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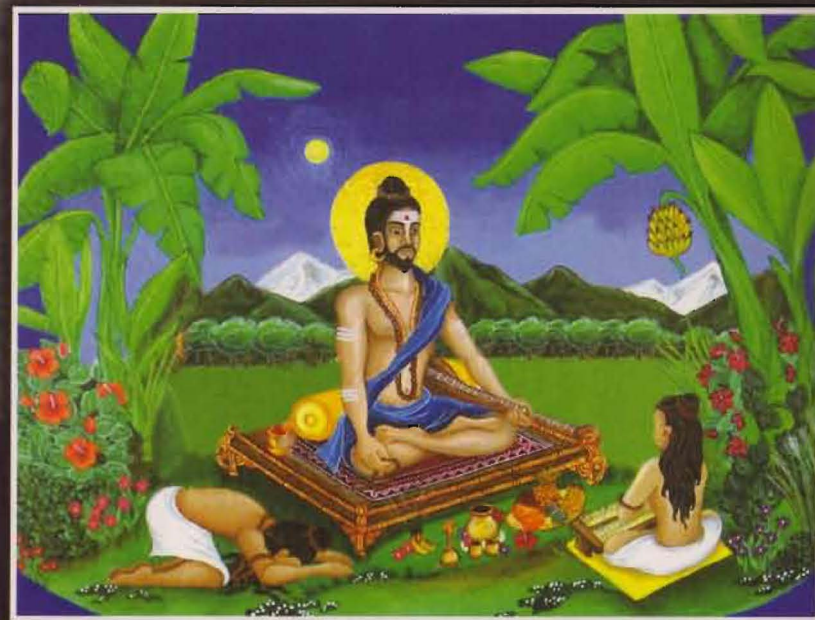
Abhinavā (अभिनवा)



Abhinavā (अभिनवा)

Perspectives on Abhinavagupta

Studies in Memory of K.C. Pandey on His Centenary



Edited by

Navjivan Rastogi

Meera Rastogi, *joint editor*

Till the advent of Prof. K.C. Pandey on the Indological horizon, the Sanskrit academy was hardly aware that Abhinavagupta—the most towering creative genius of medieval India—was more a philosopher than a literary critic and that his foray into poetics, in fact art and aesthetics as such, was to complement and substantiate his metaphysical and soteriological vision and that his contribution has been phenomenal in both the realms along with their allied and applied ramifications. It was largely for Pandey to unearth Abhinavagupta from the historical and academic oblivion and highlight the unique poignancy of Abhinavan contribution as being nurtured by a unified dynamic integral world-view having perfection, that is, oneness of the being and the beautiful, experience and expression, beingness and bliss, foundationally enshrined in its epicentre. Thus, Pandey proved to be a "path discoverer," *pathikrt* and a "system-builder," *tarkasya kartā*. He consistently, and cogently, demonstrated through his numerous writings the intrinsically reciprocal congeniality that obtained between the Trika metaphysics on the one hand and its aesthetics on the other, where the former constitutes the genesis (*kāraṇa hetu*) of the theory of art and the latter the psycho-epistemological synthesis to the proper understanding of the tantrico-philosophical stipulations.

The volume opens with a fairly long préface introducing the underlying theme and spirit of the whole venture followed by a biographical essay on Pandey's inspiring life plus a comprehensive bibliography of his writings. The opening segment is followed by the Part One comprising reminiscences from a cross-section of his students and admirers including quite a few surviving close associates and contemporaries. The next two parts constitute the substantive portion and are devoted to Kashmir Shaivism and Abhinavan aesthetics, respectively.

Navjivan Rastogi, besides being a pupil in the direct lineage of K.C. Pandey, is privileged to have been a colleague of his master and mentor for six years with whom he (jointly) edited an anonymous subcommentary on Abhinavagupta's *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* (unpublished). Formerly Honorary Director of the Abhinavagupta Institute of Aesthetics and Śaiva Philosophy, founded by his teacher K.C. Pandey, he retired from active service as the chairperson of the Department of Sanskrit, Pāli, and Prākṛta languages, University of Lucknow. Navjivan Rastogi came to prominence with the publication of his *Kṛama Tantricism of Kashmir*, vol. 1. His other major works for which he is known are: *An Introduction to the Tantraloka: A Study in Structure and Kāśmīra Śivādvayavāda kī Mūla Avadhāranāyēn* ("Key concepts of the Śaiva Monism of Kashmir"), in Hindi. He has also edited *Tantrāloka* with the *Vivēka* of Jayaratha, in eight volumes jointly with R.C. Dwivedi. His most recent publication is *Abhinavagupta kā Tantrāgamīya Darśana*. At the moment, his two works are in press. Presently he is, inter alia, associated with Karl H. Potter in editing the EIP (Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies), volume on Kashmir Shaivism.

Meera Rastogi, the joint editor, is a direct student of Navjivan Rastogi. She has recently published her doctoral dissertation "Tāntrika Śivādvayavāda meṅ Icchā-svātantrya tathā Niyamanavāda" ("Free will and Determinism in Tāntric Śivādvayavāda"). As a former General Fellowship awardee of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, she wrote a monograph entitled "Abhinavagupta's Theory of Speech" (unpublished). Presently, she is a lecturer in Sanskrit, University of Lucknow.

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Meera Rastogi, *Joint editor*



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The present anthological initiative starting with "Understanding Kashmir Śaivism: A Contemporary Approach" and extending upto "Kāśmīrī Saundaryabodha kā Samājaśāstra" representing a broad spectrum of perspectives on Kashmir Śaivism and Indian aesthetics as understood by Abhinavagupta and his intellectual lineage constitute homage paid by their respective authors to the hallowed memory of Prof. K.C. Pandey as the pioneer of the studies in the Abhinavan thought in our era. But for Prof. Pandey, we repeat, the contemporary scholarship's access to and understanding of a unique and major thought movement of the Indian philosophy and art speculation would have been severely handicapped. There could not be a better way of paying tribute to the man who strove through out his life to deepen our insight into Abhinavan mind than showcasing contemporary presentations of Abhinavagupta's thought covering both, its systematic evolution as well as philosophical reformulations. Now to be section(part)-specific.

The section on Kashmir Śaivism opens with Sunthar Visuvaliṅgam's thought-stimulating paper titled "Understanding Kashmir Śaivism: A Contemporary Approach." Marking the contemporary understanding of Kashmir Śaivism of Sunthar Visuvaliṅgam is his focus on the two core exclusive philosophical features, e.g., (i) transgressive sacrality and (ii) metaphysics of "descending realization" (*avaroha/vikāsa*). The philosophical formulation of "transgressive sacrality" seeks to define liberation (*mokṣa*) as being enshrined in the transcendental bliss of Bhairava consciousness solely effected by the ritual mechanism of sexual ecstasy (*kulayāga*). The doctrine of autonomy (*svātantrya*) is nothing but harmonizing two opposing polarities by transgressive sacra-lization of the supposedly profane objects like sex, wine and meat. As to the interrelationship between philosophy and ethics the transgressive sacrality transcends morality, a socially desirable notion, in the sense that the end objective of the morality is self-liberation in the ritual and metaphysical context. The symbolic mythical/ritual universe of the Kashmir Śaiva metaphysics is capable of assimilating and integrating the insights of morality and transgressive sacrality in the reconstituted frame. Inspired by Rene Guenon's distinction between "ascending" and "descending"

realizations, though expressed in terms of typical Vedantic ontology, Sunthar Visuvaliṅgam finds its correspondence rather much closer to Kashmir Śaivism. In the philosophical formulation of the esoteric "descending realization" consciousness redescends to integrate to itself world-affirming inclusive non-dualism reconciling and transcending. at the same time, both dualism and non-dualism. The principle of *vimarśa* is the mechanism employed by Abhinavagupta for introducing synthetic epistemology and thereby re-establishing Bhartṛhari's system of values as against Buddhist-logician's deconstruction of ontology and of language and internalizing "tradition" in order to reorient its source in his own experience of the Absolute which, while retaining basic core of the Vedic spirituality, epitomizes spirituality in terms of transgressive sacrality of the Bhairavāgamas. Such a formulation for sure acts as a curtain-raiser for and anticipates G.C. Pandey's reflective insights on the Kashmir Śaiva demolition of the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika logic of deconstruction. The resonance of Sunthar's view is unmistakable in David Lawrence's forthcoming thesis that the homogenized reconciliation of Hindu ethnocentric ethos is better understood in terms of Abhinavagupta's definition of Tradition (*āgama*) bequeathing validity to all traditions subject to time, place, person, etc. This metaphysics of descent is also crucial to our understanding of the aesthetic experience. The experience of an adept (steeped in descending realization) in re-living the worldly experiences in a trans-worldly (read transgressive) mode, is necessarily a beauty-experience or beatific realization.

The following paper by B.N. Pandit ("Kashmir Śaivism: An Orthodox Approach to its History") strikes us with a contrarian approach in presenting a typical orthodox formulation of the history of Kashmir Śaivism showcasing a harmonious blend of abiding faith in the tradition and ground reality of the historical facts. According to Pandit the commonly acknowledged history of Kashmir Śaivism beginning with Vasugupta and Somānanda, factually speaking, represents a much later phase. The actual history is steeped in early antiquity going beyond Indus Valley civilization. It arose and lasted in the form of a *sādhana* which had its nearest counterpart in the praxis of Śāmbhavi Yogamudrā bearing the appellation of Trika yoga. With the

1

Understanding Kashmir Śaivism: A Contemporary Approach*

SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM

The first problem that confronts a student approaching the Śaivism of Kashmir is to identify the core philosophical features which distinguish it from all other schools of Indian philosophy.

Whereas all the other systems derive primarily from the relatively exoteric viewpoint of the “ascending realization” (*saṅkoca*), Kashmir Śaivism is primarily the philosophical formulation of the esoteric “descending realization” (*vikāsa*). “During the ‘ascending’ realization consciousness isolates itself from all objectivity until it transcends the latter through a process assimilated to a gradual process of ‘self-purification. . . .’ But the process attains completion only when consciousness ‘redescends’ to assimilate the entire objective world to itself, a ‘universalization’ culminating in

*This paper has been resurrected from the extensive comments made by Dr Sunthar Visuvalingam on the topics specifically mooted by him for encouraging intensive discussion in the National Seminar on *Kashmir Shaivism*, held at Srinagar from 20 to 24 September 1986, sponsored by the ICPR. Although the discussion on the lines envisaged by him did not take place in the Seminar, his formulations as contained in the working-note prepared by him (a signed copy of which was marked to the editor of this volume for comments) merit serious consideration by the scholars and as such are being reproduced in the form of an article as above. This we thought would be a befitting tribute to the memory of Prof. K.C. Pandey from a scholar who also made excellent contribution to the Abhinavan aesthetics.

the state of *anuttara*, impossible to describe in terms of *saṅkoca* and *vikāsa*, understood as constituting the ultimate essence of Bhairava."¹ Hence, unlike the world-negating exclusive non-dualism of Śaṅkara, the Pratyabhijñā is a world-affirming inclusive non-dualism that claims to reconcile and transcend both dualism and (exclusive) non-dualism.

This naturally brings us to explore the conceptual structure of the philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism defined by descending realization as stated above.

It is because the experience of Bhairava-Anuttara is beyond both duality and non-duality, both immanent and transcendent, because it is rooted in the point of view of the descending realization that the entire *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*, "recognition of the Lord (in all manifestation)," was composed with the aim of defending, on a non-dualistic (*advaita*) basis, the reality and validity of all common-sense (Nyāya) categories (*padārthas* like substance, quality, action, etc.) which sustain our worldly transactions, against the attacks of those Buddhist Logicians who denied the reality of the world. It is no accident that the spiritual attitude, whereby the Trika adept grasps the indivisible unity of the inner substratum of consciousness and the outer world of objects in a single perception, has been called the "Bhairavic posture" (*Bhairavī-mudrā*).² Whereas Śaṅkara's main challenge was the Mādhyamika deconstruction of ontology through logic (principle of non-contradiction) and like his opponents he was unable to philosophically reconcile the non-dual Absolute with the relative reality of the Nyāya world of everyday transactions, Abhinavagupta's main challenge was the Vijñānavāda-Sautrāntika de-realization (momentary *svalakṣaṇa*) of all experience through epistemology though he borrows the critique of his opponents to re-establish the Nyāya categories and principles within a non-dualistic perspective that in some ways returns to the earlier Vasubandhu-Vijñānavāda. Now the principle of *vimarśa* restricts the destructive scope of the dialectics of non-contradiction by introducing a synthetic epistemology based on the distinction between "focal" (*pradhāna*) and "subsidiary" (*gauṇa*) awareness

(*parāmarśa*). Bhartṛhari tried (unsuccessfully) to defend the authority of the Vedic tradition(s) and tradition in general against the Vijñānavādin's empirico-logical critique by replacing their consciousness with his word (*vāc*), ultimately identified with the Vedic Revelation (*śruti*), and by daringly "internalizing" the latter, something which was unacceptable to the orthodox Mīmāṃsā-sakas as it rather jeopardized the literal authority of the Veda in brahmanical life. Dinnāga however turned the tables by reducing all linguistic reality, i.e., invalidating both the authority of the scriptural word (*āgama*) and determinate perception (*savikalpa pratyakṣa*), to mere mental constructions (*vikalpa*) as opposed to transcendent perception (*svalakṣaṇa*) accessible only to yogic introspection. Abhinavagupta re-establishes Bhartṛhari's system of values by replacing word with phenomenon, *śabdavāda* with *ābhāsavāda*, synthetic linguistics with synthetic epistemology that assigns a primarily constructive role to Logic. This explicit subordination of logic to tradition, even while developing and refining it in the service of the latter, is an explicit continuation of the position of the famous grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari in his defence of the Vedic traditions as expounded in his *Vākyapadiya*. My own guru, Mahāmahopādhyāya Acārya Rameshwar Jha, who was steeped in the *Vākyapadiya*, never tired in repeating that the Pratyabhijñā system was, in many respects, only a refinement of this seminal work.³ But if Abhinavagupta was able to culminate the process of internalizing Tradition so as to discover its source in his own experience of the Absolute-Anuttara, this is because the tradition in question is no longer the (reformed) classical understanding of the Veda governing the exoteric norms of public life but instead the transgressive sacrality of the Bhairavāgamas, with their prolongations in the Śaivāgamas. Yet our researches confirm that the esoteric dimension of the Bhairava cult has conserved, under wholly transformed socio-religious conditions, the very core of Vedic spirituality before its codification and suspended animation. Though this explicit formulation of the soteriological distinction between ascending and descending realizations on the background of Trika metaphysics has found late expression in the history of

Hindu traditions, the class of transgressive practices it seeks to account for and justify, along with the abiding symbolic universe they have generated, has been a permanent feature of this tradition from its Vedic origins⁴ and the transgressive essence of Bhairava is in many ways bequeathed to him by the very (Brahmā's fifth) head he decapitates. Otherwise, the glorification of Bhairava in mythological traditions that remain at heart brahmanical and claim to amplify the Vedic doctrines will remain incomprehensible.⁵ Finally, disappearing from the Hindu scene just before the traumatizing arrival of Islam interrupted the inner logic of the development of Indian religion and philosophy, Abhinavagupta has been able to synthesize and/or provide the basis for our own synthesis of all the traditions of religious philosophy that he and we have inherited.

The essence of this Abhinava's synthesis lies in the intrinsic relationship between the thinking on Aesthetics of many philosophers of Kashmir Śaivism and the philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism to which they have made great contributions.

It is not surprising that it is only a metaphysics of the descent, like the Pratyabhijñā, that has provided the basis of a successful account of the aesthetic experience, distinguishing it carefully from the bliss of transcendent reality on the one hand and gross sensuous pleasure on the other. By living through ordinary experiences in an extraordinary mode, the adept of the descent has an essentially aesthetic perception of life.⁶ Aesthetic terms like *rasa* which have both bio-sexual and spiritual dimensions are ultimately intelligible only in the context of esoteric techniques exploiting the very resources of the body to transcend human finitude. "The *rasa*-aesthetic, including *Hāsyā*, is based not so much on the principle of consciousness seeking to escape its biological determinations but rather on the quasi-tantric principle of its turning back to infuse the biological functions, in their emotional expression, with its own lightness, mobility and detachment."⁷ It would moreover seem that Abhinavagupta recognized in the *vidūṣaka* of the Sanskrit drama the condensed reflection of his own transgressive sacrality, for which reason he attributes to him the

(mere) "semblance of humour" *rasābhāsa*.

A very significant area of our enquiry must relate to finding out the specific distinction about the way *mokṣa* is conceived in Kashmir Śaivism from the way it is conceived in other systems. This concern is best answered by the cherished aim of Kashmir Śaivism, i.e., to establish oneself in the absolute bliss of Bhairava-consciousness through the exploitation of the latter's partial and conditioned manifestation in the joy of (especially incestuous in the primordial *kula-yāga*) sexual union, which is however more total and self-absorbing than the other pleasures of ordinary life (and which) especially involves the participation of all the five senses and the mind resulting in their unification. All the incoming sensory impressions serve to kindle and fuel the sexual fire that blazes forth to serve as a vehicle for the expansion of the unsullied consciousness.⁸ Though in practical terms such transgressive exploitation of sexuality, impure substances like meat and wine, negative emotions like anger, fear, etc. and the quest for magical power (*siddhi*), may appear to be diametrically opposed to the quiescent isolative liberation (*mokṣa*) of the other non-tantric systems, experientially and in principle, the dynamic universalizing liberation of the Trika "power-doctrine" or *svātantryavāda* is inclusive of its opposing but complementary pole, just as *vimarśa* itself is inconceivable without *prakāśa*. But such transgressive sacrality, derived from the Bhairava traditions of the Kāpālikas who conceived of an orgasmic Absolute, where *mokṣa* is fused with sensuality (*bhoga*), necessarily presupposes the metaphysical principles upon which the descending realization is based. For the blissful state of Bhairava-Anuttara thereby realized is an undescribable indeterminate fusion of the quiescent transcendent (*śānta*) and the emergent immanent (*udīta*) poles of the supreme consciousness. Those intent on final emancipation concentrate exclusively on the former dimension whereas those seeking the lordship of creative (magical) powers and longevity particularly cultivate the latter aspect.⁹ This soteriological distinction underlies the philosophical ones.

Such radical metaphysical principles which lie at the bottom of

descending realization which again is a source of transgressive sacrality as discussed above at once highlights the perennial moral dilemma. The question may be asked: do moral consciousness and moral experience play any role in the philosophical thinking of Kashmir Śaivism?

The specifically moral point of view is wanting in Hinduism where, as in other archaic societies, it is rather the ritual point of view that holds sway. This does not mean that Hindus are amoral or worse still immoral, but simply that even behaviour that sometimes impresses us as superlatively moral should be viewed from a different angle. Those who wholeheartedly pursue the final goal of spiritual liberation, through that ascetic and renunciatory dimension in harmony with the system of socio-religious interdictions, rigorously observe precepts like non-denial that could surprise and disconcert the most stringent moralist. But such "ethical" conduct is an integral part of, is wholly dependent on, a larger culturally sanctioned design that aims primarily at self-liberation and has no independent or absolute status such as claimed by modern especially a-religious morality. What is important here is that the same precepts, even the fundamental pillars of worldly morality without which no life is possible even in the most secular of societies, may be transgressed by spiritual adepts, including those who had been observing them rigorously and intensely over a long period, in order to achieve the same goal of spiritual liberation but in a different perhaps more effective and quicker mode. The elements of ascetic self-denial and of transgression fused, in sects like the Pāśupata (Lākula being one of the major forerunners of Kashmir Śaivism), into a single discipline and contributing to a single goal, defy all analysis in moral terms and are intelligible only from a ritual point of view that equally justifies certain socio-religious norms as well as their ritual violation. For the moralist to ask whether transgressive sacrality is ethical is to beg a question that cannot arise from the point of view of such sacrality at all. The question to be posed is rather, "what opposing understandings of man's essence do the differing points of view of morality and transgressive sacrality presuppose?" The supreme concept of the Divine, that has devoured and assimi-

lated the demoniac, finds its most forceful expression for Abhinavagupta, in the figure of the terrifying quasi-demoniacal *Bhairava*, the fearful, not only because he represents the dark chaotic destructive aspects of the unconscious, but also, and probably more so, because he represents the sudden breaking in of the "Superconscious," brought about by the deliberate exploitation of these very dregs of the moral consciousness.¹⁰ Whereas Marx, Freud and Nietzsche have in different ways undermined the moral self-assurance of modern man, the symbolic mythico-ritual universe of Kashmir Śaivist metaphysics is capable of constructively assimilating and integrating their insights within a reformulated framework.

Already shaken by the encounter with other and conflicting religions, modern man, whose religious faith been devastated directly or indirectly by the revolutions of the above three secular philosophers, is able to reappropriate the transgressive core of archaic religion only through the application of specifically modern categories and intellectual disciplines.¹¹

At this point, it may perhaps be appropriate if we take up an examination of the weak points in the philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism as it has been formulated up till now.

It may be seen that it is century-long mutual influence in culture and practice and fierce interaction of clashing theological standpoints that has constantly shaped the intertwined evolution of the numerous currents of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Philosophical debate and mutual borrowings also mark the relations between the various Hindu cults, doctrines and philosophical systems, which have always been anxious to establish their own positions through a systematic critique of those of their opponents.¹² Philosophy, in the modern sense, did not exist in India before the rationalizing Buddhist challenge to the traditional brahminical religion, and the genesis and structure of the Pratyabhijñā is wholly determined by the need to counter the rigorous critique of the prestigious Dharmakīrti school of Buddhist Logic in its Kashmirian development as later represented by Dharmottara. Yet for most modern Western Philo-

sophers, Indian and especially Hindu systems of thought would rank only as second-rate philosophy and one could rightly claim that Reason in the modern Cartesian sense has never dawned in Indian history. But for Abhinava, all logic is inconclusive in itself; its use by the various philosophical systems in arguing out their conception of ultimate reality and the means of attaining it is finally only apologetic in character convincing only to those already pre-inclined to adopt the presuppositions and tenets of that particular tradition. According to him the faith should be placed only in the authority of tradition, which is superior to logic, and the tradition in question is precisely that which has established itself in the heart of the individual concerned. If no tradition has been able to lodge itself in his heart, it is so much the worse for him.¹³ Contemporary Indian students of philosophy, having the privilege to witness the relativization of Western Reason by the structuralists and now its deconstruction by the post-structuralists need only rejoice that India has been spared this short-lived self-intoxication followed by disillusionment.

Whereas Kashmir Śaivism was a highly adequate and successful response to the challenges of its time, our interlocutors in modern India are the egalitarian of this-worldly monotheism of Islam, the social critique of Christian *bhakti* and especially the omnipresent subversion of modernism in its protean disguises. Abhinava himself boasts of having learnt at the feet of numerous spiritual masters of diverse Hindu and even heterodox Buddhist and Jaina traditions and of being all the richer spiritually for it. These world views do not even share some of the fundamental presuppositions of classical Indian culture like *karma* (rebirth), polytheisizing tendency of image worship, emphatic legitimization of renunciation and asceticism, or even monastic life (excepting some orders of Catholicism) and so on. Abhinavagupta's example, the task he has left us, is to study the theological traditions of our immediate neighbours not only in their own terms, so as to enrich ourselves, but also critically so as to reformulate possible common platforms against the juggernaut of modernism that negates all ultimate meaning to human endeavour outside of

the immediate comforts of life. In my view *karma*-doctrine, exaggerated valorization of renunciation (*saṁnyāsa*) and much of the philosophical superstructure of Kashmir Śaivism, which in any case are post-Upaniṣadic are some of the features that can be surrendered without compromising the perennial insight of Kashmir Śaivism. Fortunately the task of universalizing these insights and values has already been incomparably prepared for us by the modern esoterist Rene Guenon, born a catholic, converted to Sūfī-Islām, and paradoxically proclaiming till the last the metaphysical superiority of Advaita Vedānta, and who contributed so much to the furthering of interreligious dialogue on a traditional, as opposed to modernistic, basis.¹⁴ Directly or indirectly, through his decisive and determining influence on the *philosophia perennis* of Coomaraswamy, the holistic sociology of Dumont, the religious phenomenology of Eliade, the Islamic esoterism of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and others who are slowly losing their scruples about admitting their indebtedness to him, Guenon has in the course of a few decades profoundly transformed and undermined the ethnocentrism of the human sciences in their approach to non-Western traditional cultures. His distinction between *ascending* and *descending* realizations, though expressed in the typical terminology of Vedāntic ontology, corresponds more closely to the Trika (Pratyabhijñā) point of view apparently unknown to him,¹⁵ at a time when hardly anything was known in the West of its texts and doctrines. The most natural way of adapting Kashmir Śaivism to our times within a framework readily intelligible and acceptable to the traditional spokesmen of the world's great religions would be to translate, each according to his ability and predilection, the various sophisticatedly formulated insights of Kashmir Śaivism into the rudimentary infrastructure bequeathed to us by Guenon. This would necessarily require the *de-Śivaizing* of Kashmir Śaivism.

Hindu "ethnocentrism" is tempered and counterbalanced, in its foremost representative(s), by a resolute relativism that grants validity to every tradition but only for its own adherents. This is best understood in the light of Abhinava's definition of

“Tradition” (*āgama*). All traditions are indeed of the nature of (a set of) injunctions, prohibitions, etc. that take into consideration specific conditions of person, place, time, state, contributory factors, etc. Moreover, conditioned by (consideration of such questions like) what? when? how? and where? all traditions are valid. Even the traditions of the barbarians (non-Indians) are to that extent valid, though due to the (inevitable) contact with non-Indian cultures they are rather semblances of tradition (for those brought up within the Indian culture).¹⁶ This “guenonian” perspective opposed to the mixing of traditions¹⁷ and allowing interaction between them only by their elites through an esoteric mode was applicable only in strictly traditional Indian (or other) societies, where religious systems and faiths, even when juxtaposed, still remain relatively uncontaminated. The proliferating encroachment of modern living conditions throughout the globe has not only of itself eroded religious faith but also by rendering the mixing of traditions increasingly inevitable turns such traditional integrism into wishful thinking that becomes a ready prey to the blind-alley of fundamentalism. All the more so as superficial modernisation of the world religions has led to the further atrophy of their respective esoteric dimensions which normally presuppose a thorough grounding in the exoteric universe of that tradition. “No inter-religious dialogue can be of value or bear any practical fruit, unless the interlocutors are prepared to modify their existing points of view, to admit that much in their own traditions is no longer of any relevance due to changes in general mentality, conditions of modern life, and the spatio-temporal upheavals in the recent history of these traditions. These are precisely the factors that, for Abhinavagupta, define any tradition, and unless its adherents are able to recognize their relative and contingent character and thereby court the danger of religious confusion and loss of faith, there can, instead of borrowing whatever is of value in the other religions, only be a hardening of attitudes into an uncompromising rigidity. The current phenomenon of fundamentalism has not spared any of the major religions and in many respects it is specifically a modern phenomenon.”¹⁸

Abhinava was the crowning theoretician of the transgressive ideology of the Trika (rather Kaula) tantrism, developed out of the radical practices enjoined in the textual traditions of the esoteric Bhairava schools and attributes his highest spiritual realization of the supreme all-devouring Bhairava-Consciousness to precisely such transgressive praxis. At the same time, he clearly recognized the dichotomy between the esoteric and the exoteric domains, the latter governed by rigorous socio-religious norms from which perspective alone he comments on the Sanskrit-drama. Forbidding the uninitiated access to the secret texts of the Bhairava-traditions, he insists on the continuity between the Vedic and the Tantric traditions of esotericism exploiting extreme impurity and radical transgression in order to transcend the pure/impure distinction, and attributes the reticence of the Vedic sages on this transgressive dimension of their realizations to their concern with preserving the exoteric worldly order founded on norms of purity.¹⁹ It was this esoteric transgressive dimension of Kashmir Śaivism functioning at the heart of a strictly traditional society that constituted one of its prime weaknesses by obliging it to infiltrate (and even partly annex) more popular established systems on account of the restrictions on its direct diffusion, for there was no possibility of approaching or studying Kashmir Śaivism from the outside. But with the rapid erosion of the traditional socio-religious structures of Hinduism and the present-day free access to the increasingly popular “forbidden” texts, resulting in the open discussion of its unusual modes of sacrality among the western-educated intelligentsia, this transgressive dimension is revealing itself to be rather the real strength of Kashmir Śaivism. Whereas the secular counter-sciences of psychoanalysis, anthropology and linguistics are subverting Western ethnocentric humanism from within and converging to explore and reveal the hidden coherence and unity of traditional civilizations, their confrontation with such self-conscious formulations of transgressive sacrality should increasingly question the wholly unconscious nature they attribute to its outward manifestations. With one foot in Kashmir Śaivism and the other in modernism, we are in the historically privileged situation of being

able to approach both these opposing paradigms from the outside and their cross-fertilization could well result not only in the inevitable *de-hinduization* of Kashmir Śaivism but also ultimately in the sacralization of these disciplines. And the open recognition and even affirmation of the positive aspects of transgressive sacrality can add little to the increasing dangers of a world disintegrating under the inexorable logic of its own progress.

Thus the development and reformulation must proceed simultaneously in two different but complementary directions: Firstly, dialogue with non-Hindu modes of transgressive sacrality, like sabbatism in the Jewish tradition, the *Mala* "amatyah" among the Sūfis, Taoistic antinomianism in the Chinese civilization, and of course the dialogue with the Buddhist and Tibetan tantrism which had been going on even before the emergence of Kashmir Śaivism; Secondly, the critical appropriation of the conceptual tools and methods of the human sciences especially as applied to the archaic and primitive societies. Just as René Girard, for whom Christianity remains closer to the truth than psychoanalysis and the human sciences, seeks to reinterpret the Christian mystery itself (of Christ's Passion on the Cross) in terms of the primordial violence at the heart of humanity, which the archaic religions were regularly and universally compelled to channel into the mechanisms of the sacrificial scapegoat in order to prevent human society from reverting to undifferentiated chaos, to protect society from man himself;²⁰ so too can Bhairava (and *vidūṣaka*) be better understood in the light of primitive transgressive sacrality, evident even in the Greek Dionysos (and in the Tragedy he patronizes), and conversely the soteriology of Kashmir Śaivism can reveal these supremely coherent primitive universes to be not the mere expression of inner social or logical contradictions but rather the deliberate exteriorizations of extraordinary states of consciousness and of the esoteric techniques they presuppose. Whereas it has been till now fashionable to emphasize those aspects of Hinduism that would place it on a par with the West, specialists of Kashmir Śaivism should rather attempt to reconcile a permanent, and probably even central, dimension of Hinduism with the religions

of the America, Africa and Oceania. Instead of comparing Hindu *bhakti* to a personal god with the same in the semitic religions, or Hindu philosophy with that of Kant, Hegel, and Bradley, or Vedāntic absolutism with that of the Western mystics like Plotinus or Eckhart, or Hindu asceticism with Buddhist or Christian monasticism, the problem of transgressive sacrality in India will bring it spiritually closer to the archaic and primitive religions, whose true sophistication is only recently being revealed to us by the painstaking researches of anthropologists like Levi-Strauss. It is by refocussing attention on parallel phenomena in their own religio-cultural histories that the Semitic religions may be expected to participate on the same platform. India (and especially Kashmir Śaivism) occupies a privileged situation in an interreligious forum on transgressive sacrality because, on the one hand, it has seen the same developments of philosophy, *bhakti*, ethical tendencies, aesthetics, etc., as the Western religions has undergone and, on the other hand, it has always retained that transgressive dimension that seems so central to the intelligibility of archaic religions, but has become obscured in the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. By showing how this transgressive dimension has in Kashmir Śaivism managed to integrate these later developments in India, the way would at least be partly cleared for reconciling the monotheistic tradition with the sources of archaic spirituality.²¹

In Kashmir Śaivism, any mixing of doctrines and practices is rigorously condemned as inevitably leading to disillusionment and falling away from both the traditions concerned. Thus Abhinava warns that the result of such groping, self-searching, even free-thinking dialogue, can only be further inextricable confusion and complete loss of faith, perhaps in all religions. Is this not precisely the predicament of modern man?²² In fact, with the spectacular boom in the publishing industry and the often superficial overdevelopment of the intellectual-centre, it is rather the philosophical and theological aspects of religion that have become wholly discredited, so much so that modern man, having completely lost faith in the capacity of reason to guide him to the Ultimate Truth, seeks to satisfy his growing spiritual hunger with the newfangled

home-made or imported irrational religious cults or with the experiential techniques of practical psychoanalysis or the (often pseudo-)scientific legitimacy of contemporary parapsychology (which has made tremendous advances especially in the civilization of European dialectical materialism). The modern eclectic versions of traditional Indian tantrism certainly cannot, like Rajaneesh himself, find a permanent home in the West and are *persona non grata* even in India. And as recent events have only too clearly shown even the prolongations and adaptations of Kashmir Śaivism in (the *Cit-śaktivilāsa* of) the Siddha-Yoga movement, despite their importance as sources of foreign-exchange, are only too prone to exploit the naive credulity of well-meaning Westerners and Indians and are conversely all the more susceptible to subversion by designs that are quite foreign to Indian spirituality. It is clear that only a form of spiritual discipline experimentally adapted to and developed within the unstable conditions of modern Western life, rapidly becoming the universal norm, can form the basis of a viable future soteriology. Whether we like it or not, it is the now retreating Western colonial expansion that has brought together the non-Western cultures of the world and served as a conduit for meaningful dialogue within the "Third World," and it is surely no accident that Guenon, the incomparable defender of the East, was himself after all a Westerner. The points of contact between the techniques of Kashmir Śaivism and those of Gurdjieff's *Fourth Way* for the harmonious development of man are truly striking, and the latter can easily provide a ready receptacle for the translation of Kashmir Śaivism (and other even non-Indian forms of) spirituality into an idiom appropriate to modern life, all the more so as the central technique of both disciplines is the constant practice of "Self-remembering" (*ahambhāva*) in the midst of all the experience, including the negative emotions of everyday-life. In this context, even such basic principles as the *ātman*, which serves primarily the ideological role, as in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta, of maintaining the continuity and complex hierarchy of values with the other brahmanical systems, and which in any case is a post-Brahmaṇa invention, can be easily surrendered

for Gurdjieff's "materialism" (with a vengeance). Abhinavagupta himself is almost ready, on several occasions, to adopt the Buddhist principle of discontinuity and momentariness (*kṣaṇikavāda*) at a crucial though not the highest level of his Pratyabhijñā, and it is not difficult to reconcile this readiness under the changed circumstances, with Gurdjieff's assertion that modern man is a soulless machine which is nevertheless capable, through hard work, of acquiring a permanent Self. This then is the third direction open to ordinary people struggling to get along in a highly dissatisfying ordinary world and who have neither the time nor the energies left to permit themselves the luxury of dabbling in the other two directions, which easily risk becoming mere intellectual exercises. Ācārya Rameshwar Jha used to repeatedly affirm that, under the present conditions and even in India, it is extremely rare for learning (and even literacy) to coexist with spiritual experience and placed me in the dilemma, on my very first visit, of choosing between studying Kashmir Śaiva-Tantrism or *about* Kashmir Śaiva-Tantrism. And whenever I confronted him with apprehensions about the future of Kashmir Śaivist spirituality after its sole surviving exponent, he was never unduly concerned about its survival as Kashmir Śaivism for "there is no reckoning the modes of spiritual development that flourish only to disappear with the times." However, as professionals, for whom philosophy is more a question of bread-winning than ultimate reality, we need not unduly concern ourselves with this de-philosophizing of Kashmir Śaivism which can, at least for the time being, be left safely in the hands of laymen with more terrestrial preoccupations. Nevertheless, in my PhD thesis on "Abhinavagupta's Bisociative Conception of Humour: Its Resonances in Sanskrit Drama, Poetry, Hindu Mythology, and Spiritual Praxis," I have made a small attempt at integrating the above three directions of development by synthesizing Abhinava's implicitly bisociative understanding of humour (*hāsya*) with Gurdjieff's explicitly bisociative definition of laughter (*hāsa*) in order, with the help of modern conceptual tools borrowed from the most varied disciplines, to formulate a universally valid theory accounting for the transgressive cross-

cultural significance of ritual laughter and humour and thereby capable of solving the enigma of the *vidūṣaka*.

Unlike J.C. Heesterman who would find that Hinduism is no more than the futile attempt to resolve an innate *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, I continue to see this "Inner Conflict" as the expression of the constituting duality of (especially modern) man himself, as is becoming embarrassingly evident from the converging development of psychoanalysis and the other human sciences in the work of archaeologists of the modern West like Michel Foucault. Transgressive sacrality, with its dialectical inner complementarity of the two opposing—*ascending* and *descending*—modes of spiritual realization theorized by Abhinavagupta, has always offered (not only) Hindus the means of resolving, or rather transcending, this "outer conflict of tradition," not on the sociological (or even psychological) level but rather by surpassing the human condition itself, but in a manner that can realize its fullest potentialities.

V.S. Naipaul has bitterly observed that our *Wounded Civilization* is in desperate need of an ideology. Kashmir Śaivism certainly cannot provide this ideology, but Abhinavagupta can certainly provide us the necessary vision and probably even the basis for gradually evolving such an universal ideology that, like Gandhism in its own time, will go beyond the more provincial, though necessary, concerns of "national integration."

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2. Cf. BH, p.11.

3. Cf. TS, p. 21n23.
4. Ibid., p. 10.
5. Cf. BH, p. 8.
6. Cf. TS, p. 9.
7. V. Suntharlingam, "Abhinavagupta's Biosociative Concept of Humour: Its Resonances in Sanskrit Drama, Poetry, Mythology, and Spiritual Praxis" (PhD thesis), Department of Philosophy, Banaras Hindu University, 1983, p.13.
8. Cf. BH, p.12.
9. Ibid.
10. Cf. TS, pp.10-13.
11. Ibid., p.17.
12. Ibid., p.13.
13. Ibid., pp.14-15.
14. Ibid., pp. 20-21n18.
15. Ibid., p.10n8.
16. Ibid., p.14.
17. Ibid., p.13.
18. Ibid., p.17.
19. Ibid., p. 8; V. Suntharlingam, "Abhinavagupta's Biosociative Concept . . ." (PhD thesis), p. 20.
20. TS, p.11.
21. Ibid., p.16.
22. Ibid., pp.13-14.