तिमतः शक्तित्वं नापदिश्यते। – IPK 4.1.5

[94] अभेदात् इति। प्रतिबिम्बे हि भेदोऽसत्रपि आभाति तावत्; शक्तौ तदपि नेति आशयः। – IPVV, III, p. 270

[95] सा चैषा प्रतिभा तत्तत्पदार्थक्रमरूषिता।
अक्रमानन्तचिद्रूपः प्रमाता स महेश्वरः॥ – IPK 1.7.1

[96] प्रतिभातत्त्वं शक्तिलक्षणम्। – N.T.U., I, p. 191

[97] नौमि चित्प्रतिभां देवीं परां भैरवयोगिनीम्। – TA 1.2

[98] शक्तिः कवित्वबीजरूपः। – Kā.P.

[99] प्रमातृत्व-माहेश्वर्याभ्याम् उपचिता लब्धपरिपोषा, तत एव उपचयबलादेव उचितः पुंस्त्वनिर्देशः। – IPVV, II, p. 341

It may be noted that, nourished by *pramātṛtva* and *māheśvarya* (i.e. *jñātṛtva* and *kartṛtva*) Pratibhā (normally used in feminine gender in Sanskrit diction) has been delineated here in masculine gender as Maheśvara. Abhinavagupta means to say that gender attributions are logically inconsequential, at the most they reflect linguistic norms and compulsions. In this equation as enunciated by Abhinavagupta, one might note a veiled hint towards seminal formulation of twofold Pratibhā into *bhāvayitrī* (appreciative) and *kārayitrī* (creative) respectively. This might be construed as a metaphysical grounding provided by Abhinavagupta [in terms of subjectivity (*pramātṛtvā/jñātṛtva*) and agentiality par excellence (*māheśvarya/kartṛtva*)] for the later poetic category of Pratibhā in its. twofold conceptualization.

known sources, speaks of an inherent relationship between Śakti and the creator of the world, but it is difficult to say if it could be described as wholly monistic. It does speak of the oneness of the Divine creative will, the emergent state of Śakti, which in course of self-differentiation undergoes Śakti-differentiation, and from this point onwards assumes the infinite variety of the subjects, objects and phonemes.[100] The two āgamas claiming their affiliation to still older *Rudrayāmala Tantra*, namely the *Vijñānabhairava* and *Parā-Trīśikā*, do evince absolutistic attitude. The *Vijñānabhairava*,[101] in very clear terms, moots the idea of Śakti and Śaktimān and their intrinsic unity shedding even a shade of duality whatsoever. It also enunciates the notion of Parā Śakti lending gnostic orientation to it thereby espousing the unity of power and knowledge (*śakti* and *jñāna*) and discovery of Śaktimān through Śakti. It is the *Vijñanabhairava* that actually renders Śakti's triple gnostic instrumentality, though generally ascribed to the *Mālinīvijaya*, in terms of unity, unity-duality and duality, a phenomenon that has enormously impacted the later formulations of Śakti. The tone of the *Parātrīśikā,* which is said to have inspired commentaries by a sizable number of Pratyabhijñā authors, is non-dualistic preaching the essential unity of microcosm with the macrocosm as subsisting within the nature of Śakti. Śiva, described as the transcendent *Anuttara,* is viewed as Śaktimān who potentially contains the entire existence, both mobile and immobile, within as does a tiny seed the enormous banyan tree within symbolized by Śakti.[102] The *Netra-tantra* emphasized the blissful character of Śakti that demarcated it from the blissless Śiva.[103] A further rich source of āgamic valuation of Śakti is provided by the Krama

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[100] या सा शक्तिर्जगद्धातुः कथिता समवायिनी।
इच्छात्वं तस्य सा देवि सिसृक्षोः प्रतिपद्यते।।
सैकापि सत्येनकत्वं यथा गच्छति तच्छृणु। – MVT 3.5-6
एवमेषा द्विरूपापि पुनर्भेदैरनन्तताम्।
अर्थोपाधिवशाद्याति चिन्तामणिरिवेश्वरी।।
तत्र तावत्समापन्ना मातृभावं विभिद्यते।। – ibid., 3.8-9

[101] शक्तिशक्तिमतोर्यद्वदभेदः सर्वदा स्थितः।
अतस्तद्धर्मधर्मित्वात् पराशक्तिः परात्मनः।।
न वह्नेर्दाहिका शक्तिः व्यतिरिक्ता विभाव्यते।
केवलं ज्ञानसत्तायां प्रारम्भोऽयं प्रवेशने।। – V.Bh. 18-19

[102] यथा न्यग्रोधबीजस्थः शक्तिरूपो महाद्रुमः।
तथा हृदयबीजस्थं जगदेच्चराचरम्।। – PT 24

[103] सानन्दा तु पराशक्तिर्निरानन्दस्तु परः शिवः। – cited in Koṣa, p. 659

āgamas.[104] In the Krama āgamas we come across two definite strands with the alternating emphasis on Śiva and Śakti as being the primary reality, though in either case the Krama approach boasts of monistic rigour holding different visualizations of Śakti (e.g., Anākhyā, Saṃkarṣiṇī, Jayā, Kubjikā, Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī, Kālī) all devouring duality and shining in their pristine awareness. Coming from revealed to the human literature the earliest formulations we come across with are from Vasugupta (800-850AD) who accords a philosophical orientation to the mythological images of Śakti equating Umā and Kumārī with Śakti as well as the absolutic will.[105] The whole creation, i.e. the world of Śiva, is projected either as a proliferation of His power or a mass or aggregate of His powers.[106] On either reckoning the Śakti-texturing is not diluted. To be endowed with Śakti is the innate condition of being, hence impure and pure, i.e. individual and cosmic, subjectivity is inlaid with Śakti. As such, Śakti-visualization is deemed to be the source of realization of both, the limited powers as well as the absolute sovereignty (*vibhūti*).[107] Vasugupta finds this point conducive for introducing the concept of *cakreśatva*, "the mastering of the cycle of powers," as constitutive of the absolute sovereignty, identical with the subjective autonomy.[108] This conceptualization reflected a landmark internalization of the Śaivist who saw his Self as an actor, his inner personality as the stage and his sense-faculties as the audience aesthetically appreciating the outside world as spontanetus expression of his infinite internal autonomy pulsating with life.[109] Vasugupta offered a refreshingly poignant aesthetical paradigm in which an actor exercised absolute control in drifting away from his original self to the enacted self and again going back to his original self rendering the perceived world as personal enactment of a self-scripted narrative in stark departure from one where the external world was the shadow of an impotent contentless subjective reality through machinations of an

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[104] Such as the *Kālikākrama, Kramasadbhāva* and *Jayadratha-yāmala.* My understanding of these Krama āgamas is based on the references made to them in the printed Śaiva works and the valuable studies by Braj Vallabha Dwivedi, Dyczkowski and Sanderson.

[105] इच्छा शक्तिरुमा कुमारी। – Ś. Sū 1.13

[106] स्वशक्तिप्रचयोऽस्य विश्वम्। – Ś. Sū 3.30

[107] शुद्धतत्त्वसंधानाद्वापशुशक्तिः। – ibid. 1.16
शक्तिसंधाने शरीरोत्पत्तिः। – ibid. 1.19

[108] सिद्धः स्वतन्त्रभावः। – Ibid 3.13

[109] Vide Ś.Sū 3.9-11: नर्तक आत्मा; रङ्गोऽन्तरात्मा; प्रेक्षकाणीन्द्रियाणि।

inexplicable impersonal agency. Śivānanada is another important author on the contemporary scene hailed as Avatārakanātha in the tradition for founding the Krama system whose views are of critical importance. Though the tradition is divided over his exact affiliation[110] as to whether he subscribed to the ultimacy of Śiva or that of Śakti, he reckoned Śakti as *Kālī* and identified it with Divine autonomy conceived in terms of extreme dynamism.[111] The unitary flow of Śakti underwent self-differentiation due its functional modes, numbering twelve (thirteen, according to the differing interpretation). These functional modes later came to be known as *kṛtya* in their causal aspect[112] and *kālīs* in their manifested aspect.[113] Śivānanda was responsible for radicalizing the way Śakti was to be looked upon in future in the system. Among the second generation philosophers came Kallaṭa (825-875 AD),[114] the author of the *Spanda-kārikā*[115] and a direct pupil of Vasugupta. Kallaṭa gave a new orientation to the dynamic construction of reality, just like the Krama, in terms of *spanda*, "vibration". He reiterated Vasugupta's postulation of Śiva as the Lord of the cycle of powers (*cakreśa*), positing *spanda* (lit., slight movement) in terms of unfoldment and enfoldment (*unmeṣa/nimeṣa*) of powers and abstracted reality in those of pure kinesis. The absolutic power was perceived as a unity of knowledge and action, being the characteristic attribute of the absolute.[116] This was further reformulated in terms of innate autonomy.[117] Thus paving the way for perceiving the absolute as omniscient and omnipotent, this doctrine could be said to have anticipated and inspired the Pratyabhijñā formulations of *jñāna and kriyā* as *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* integrated into the notion of *svātantrya.* In the Spanda cosmology the ultimate power was designated as primary or universal (*sāmānya*) vibration and the whole of external world as the instance of secondary, particular or specific (*viśeṣa*)

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[110] For details see *K.T.*, pp. 104-108

[111] श्रयेत्स्वातन्त्र्यशक्तिं स्वां सा श्रीकाली परा कला। – cited in Ś. Śū. V. on Ś.Sū. 3.13

[112] Namely emanation, sustenance, withdrawal and rest in the three phases of rise, maintenance and dissolution each.

[113] एकं स्वरूपरूपं प्रसरस्थितिविलयभेदतस्त्रिविधम्।
प्रत्येकमुदयसंस्थितिलयविश्रमश्चतुर्विधं तदपि।। – cited in TAV, III, p. 197

[114] For historical and other details see K.T., 111-122

[115] Kṣemarāja and Maheśvarānanda attribute the authorship of the kārikās to Vasugupta himself.

[116] तदाऽस्याकृत्रिमो धर्मो ज्ञत्व-कर्तृत्वलक्षणः।
यतस्तदीप्सितं सर्वं जानाति च करोति च।। – Sp.K.10

[117] यतः स्वतन्त्रता तस्य सर्वत्रेयमकृत्रिमा। – ibid., 7

vibration enlivened by the former.[118] This catalyzed into transformation of the aesthetic metaphor of the stage into that of a sport in which the realized self now visualized the external world as an ongoing frolicking activity of his own awareness.[119] Moving forward Kallaṭa accorded a metaphysical orientation to the popular perception of Śakti as strength (*bala*) and enterprise (*uddyoga*) making it a part of the Śakti-vocabulary. This spiritual enterprise, duly buttressed by strength, i.e. power, was conceived as leading to the clearer, more distinct visualization of self.[120] As a part of the Śakti dialectics, on the inverse side, ignorance (*ajñāna*) was seen as being instrumental to the exhaustion caused by sapping of spiritual energy.[121] As against this, the firm grounding of the self on his own endows him with absolute control and enjoyment rendering him thereby the Master of the Cycle of Powers, a theme with which Kallaṭa begins and ends his kārikās.[122]

Kallaṭa's maternal cousin and pupil Pradyumna Bhaṭṭa, the author of the *Tattvagarbha Stotra,* subscribed to the ultimacy of Śakti, though remaining within the monistic Śaiva fold.[123] In his leanings he appears to have sided with the Krama. He seems to have two conceptions of Śakti. In the first conception as the ultimate principle, Śakti comprehended Śiva within, though Śiva in His turn was an all-inclusive principle – there was no such form of speech as was not present in Śiva. That is, Śakti was viewed as the super-inclusive principle.[124]The entire cetegorial world of thirtysix categories was an expansion of Śakti hence, even the determinate

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[118] गुणादिस्पन्दनिष्यन्दाः सामान्यस्पन्दसंश्रयात्।
लब्धात्मलाभाः सततं स्युः। ….   ।। – ibid., 19
[119] इति वा यस्य संवित्तिः क्रीडात्वेनाखिलं जगत्।
स पश्यन् सततं युक्तो जीवन्मुक्तो न संशयः।। – ibid., 30
[120] यथा ह्यर्थोऽस्फुटो दृष्टः सावधानेऽपि चेतसि।
भूयः स्फुटतरो भाति स्वबलोद्योगभावितः।। – ibid. 36
  This was a formulation whose impact could be seen later in the Abhinavan hermeneutics of recognition in his commentary on the *Dhvanyāloka* (1.8).
[121] ग्लानिर्विलुण्ठिका देहे तस्याश्चाज्ञानतः सृतिः।
तदुन्मेषविलुप्तं चेत् कुतः सा स्यादहेतुका।। – Sp.K. 40
[122] तं शक्तिचक्रविभवप्रभवं शंकरं स्तुमः।– Sp.K. 1; तदा ल्वेकत्र संरूढस्तदा तस्य लयोद्भवौ।
नियच्छन् भोक्तृतामेति ततश्चक्रेश्वरो भवेत्।। – ibid., 51
[123] अन्यच्च यैः शक्तिवादिभिः … इत्येवमभिधानात् शैवदर्शनरिथतैरपि सद्भिः। – Ś.Dṛ.V., p. 101
[124] स्वभावस्थितिं मुक्त्वा, तस्मान्नान्यास्ति सा दशा।
शिवे यस्या न वाग्रूपं सूक्ष्ममप्राप्तसंनिधि।। – cited in Ś.Dṛ.V., pp 101-102

manifestation had freedom as its nature.[125] In the second conception, Pradyumna Bhaṭṭa considers Śakti category, the second stage of cosmic emanation, as "slight swelling up"[126] (*kiñciducchanatā*), a view that was aggressively contested by Somānanda – who introduced the concept of *aunmukhya* (lit., proneness) as a cognate concept of *kincidūchantā*.

At this point enter Pratyabhijñā philosophers, headed by Somānanda (875-925 AD) who showed unflinching faith in the supremacy of Śiva and ardently stood by non-difference between Śakti and Śaktimān.[127] For him, this was a universal principle unexceptedly applicable to all instances. Thus Śiva, the Śaktimān, was conceived as one's own self, consisting of five powers namely awareness (*cid*), bliss (*ānanda*), will (*icchā*), knowledge (*Jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*). The first two defining His transcendence and the next three, in their intense subtlety, immance.[128] He concretizes into the worldly forms by his own power.[129] Gnoli[130] and Kaw[131] both draw our attention to the central element in Somānanda's thesis. According to him, the will, the first state of consciousness, preceding every activity has two moments – an initial moment of tension and the actual will. Corresponding to Pradyumna Bhaṭṭa's "slight swelling up", Somānanda envisions in all our activities "an element of 'drive', of 'urge', of an inner conation (*saṁrambha, aunmukhya, udyoga, samudyama*) which, directed towards a given end, contains within itself the image of things to come. This tension is the most intimate and central activity of consciousness."[132]This tension (which might be traced to the root/to tend), also described as the "initial moment" (*prathamā tuṭi*), boasting an aesthetic lining (*āmoda*),[133] is marked by the

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[125] श्रीमद्भट्टप्रद्युम्नपादैः संविच्छक्तिप्रसरमात्रतां षट्त्रिंशत्तत्त्वमुपपाद्य यत्तुवितत्य विकल्पप्रतिभासनस्य स्वातन्त्र्यमुदितं तत्र…। – IPVV, II, p. 337

[126] सैव किंचिदुच्छूनता कथ्यते भट्टप्रद्युम्नेन तत्त्वगर्भे। – cited in S.Dr.V., p. 16

[127] शक्तिशक्तिमतामुक्ता सर्वत्र ह्यभेदिता। – Ś.Dṛ. 3.65

[128] सुसूक्ष्मशक्तित्रितयसामरस्येन वर्तते। – Ś.Dṛ. 1.5

[129] शिवः करोतु निजया नमः शक्त्या ततात्मने। – ibid. 1.1

[130] Cf. "Śivadṛṣṭi by Somānanda", pp. 16-22

[131] Cf. *The Doctrine*, pp. 66-67

[132] Loc. cit.

[133] यदा तु तस्य चिद्धर्मविभवाभोदजृम्भया।।
विचित्ररचनानानाकार्यसृष्टिप्रवर्तने।
भवत्युन्मुखिता चित्ता सेच्छायाः प्रथमा तुटिः।। – Ś.Dṛ. 1.7-8
[आमोदः = चमत्कारः Ś.Dṛ.V.]

commingling vibration of all powers.[134] Retaining this joyous tinge (*prabhāvāmodabhāvitaḥ*) Somānanda modifies the aesthetic metaphor of the "play of awareness" into the "play of the joyful sovereign".[135] By pronouncing the ultimate character of the world being in the nature of Śiva (*śivātmaka*), Somānanda in effect means that there is nothing that is without the power of Śiva. It is because of its Śakti character a thing is called existent (*sat*).[136]

Utpala (900-950 AD) is one of our most important theoreticians and is known as the originator of the Pratyabhijñā school. What is strange, Utpala in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā* and *Vṛtti* does not directly define Śakti, skips Śakti as a category from the cosmological scheme (*śakti-tattva*), and employs the word *śakti* only as a predicative suffix to the substantive proper names (e.g., *māyā-śakti, pareśa-śakti, kāla-śakti* etc.). Yet some of his formulations bring his attitude into sharp focus. The first is a two-way formulation in terms of *śaktyāviṣkaraṇa*[137] ("discovering through power") and *śaktiprakāśana*[138] ("manifesting through power") with reference to the ascending and descending realizations respectively. In the former Śakti is the 'extraordinary faculty' the recognition of which as a sign leads to the discovery of the self as the Godhead obscured by delusion and in the latter, it is 'absolute autonomy' recognition of which is responsible for bringing to light the inner absolutic character of the practical reality of conceptions and names (*jñānābhidhānātmā*). That the power in this context is knowledge and action, or subjectivity and agency to be precise, becomes evident when he defines the Godhead as the self who has recognized himself as filled with infinite knowledge and action.[139] Thus the final equation that emerges is: Power is equal to autonomy is equal to knowing and acting. The individual self and the Supreme Self both are

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[134] एतेष्वेव प्रसङ्गेषु सर्वशक्तिविलोलता। – S.Dṛ. 1.11

[135] यथा नृपः सार्वभौमः प्रभावामोदभावितः।।
क्रीडन्करोति पादातिधर्मांस्तद्धर्मधर्मतः।
तथा प्रभुः प्रमोदात्मा क्रीडत्येवं तथा तथा।। – ibid. 1.37-38

[136] अथेदानीं प्रवक्तव्यं यथा सर्वं शिवात्मकम्।
नाशक्तो विद्यते कश्चिच्छक्तं वस्त्वेव। – ibid. 4.1, cited by Kaw, op. cit, p. 99

[137] शक्त्याविष्करणेनेयं प्रत्यभिज्ञोपदर्श्यते। – IPK 1.1.3
Śakti is *asādhāraṇaprabhāva*, and *āviṣkaraṇa* is *abhijñāna-khyāpana* according to Utpala's *Vṛtti*:
असाधारणप्रभावाभिज्ञानख्यापनेन दृढनिश्चयरूपं प्रत्यभिज्ञानमात्रम् उपदिश्यते। (on IPK 1.1.3)

[138] शक्तिप्रकाशेनेशादिव्यवहारः प्रवर्तते। – IPK 2.3.17; शक्तिप्रकाशेन शुद्धस्वातन्त्र्यादिहेतुप्रदर्शनेन – Utpala's Vṛtti on ibid.

[139] इत्थमाविष्कृतशक्त्यभिज्ञानम् आत्मानम् अनन्तज्ञानक्रियाशक्तिनिभृतम् ईश्वरं प्रत्यभिज्ञाय – Vṛtti on IPK 4.1.15

Śaktimān and divine in their respective domain, the dividing line being non-recognition and recognition of powers as belonging to them.[140] Though the absolute is transcendent and immanent, it is the latter aspect the Pratyabhijñā is more concerned with. Since awareness-principle constitutes the external reality, the world, there is no scope for anything else. Hence all modes of cognition or action have to be deduced as powers. Accordingly perception, memory, logical determination and action are called *jñāna-, smaraṇa-, apohana-,* and *kriyā-śakti* respectively.[141] It is the reason the soteriological realization of the self, conceptualized as *samāveśa* ("immersion") in the system, which is gnostic in nature, is viewed as Śakti-samāveśa.[142]

Utpala's metaphysical classification of powers into *īśvaraśakti* "Lord's power" and *maheśvaratā/maheśvara-śakti* "Supreme Lord's power" is semantically very significant[143] indicating the essentially divine character of reality in both of its phases– empirical and metempirical. Śakti is viewed as the definition of non-dualism: in case Śaktimān is reckoned as different, Śakti would lose its very signification.[144] Giving a valuational orientation Utpala rationalizes *īśvaraśakti* as lacking in self-repose (*ātmaviśrānti-virodha* i.e., other-looking, extroverting) whereas *maheśvaratā* is the self's self-resting or self-repose (*ātma-viśrānti*).

After Utpala, his grand pupil Abhinavagupta (950-1020 AD) is by far the most important author for anything connected with Kashmir Śaivism. However, since most of the insights and ideas in this paper are drawn from him, we propose to skip his views for fear of repetition.

Among the post-Abhinava Śaiva thinkers Kṣemarāja (975-1025 AD) occupies the place of the highest eminence. While explaining the phrase *śakticakravibhavaprabhavam* ("source of the majesty of the cycle of powers") in his

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[140] Cf. परिज्ञातेश्वरभावस्य – Vṛtti on IPK 4.1.12; ईशशक्त्यैव अपरिज्ञातया – ibid., on IPK 4.1.9

[141] चित्तत्त्वमेव विश्वरूपम् अतोऽतिरिक्तस्य अनुपपत्तेः … अस्यैव ज्ञानादिकाः शक्तयः। – ibid. on IPK 1.3.7

[142] अस्य प्रमातुरेतद्बोधमयतामापन्नस्य ज्ञानं तच्छक्तिसमावेशलक्षणम् उच्यते। – ibid. on 3.2.12

[143] क्षेत्रज्ञस्यापि ईश्वरशक्त्यैव विकल्पारंभ इति तद्दशायामपि परिज्ञातेश्वरभावस्य… महेश्वरतैव। – ibid. on 4.12

[144] Cf. सा च ईश्वरशक्तिः स्वात्ममात्रविश्रान्तिविरोधाय मायाव्यपदेश्या। – ibid. on 4.9-10;
उक्ता च सैव विश्रान्तिः सर्वापेक्षानिरोधतः।
स्वातन्त्र्यमथ कर्तृत्वं मुख्यमीश्वरतापि च।। – APS 23.

commentary, *Spandasandoha,* on the first verse of the *Spanda-kārikā*[145] he develops a complete hermeneutics of Śakti within the overall framework of the Krama system and his version of Kashmir Śaivism called *Akulatrika*. It must be noted, however, that here the powers stand for a pluralistic concept, Śiva being their ultimate undifferentiated prius. In all Kṣema accords eleven interpretations. We may take a look at them[146] seariatim: (i) The manifest world of our experience represents His powers. That is whatever shines is His power; (ii) Our senses are powers and their natural disposition is to reach out to their respective objects; (iii) Śakti represents the deity presiding over the sense/s. In a formulation, peculiar to the Krama system, these are sourced to the trans-sequential reality manifesting successive world of fivefold acts (*kramārtha*); (iv) Śakti represents *mantra* and *mudrā* arising from and being absorbed into Śiva; (v) Śakti, by implication, would stand for the mind of the adept which is brought to rest within Śiva's own nature; (vi) Śakti means initiation, grace and the visualization of the object of meditation; (vii) Powers here represent deities Brāhmī etc. who signify and preside over the consonants from *'ka'* to *'ma'* and the series of cause-deities headed by Brahmā who are unable to ascend to higher level of non-dual absolutic reality or, on an alternative construction, are capable to ascend to the increasingly higher realms by discarding the lower ones; (viii) Śakti means *yoginī*, both internal and external, representing one of the *khecarī, gocarī, dikcarī, bhūcarī* and her consort (hero/es = *vīra/s*), dispenser of lower yogic accomplishments; (ix) Śakti stands for *vāmeśvarī,* who presides over cycles, both internal and external, named Khecarī, Gocarī, Dikcarī and Bhūcarī, technically called *pañcavāha* in the Krama parlance; (x) Śakti represents feelings of attachment, aversion, anger etc. governed by respective āgamaic deities and bodily elements equally governed by them; (xi) Śakti means the ray of pure consciousness capable of entering into free and unitary light of consciousness. By ascribing so many senses to

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[145] यस्योन्मेषनिमेषाभ्यां जगतः प्रलयोदयौ ।
  तं शक्तिचक्रविभवप्रभवं शंकरं स्तुमः ।। – Sp.K. 1

[146] (i) प्रकाशमानं विश्वमस्य शक्तयः, (ii) शक्तिचक्रस्य इन्द्रियवर्गस्य, (iii) शक्तिचक्रस्य करणेश्वरीचक्रस्य, (iv) शक्तिचक्रं मन्त्रगणो मुद्रासमूहश्च, (v) शक्तिचक्रेण दीक्षानुग्रहध्येयसमापत्त्यादिना, (vi) (व्याख्यातेन च शक्तिचक्रविभवेन....दीप्तिः) यस्य साधकचित्तस्य, (viia) शक्तयो ब्राह्मादिदेव्यो ब्रह्मादिकारणमाला च, (viib) तस्यैव शक्तिचक्रस्य (viii) शक्तिचक्रं खेचरी-गोचरी-दिक्चरी-भूचर्यादिः बाह्यान्तरताभेदभिन्नो नानायोगिनीगणः, तदुपलक्षितो वीरव्रातश्च, (ix) श्रीवामेश्वर्यधिष्ठितानि खेचरी-गोचरी-दिक्चरी-भूचरी-चक्राणि आन्तराणि बाह्यानि च, (x) शक्तिचक्रस्य आगमसम्प्रदायप्रसिद्धनानादेवतापरमार्थस्य रागद्वेषविकल्पादिप्रत्ययग्रामस्य, तथा देहाश्रित्तद्देवतापरमार्थनानाधात्वादिगणस्य, (xi) शक्तिचक्रस्य स्वातन्त्र्याद्वयनिजमहाप्रकाशानुप्रवेशकारिस्वमरीचिनिचयस्य। – Sp.S., pp. 15-23

the word *śakti* Kṣemarāja intends to propound that one's own nature is Śiva in accordance with the tenets of the most exalted (*uttama*) system called 'Akula Trika', as distinct from Kula Trika or Anuttra Trika, which subscribed to the absolute reality in both the phases– transcendent and immanent.[147]

In the post-Kṣemarāja phase the two authors who impress are Jayaratha and Maheśvarānanda, beside Bhāskarakaṇtha to some extent. But their merit lies in reconstructing, explaining and presenting the original data. Not much of new ground is seen there hence they may be deferred to some future occasion.

To conclude. What makes Kashmir Śaivism relevant today. In what way could it address our contemporary concerns? Concerns are very much real, menacing and traumatic: globalization, consumerism, clash of civilizations and terminally challenged right to dignified life and cultural identity under the constant shadow of extermination. The unequivocal answer world be: By an honest and willing appropriation of the true import of the Śakti doctrine in our life and way of thinking. In the immediate context of Kashmir and Kashmiris it has all the more significant and demonstratable bearing.

Śakti is the name of the ethos of Kashmir Śaivism. Śakti is the notion of integrity, unity, dignity and beauty. It does not call for dissolution of individuality, rather inspires one to fill it with fullness, all-encompassing universality. It constitutes a beacon call to look for perfection as a value in the imperfect and go on raising its level to that of the fullest awakening. Then, Śakti is not simply an idea, or an ideal for that matter, but an imperative, a requisite for the life of fulfillment, for the life of dignity, for realizing one's infinite and highest potential without fear and doubt, be it an individual, a community, or a nation. In the *Spanda-pradipikā*, Bhaṭṭa Utpala defines Śakti as virility, whose possessor dies not, decays not, falls not from his infinitely empowered innate existence:

> *vīryaṁ sadāluptaśaktiḥ nāśābhāvācca tadvataḥ /*
> *ātmasattvāparibhraṁśalakṣaṇādvairyamāsta /*
> *anantaśaktiḥ sā sāmarthyāt sarvataḥ sadā //. – (Sp. P., p. 104)*

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[147] एवमनेन श्लोकभागेन… विश्वोत्तीर्णो विश्वमयश्च उत्तमाकुलत्रिकाद्याम्नायोपदिशा स्वस्वभाव एव शंकरः इति उपपादितम्। – Sp.S., p. 24.

This state of entrenchment within one's own leads to infinite empowerment in perpetuity resounding Vedic declaration – *nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ.* (*Muṇ.U.*3.2.4) Recognition of one's identity, one's potential as a never ending pursuit generates strength, confidence in one's capacity to achieve, courage to face challenge and actualize his higher mission. It would be quite in order to go back to Prasad, the great Hindi poet of Kashmir Śaivism already alluded to at the outset, who in the following stanzas, implores us, the humans, to shed our growing weakness and indulge head on into the sportive activity of power urging human beings who are essentially power-electrons but are helplessly on the costant run owing to their fragmented existence to surge forward so as to integrate and make the humanity a winner:

विश्व की दुर्बलता बल बने, पराजय का बढ़ता व्यापार।

हंसाता रहे उसे सविलास, शक्ति का क्रीडामय संचार।।

शक्ति के विद्युत्कण, जो व्यस्त विकल बिखरे हैं हो निरुपाय।

समन्वय उसका करे समस्त, विजयिनी मानवता हो जाय।। – (*Kāmāyanī,* Śraddhā Canto)

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