Part II

\textit{Vāk: Transformation between the Perceptible and the In-perceptible}
**Part II**

*Vāk*: Transformation between the Perceptible and the In-perceptible

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Part II

Vāk: Transformation between the Perceptible and the In-perceptible

1. Association of manḍalas with the concept of vāk

The following references of vāk traced in the Buddhist tantras are to demonstrate the prevalence of the concept of vāk in the tantric ambience of the period that may have influenced the creations of the manḍalas in Tabo and Alchi.

1.1. Tantric background of manḍalas

1.1.1. Deities of manḍalas: saṃbhogakāya: vāk aspect of Dharma

According to the Mahāvairocanaḥsaṃbodhi Tantra, manḍalas manifest the kāya aspect of Vairocana, while mantras and mudrās stand for respectively his vāk and citta aspects. Here, the tripartite of kāya, vāk, and citta, is a compound of inseparable three in whose totality the Dharma is manifested. Thus, even when manḍalas are said to be the transformation of the kāya aspect of the Enlightenment, they should be viewed in relation to the vāk and the citta aspect together, because the kāya of the Dharma is indistinguishable from its vāk and citta aspects.¹ Moreover, the divinities depicted in manḍalas are the saṃbhogakāya manifestation of the Dharma, which is the vāk aspect of Mahāvairocana according to the same Tantra. Manḍalas consisting of saṃbhogakāya divinities should be subsequently viewed as the expression of the vāk aspect of the Ultimate Dharma.

¹ The inseparability of the tripartite has been well argued in the Buddhaguhya’s commentary to MVT XXII. 1, trans. Hodge 2003: p.348.
1.1.2. Re-consideration of the theory of vāk in the field of Buddhist studies and the problem of translation

The Sanskrit term vāk is interchangeable with the term śabda, when it denotes the essence of ordinary sounds. Yet, it is closer to the śabda-brahman if it directs to the Highest Principle conceived in the form of sound. The doctrine of vāk has been looked upon within the study of Hindu tantras or Indian philosophy of language. In contrast, its importance has not been duly recognized in the study of Buddhist tantras, except the attentions paid by a few scholars. Even though it is frequently encountered in the feature of the tripartite, kāya-vāk-citta and the mantra practice has been taken central in the understandings of the Buddhist tantras, the fundamental concept of vāk has not been brought forth into the fore. The vital importance of the concept of vāk in the Buddhist practice is evident in the fact that the two essential soteriological techniques of Buddhist tantras, that is, the mantra and the visualization, have their common background in the power of vāk. As the fundamental basis for the practices employing mātrkās, bijas and mantras, vāk serves as the guiding agent in sādhanas, and the power of vāk critically works in the process of transformations in the visualization.

The profound meaning of sound, whether it is named vāk, śabda or dhvani in Sanskrit terms, is certainly not the invention of Bhartrhari, or the sole domain of Tantrism. The speculation on vāk starts from the Rgveda and we find profound conceptions of the vāk in the Upaniṣads. That the mantra practice has already occupied an important place in the Mahāyāna tradition proves that the philosophy of the primeval sound and the power of phonemes had been established in the Buddhist context as well. Already in the Gaṇḍavyuha Sūtra assigned to the period before the 2nd century A.D., the practice with phonemes has been introduced. In the story of

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2 Cf. Hodge 2003: p. 5. In the translator’s introduction to the Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra, Hodge gives a summary of the features of Buddhist tantras: “Speculaisons on the nature and power of speech are prominent, especially with regards the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet.”

3 See Falk 1943: pp. 3-26; Padoux 1992: pp. 4-29.

4 The first Chinese translation of the Avāmsaka Sūtra that includes the Gaṇḍavyuha Sūtra is assigned to the period around 2nd century A.D.

5 The story of a youth Silpabhiṣṭa in the Gaṇḍavyuha Sūtra informs us that the Buddhist had already known the practice of phonemes, if it was not a part of Buddhist practice.
Silpābhijña, the phonemes are taught as instrument to bring the practitioner to the wisdom. For example, by pronouncing $A$, one enters a door of prajñā called sphere of totality. Lama Anagarika Govinda remarks,

"the knowledge of the creative sound lived in India. It was further developed in the various Yoga-systems and found its last refinement in those Schools of Buddhism which had their philosophical foundation in the doctrine of the Vijñānavadins."

Although his acknowledgment of the Vijñānavadins as the last refinement of the sound theory needs a careful examination, his placement of Buddhism in the context of the sound theory is valuable.

It should be pointed out that the term vāk is charged with layers of meanings and symbolism, and that these symbolic layers of the term have been overlooked while dealing with Buddhist practice and philosophy. The term vāk has been conveniently translated into 'speech' in English. The routine translation of the term into 'speech' often veils its profound layers of concept and obstructs us to conceive its metaphysical dimensions. Further, narrowing the scope of the tripartite, kāya-vāk-citta, by translating them into the English term 'body-speech-mind' causes misunderstanding because we try to interpret the concepts, more or less, in the sense of human constituents. Especially, when we encounter the tripartite kāya-vāk-citta in the descriptions of the Absolute, we fail to grasp the meaning because of the preset idea of body, speech and mind at the psycho-physical level. The English translation hampers us to see the subtle layers of the vāk concept, thus, we are led to view the vāk as discursive speech. Thus, I keep vāk untranslated, when the English translation of the Buddhist texts are quoted in the present thesis.

The problem of translating 'citta' is not different. We should keep in mind that

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8 The problem of translating cit as 'consciousness' has been raised and criticized in the context of Trika Śaivism. See Fürlinger 2006. Cit should be discerned from citta in the context of Trika Śaivism. The former signifies the Pure Divine Consciousness, while the latter denotes the individual consciousness in
the translation of ṣaṅk and citta into ‘speech’ and ‘mind’ brings down these concepts on a flat ground and prevent us from considering the concepts beyond the psycho-physical level. The concept of ṣaṅk in the Buddhist context needs a new light in line with its significance in Indian spiritual traditions.⁹

1.2. Buddhist practice of syllables

1.2.1. References to the ṣaṅk cakra and its concept as the mediating agent in between two poles

The maṇḍala of ṣaṅk cakra, consisting of aksaras, has been expounded in chapter X of the Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra. In the exposition of the maṇḍala of ṣaṅk, ṣaṅk is discerned as the mediating agent between the nirmāṇakāya and the dharma-kāya, and between all beings and dharmadhātu. Thus, in the following passage, the emanations of the maṇḍala of ṣaṅk have been compared to ‘gates’.

“Lord of the Secret Ones (Vajrapāṇi), behold the vast emanations of the Mandala of my ṣaṅk cakra which pervade limitless world systems, which are gates of purity, gates which satisfy all beings according to their wishes and make known the dharmadhātu to each of them individually. They are at present engaged in the performance of Buddha activities as Śākyamunis in unlimited world-systems that are more extensive than the realm of space. Yet, Lord of the Secret Ones, concerning that, beings do not know that this is the arising of the Mandala of the Bhagavat’s ṣaṅk cakra, that they are Buddha Bodies arisen from the Essence of the arrayed of Adornments of the ṣaṅk of the Buddha, which produces them to satisfy being according to their wishes.”¹⁰

It explains that the emanations from the maṇḍala of ṣaṅk cakra pervade all the world systems, which indicates the all-pervading nature of ṣaṅk. These emanations are the gates in between dharmadhātu and all beings. Through these gates, the dharmadhātu is revealed in all beings according to what they wish, and through the same gates all

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⁹ See Falk 1943.
beings enter into the *dharmadhātu*, therefore, they are called gates of purity.\(^{11}\) Śākyamunis, who are innumerable *nirmāṇakāyas* in all the world systems, are said, in the text, to have been born from the *vāk cakra* in order to satisfy all beings.

Buddhaguhya clarifies the term *vāk cakra*: "it is called a *cakra* because the *vāk* of the Tathāgata which arises in various kinds of forms, enters the [consciousness] streams of beings."\(^{12}\) Thus, the expression of ‘*vāk cakra*’ connotes that the *vāk* is the mediating agent between bodily forms and consciousness (*kāya* and *citta*), as well as between all beings and the *dharmadhātu*.

1.2.2. Philosophy of syllables

In the *mantrayāna* practice, the sound of *mantras* and *aṅkaras* (syllables) are comprehended as the subtle manifestation of *śānya*. The *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra* explains that qualities of Tathāgatas are transformed into the letters of the *mantras*.\(^{13}\) Having narrated the attribute of the Perfect Enlightenment, the Bhagavan Vairocana declares,

> "Hence I revealed this reality in the form of letters, by the power of transformation, to illumine the world, and out of pity for beings I teach everything to them."\(^{14}\)

The *Tantra* views that the syllables are the receptacle of the Truth and Reality, and illumine the world. It is believed that the properties of *mantras* in the absolute level are not created. It precedes the appearance of Tathāgata. It is the *svabhāva* of all phenomena, and the *svabhāva* of the *mantras* of a *mantrin*.\(^{15}\)

The sound of Sanskrit syllables and phonemes are symbols, which have esoteric values in the *mantra* practice. Chapter II of the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra*

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.
\(^{13}\) Cf. MVT II. 82-3, trans. Hodge 2003: p. 132.
\(^{15}\) MVT II. 81, trans. Hodge 2003: p. 131.
explains, for example, "A is a gate to all phenomena because they are unarisen from the beginning. Ka is a gate to all phenomena, because they are without purpose. Kha is a gate to all phenomena, because they cannot be perceived as objects, like the sky, etc." \[16\] Here, the phonemes are explained as samādhi gates. In samādhi, the transformation of phonemes into samādhi gates is both relative and absolute. On the relative level, they manifest the Buddha’s qualities. On the absolute transformation, they reveal the fact that all the phenomena are unborn from the very beginning and they are intrinsically empty. \[17\] The syllables with anusvāra, such as ṇa, ña, ṇa, Na and Ma, have been specifically explained as the cause of mastery of all, because the anusvāra is the symbol of śūnya. The syllables with the anusvāra are the laksāṇa (signs) of śūnya, therefore they are endowed with all power. \[18\]

1.2.3. Syllable A

In making the vāk-maṇḍala, it is instructed in the Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra,

"In the center there is the Bhagavat Mahāvairocana....He should draw either his mudrā, his body-image, or his syllable. Of these, his syllable is A." \[19\]

A, which plays the essential part in the process of the visualization, as we have observed in the Part I, is the syllable of Mahāvairocana. The Nāmasaṃgiti explicitly narrates that Mahāvairocana or the Ādibuddha is born of A, and is A.

"And in this way the blessed one, the Buddha, the completely awakened, born from the syllable A (akārasaṃbhavaḥ), is the syllable A, the foremost of all phonemes (sarvavarnāgryo), of great meaning, the supreme syllable (paramākṣarah)." \[20\]

\[17\] Cf. Buddhaguhya’s commentary of the MVT II. 84, trans. Hodge 2003: p. 133. Cf. MVT II. 83 comm.: "The relative is the transformation and manifestation of the Strengths, Fearlessnesses and so on, as words and letters. The absolute is the manifestation of the intrinsic emptiness of all phenomena, which are unborn and unarisen from the very beginning, as letters." (trans. Hodge 2003: p. 132).
In the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra*, Vajrapāni requests Vairocana:

"Please explain the ground of the perfect Buddhas, with whose attainment-accomplishing words the sons and daughters of good family abide in this very world, experiencing joy and happiness, without being out of tune with the *dharmadhātu*."\(^{21}\)

On this request, one is advised to recite the syllable ‘A’. Here, A is the principle through which one could realize the non-dualism between the *dharmadhātu* and all the phenomena.

A is taken as the Essence (*hrdaya*) of all mantras, and all mantras are contained within A.\(^{22}\) "It is the supreme life-energy, and is called the most excellent magnet."\(^{23}\)

A has four variations: \(\text{A, } \breve{\text{A}}, \text{AM, AH}\). A signifies Enlightenment; \(\breve{A}\), Practice; \(\text{AM}\), Perfect Enlightenment; \(\text{AH}\), Nirvāṇa.\(^{24}\) In the *Sarvatathāgatasamgraha*, AH is instructed to be the heart mantra of all entry (*āveśa*).\(^{25}\)

The syllable ‘A’, the first vowel in Sanskrit, is associated with the entry to the *dharmadhātu* in the mantra practice.\(^{26}\) The following passage from the tantra describes esoteric definition of four syllables of A.

"Immediately after he (Mahāvairocana) had entered it (*samādhi*), there arose the four modes from a single sound, the sounds which make known the entire *dharmadhātu* without remainder, whose strength abides in the *dharmadhātu*, whose strength is equal to the unequalled, which arise from the fervent inclination (*adhimokṣa*) of the perfect Buddha and which having pervaded all of the *dharmadhātu* became space-like: *NAMAH SARVATATHĀGATEBHYO VIŚVAMUKHEBHYAH SARVATHĀ A Ā AM AH* (Salutations to Sarvatathāgata, who are all-forms and omnipresent! A Ā AM AH)

As soon as these essence of the perfect Buddha had arisen, then the sounds


\(^{22}\) Cf. MVT. IV. 17, trans. Hodge 2003: p. 163.

\(^{23}\) MVT VI. 57, trans. Hodge 2003: p. 188.


\(^{26}\) Cf. MVT VI. 106.  *A* with *anusvāra* is visualized and imagined as the tranquil *dharmakōya* and the ground of all.
which make things known, characterized by the words of the essence of the perfect Buddha, sounded forth from each one of the gates, which communicate the entire dharmadhātu.”

The above passage describes the four modes of \( A: A \bar{A} A\bar{M} A\bar{H} \). The power of four \( A \) derive from dharmadhātu. Because they abide in dharmadhātu, they have unequalled power and they are the essence (hrdaya) of the perfect Buddha. They are the gates from which sounds that make known such things as pots, sheets etc. sound forth. Here, we are rendered with the fundamental basis of the mantrayāna method: sounds designating distinct or indistinct objects derive from the dharmadhātu; since the dharmadhātu is the essence of words and sounds in the mundane communication, by uttering the essence of these sounds (syllables) one reaches the dharmadhātu.

1.3. Tantric Conception of the Highest Divinity in the Nature of Sound

1.3.1. Reference to ‘the single unborn sound’ as the source of all the words

The above reference from the Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra (VI. 19-20) accounts for the development of sounds: from a single sound, four \( A \) arise; when these four \( A \) has arisen, further the sounds of mundane phenomena sounded forth. Here, we come across a remarkable reference to ‘a single sound’ that is the ultimate origin of the words we use. Buddhaguhya in the commentary to the above teaching of the Tantra adds that ‘a single sound’ from which these four \( A \)s arise is “unborn and unarisen”. The association of four \( A \) with the dharmadhātu, repeatedly cited in the verses, suggests that ‘a single sound’ refers to the dharmadhātu, and that here the dharmadhātu has been conceived in the form of sound. It is another noteworthy point that the description of the cosmogony of sounds that make things known is followed by the salutation to Sarvatathāgata in the mantra. Is Sarvatathāgata also another name of this source of sounds?

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29 Cf. ibid.
1.3.2. Question about the significance of Sarvatathāgata in the mantra practice

The Sarvatathāgata as encountered in the Sarvatathāgatagarbhasāstra have been referred to in Part I, in the context of the symbolism of maṇḍala deities. References to the Sarvatathāgata abundantly occur in descriptions of the maṇḍala deities in the text. While reading the tantras, the term ‘All the Tathāgatas’ as equivalent to Sarvatathāgata causes a considerable confusion and hampers us from grasping the meaning of the descriptions. In the translation ‘All the Tathāgatas’, we tend to imagine a collection of innumerable Tathāgatas, most often with personified forms. Under this heading, I will examine the significance of the Sarvatathāgata, and raise a question whether it means ‘all Tathāgatas’ or it is rather a proper noun in place of dharmadhātu, with a further emphasis on the innate vibrant power.

For the examination of the significance of Sarvatathāgata, here I pay careful attention to the opening passages of chapter 1 of the Sarvatathāgatagarbhasāstra.

"At that time, Sarvatathāgata filled this Buddha-world (buddhaksetra) just like sesame [seeds packed closely together in a sesame pod]. Then Sarvatathāgata gathered as if in a cloud and betook themselves to where the Bodhisattva, Mahasattva Sarvarthasiddhi was seated at the place of enlightenment (bodhimaṇḍa)\(^\text{30}\)

The text continues telling that Sarvatathāgata, manifesting the saṃbhogakāya, spoke to Sarvārthasiddhi,

"How will you, who endure ascetic practices without knowing the essence of Sarvatathāgata (sarvatathāgatagarbhasāstrābhijñatayā), realize unsurpassed perfect enlightenment (anuttaram samyaksambodhiṃ abhisambhotsyase)?\(^\text{31}\)

The thorough pervasion of Sarvatathāgata in buddhaksetra has been compared to the sesame seed packed in the sesame pod. The use of sesame is significant because its

\(^{30}\) STTS I, trans. Giebel 2001: p. 23. When I quote the translation of Giebel, the term Sarvatathāgata is left un-translated, whereas he uses ‘All the Tathāgatas’.

literal meaning of bija could imply the association of the Sarvatathāgata with mantras. The association of Sarvatathāgata with mantra practice is more plausible when we look at the fact that the Sarvatathāgatas are said to have guided Sarvārthasiddhi on the way to Enlightenment through mantras, and that the entire maṇḍala deities are said to derive from the mantras originating from the Sarvatathāgata. The description that Sarvatathāgata took the sambhogakāya form when it communicated with the Bodhisattva in the bodhimāṇḍa indicates that the Sarvatathāgata remained in another form before the manifestation of its sambhogakāya. Probably dharmākāya is its state before the sambhogakāya manifestation. As is described with the metaphors of the sesame seed filling space, or of the contraction of airs into clouds, Sarvatathāgata in dharmākāya state may be envisaged as the innate dynamic forces of expansion and contraction.

Let us now look at the critical question put forward by Sarvātāthāgatas. This question is in other words, the voice of sambhogakāya Sarvatathāgata telling that Sarvārthasiddhi should know the Sarvatathāgata Tattva in order for the Perfect Enlightenment. It signifies that the Sarvatathāgata Tattva is primary in quest for the perfect enlightenment. Here the matter how tattva is translated would be crucial for the correct understanding of Sarvatathāgata. Even though the term tattva features in the title of the text ‘Sarvatathāgata-Tattva-Samgraha’, the term ‘tattva’ has not received its worthy attention. Thus, it is either taken insignificant or translated with the term ‘Truth’. In this context, a short reference to the term ‘tattva’ made by Chandra is enlightening. In one of his articles, he points out that the tattva in the title of the text means ‘essence, core, heart’. If we are reminded that the term tattva has been used in Indian philosophical schools in the sense of ‘the category of reality’, thus given with numerical classification, Sarvatathāgata Tattva is more reasonably interpreted as the ‘Highest Principle or Essence which is called Sarvatathāgata’. Though it is the sambhogakāya form of the Sarvatathāgata that plays major parts throughout the text, it should be clearly perceived that it is the dharmākāya form of Sarvatathāgata that lies as the origin of maṇḍala deities. The Sarvatathāgata Tattva is the origin of mantric power.

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that brings forth bodily manifestations of deities, and the knowledge (abhijña) of this essence is the method to attain the Perfect Enlightenment.

In the Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra, the allusion of the Sarvatathāgata as the source of mantras is explicit. In the chapter XII, titled ‘The Dharma Letter Method, The All-penetrating Gate’, Vairocana, having explained the samādhi gates formed by the syllables and letters of mantras, praises the mantra method in the following words.

“This is the Dharma discourse regarding skill in the letter method, the process of abiding in the mantra method, that which is transformed by the transforming power of Sarvatathāgata, the process of upholding the deity, the skill in the method of all full and perfect Buddhas and the dance of Bodhisattva practice.”

It is unambiguous in the above statement of the Tantra that the mantrayāna is based on the transforming power of Sarvatathāgata. And another reference to Sarvatathāgata from the same tantra will be worthy of mentioning in order to demonstrate the correlation among Sarvatathāgata, dharmadhātu and the essence of sound, as conceived in the mantrayāna practice. In the closing scene of the chapter II, we read,

“As soon as the Bhagavat (Vairocana) had entered it (samādhi), Sarvatathāgata uttered a sound that permeated the dharmadhātu and completely protected all the realms of beings without remainder, and spoke this powerful protector Queen of Vidyā-mantras.....”

Though the above examination of Sarvatathāgata cannot be said extensive, the references to Sarvatathāgata quoted above urge us, without lacking, to see and reconsider the significance of the Sarvatathāgata in the mantrayāna practice. Sarvatathāgata could be a designation for the Relative (extensive) dharmadhātu, in contrast to the Profound dharmadhātu, which undergoes the transformation into various forms. Its transformational power is conceived in the nature of sound, thus, Sarvatathāgata is comparable to the Primeval Sound, which is the source of all sounds.

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1.3.3. Vāgīśvara /Mañjuśrī as Dharmadhātu

The concept of Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-Mañjuśrī needs a careful attention. Mañjuśrī as the presiding deity of the maṇḍala is equated to the dharmadhātu, which is a designation for the Ultimate Dharma. Why is especially Mañjuśrī venerated in equal to the dharmadhātu and regarded as the manifestation of Mahāvairocana? In this regard, his association with vāk, thus called Vāgīśvara, seems to be the ground. The name, Vāgīśvara, should be considered in the context of the prevalent tantric practice where the concept of vāk is intimately associated with the divinity and the perfect knowledge.

Mañjuśrī represents the jñāna, thus, called jñānasattva.\(^\text{35}\) In the Yogatantras, his nature is described in relation to vāk, or sound. Mañjuśrī who is identified with Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara in the maṇḍalas is his aspect of Mañjughoṣa (gentle sound). The mantra of Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara Mañjughoṣa is a ā sarva-tathāgata-hṛdaya hara-hara om hūṃ hṛ̤īḥ / bhagavan jñāna-mūrti vāgīśvara/ mahāvāca sarva-dharmagagan-āmala supari-suddha dharmadhātu-jñāna-garbha ōḥ.\(^\text{36}\) Here, the recitation of ‘jñānamūrti vāgīśvara’ and ‘mahāvāca’ displays well the nature of Mañjughoṣa conceived in terms of vāk. The mantra of Mañjughoṣa given in the Śādhanamālā is same as that of Vāgīśvara: ‘Om Vāgīśvara Muh’. Muh is the bija of Mañjughoṣa.

In chapter I of the Sarvatathāgatatattvamāṇgraha where the epiphany of Sixteen Bodhisattvas has been described, Mañjuśrī, turned from Vajradhara, says,

“Oho I am thought of as Mañjughoṣa (gentle sound) of All Buddhas (sarvabuddhanāṃ mañjughoṣa), by whose wisdom which is formless, the essence of sound will be attained (yatprajñāyā arūpiyā ghoṣatvamupalabhyate).”\(^\text{37}\)

\(^{35}\) The complete title of the Nāmasaṃgīt is the mañjuśrījñānasattvasyaaparamārtha nāmasaṃgīti-parisamāptah (from the colophon of Paris ms. 62; Filliozat 1941: 31). Other variant Sanskrit titles are given in Chandra 1993: pp. 381-4.


\(^{37}\) Snellgrove translates ‘yatprajñāyā arūpiyā ghoṣatvamupalabhyate’ into “in that knowledge which is formless is conceived as sound”. Cf. STTS, ed. Snellgrove & Chandra 1981: p. 22.
Buddhaguhya describes in the commentary to the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra* Mañjughoṣa as the *prajñā* connected with *vāk* in nature.\(^{38}\) We see that the remarkable connection between *vāk* and *prajñā* is implied in the tantric concept of the Bodhisattva. Mañjuśrī’s prominent twofold association well speaks out the position of *mantrayāna* in that the knowledge of *vāk* is the prominent means to attain *prajñā*.

In relation to the association of Mañjuśrī with *vāk*, we can draw upon the issue involved in the text *Nāmasaṃgīti*. While reading the text, we face the problem, ‘whom are the verses of *Nāmasaṃgīti* directed to?’. We lose the sight of the object of these devotional hymns, because we encounter not only Vairocana or other names of Mañjuśrī like Vajradhāra (v.111), but also names that normally designate other divinities, such as Vajrānātha or Amoghapāsa (v. 66). Scholars like Davidson\(^{39}\) and Wayman\(^{40}\) interpreted that the text is addressed to Mañjuśrī when they translated the text. On the contrary, Chandra, by examining the titles of traditional manuscripts in Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit reaches the conclusion that the verses are devoted to the Paramārtha of Yogatantra (*Advaya*), which corresponds to the term *tattva* (essence, core, heart) in the title of the root Yogatantra, *Sarvatathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha*.\(^{41}\) He points out the role of Mañjuśrī as the locuter in a number of Mahāyāna texts, such as *Saptasati Prajñāparamita* or *Sadharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*. The homage to Mañjuśrī is given in the third verse of the chapter about the *māyājāla-bhīṣambodhi-krama*.

> “Om homage to you, Embodied Knowledge of Insight (*prajñājñānamūrtaye*), Cutter of Suffering, Sharp as a Vajra. Homage to you, Lord of Speech (*vāgisvāra*), Gnostic Body (*jñānakāya*), Arapacana!”\(^{42}\)

Once Śākyamuni summoned Mañjuśrī and paid homage to him with the above verse, the verses that would come afterwards are the hymns cited by Mañjuśrī. Having taken the interpretation of Chandra, we notice that the verses with descriptions of various

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\(^{39}\) Cf. Davidson 1981.

\(^{40}\) Cf. Wayman 1985.

\(^{41}\) Chandra 1993: p. 385.

attributes and diverse names are addressed to the Ultimate Dharma, Paramarthā or Dharmadhātu.

In the Nāmasaṃgīti, the Ultimate Dharma, or Ādibuddha is often associated with vāk and mantras, as is consistent with the fact that the mantrayāna practice claims such an important place in Yogatantras. The following verses from the text verify the Paramārtha conceived in relation to mantras.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mahāprāno hy anupādo vāgudāhāravarjitaḥ} & \quad (v. 29) \\
\text{sarbābhilāpahetvagryaḥ sarvavāksuprabhāsvaḥ} & \\
\text{“Aspirated, un-originated, without uttering a sound, he is the foremost cause of all expression, shining forth within all speech.”}^{43}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mahāvidyottamo nātho mahāmantrottamo guruḥ} & \quad (v. 41) \\
\text{mahāyānanayārūḍho mahāyānanāyottamaḥ} & \\
\text{“Being highest with mahāvidyās, he is the protector; being highest with mahāmantras, he is the guide. Having mounted to the practice of the Mahāyāna, he is highest in the practice of the Mahāyāna.”}^{44}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{mahāvairocano buddho mahāmaunī mahāmuniḥ} & \quad (v. 42) \\
\text{mahāmantranayodbhuto mahāmantranayātmakāḥ} & \\
\text{“Being Mahāvairocana, he is Buddha; he is a great sage with profound sapience, and as he is produced by the great practice of mantras, by nature he is the great practice of mantras.”}^{45}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{vāgīśo vakpatir vāgmī vācaspatir anantagīḥ} & \quad (v. 50) \\
\text{satyavāk satyavādi ca catuḥsatyopadesakaḥ} & \\
\text{“As the lord of vāk, the commander of vāk, possessed of eloquence, he is the master of vāk, unending in fluency, and with true vāk he speaks the truth, teaching the four truths.”}^{46}
\end{align*}
\]

In addition to the above verses, verses 65, 101 and 111 can be cited as conspicuous

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44 Ibid.
examples that embody the concept of the Ultimate Dharma or Ādi Buddha in association with vāk.

The following verses from the text represent the Ultimate Dharma perceived in multi-dimensional forms in association with aksara and mantra.

\[
\text{sarvasambuddhabodddhavyo buddhabodhir anuttaraḥ} \\
\text{anakṣaro mantrayonir mahāmantrakulatrayaḥ} \|
\text{(v. 143)}
\]
\[
\text{sarvamantrārthajanako mahābindur anakṣarāḥ} \\
\text{pañcākṣaro mahāśūnyo binduśūnyah satākṣarāḥ} \|
\text{(v. 144)}
\]
\[
\text{sarvākāro nirākāraḥ śoddāśārdhādhabindudṛk} \\
\text{akalāḥ kalanāṭitaś caturthadhyaṇakōṭidṛk} \|
\text{(v. 145)}
\]

"To be realized by all Buddhas, as the enlightenment of the Buddha, he is supreme; devoid of syllables, his source is in mantra; he is the triad of the great mantra families.

The progenitor of the significance of all mantras, he is the great bindu, devoid of syllables; with five syllables and greatly void (śūnya), he is voidness in the bindu, with one hundred syllables.

Having all aspects, having no aspects, he bears four bindus;\(^{47}\) partless, beyond enumeration, he sustains the limit at the level of the fourth meditation.\(^{48}\)

The abundant references to vāk and mantras related to the Paramārtha in the text leads us to understand that vāk is the factor that connects Mañjuśrī and the dharmadhātu. The vāk nature of the dharmadhātu is the essence of activities of Mañjuśrī. Vāk nature of the dharmadhātu is manifested in the vāk activity of Mañjuśrī. Through vāk, prajñā is transmitted from the dharmadhātu to Mañjuśrī, and he is adored as the spokesman of the verses and teachings that reveal the nature of the dharmadhātu perceived in various forms. Since Mañjuśrī manifests the vāk nature of the dharmadhātu, he is Vāgīśvara. Thus, we see that it is the vāk due to which Mañjuśrī is adored as the revealer of the Dharma and identified with dharmadhātu.

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\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 36, n. 120: "Bindu here means bijamantra... in this case a ṣa m ṣaḥ."

\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 36.
51. Prajñāpāramitā as Mahāvairocana, rear wall, second story, sumtseg, Alchi

52. Prajñāpāramitā-*manḍala*, dukhang, Alchi

53. Central image, Prajñāpāramitā-*manḍala*, dukhang, Alchi
54. Prajñāpāramitā-маnḍala, interior of the small twin-stūpa, Alchi

55. Prajñāpāramitā-маnḍala, Maitreya Hall, Mangyu

56. Central camber, Prajñāpāramitā-маnḍala, Maitreya Hall, Mangyu
1.4. Association of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi with the Vāk

Representations of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi are significant in respect that they demonstrate the ambience of the time when the maṇḍalas are painted on the wall along with them. The association of the Goddess with vāk is as revealing as vāk traced in the concept of Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-Mañjuśrī in relation to maṇḍalas. Let us consider the following facts.

i) In Alchi, Prajñāpāramitā has been depicted in the form of the Goddess, and her personification is remarkably prevalent. The Goddess Prajñāpāramitā has been profusely depicted in Alchi along with representations of Mahāvairocana, Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī and maṇḍalas. The image of Goddess Prajñāpāramitā depicted in the second story of the same building reveals her status comparable to Mahāvairocana. (Pl. 51). We have already encountered two maṇḍalas in the third story of the sumtseg that explicitly speak for the concept of the Goddess in relation to emanations and revelation. (Pls. 45, 47, 48) There are other Prajñāpāramitā-maṇḍalas in the dukhang (Pls. 52, 53) and inside the small twin-stūpa in front of the sumtseg (Pl. 54). In the Maitreya Hall of Mangyu, a Prajñāpāramitā-maṇḍala shows the Goddess with six arms and other divinities in feminine appearances. (Pls. 55, 56)

ii) The two structures of Alchi under our consideration and the dukhang of Tabo have been constructed under the same cultural ambience. Yet, in the dukhang of Tabo we encounter no image of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā, while the narratives of Sadāprarudita in search for the prajñāpāramitā has been depicted in the ambulatory. As for maṇḍalas, geometric formats have not been adopted in Tabo.

From the facts considered above, it can be formulated that prolific depictions of Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi may have an analogous relationship to the equally abundant representation of maṇḍalas. It can be assumed that the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā and geometric maṇḍalas in Alchi both have a common conceptual basis behind their visual
representations. The background on the basis of which the Goddess Prajñāpāramita had obtained the prominent place in the iconographic scheme of Alchi can explain the context in which such geometric maṇḍalas have been prolifically created. In this regard, I will examine the association of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā with the mantra practice, and especially with the concept of vāk.

1.4.1. General Conception of The Goddess Prajñāpāramitā

When the Buddhists introduced the new Mahāyāna focus on prajñā that had been inconspicuous in the earlier Buddhism, the praṇāpāramitā was one of the six pāramitās which the seeker-after-truth had to cultivate. Prajñāpāramitā was, in the beginning, a designation for the group of literatures and their teachings. According to Conze, Prajñāpāramitā has been designated as ‘the Mother of the Buddhas (Jināṇa māta)’ already in the early stage of its development. In the idea of ekayāna that teaches the ultimate teaching of Buddhism as one, and that integrates diverse ways of vehicles (vāna), the praṇāpāramita plays a central role, clearly seen as a goddess. In the Munimatālāṃkara, Abhayākaragupta states,

"Thus, the nature of the Mahāyāna is established as being only the one vehicle (ekayāna) and the absolute (paramārtha) absence of own being (niḥsvabhāvatā) of all dharmas. This (the Great Vehicle) is the Bhagavati Prajñāpāramitā. This (Prajñāpāramitā) is to be known as the absolutely real (pāramārthika) bodhicitta, which consists of the non-differentiation of the Empty (comprehension of śūnyata) and compassion." 52

Mālā points out the dharmakāya aspect of the praṇāpāramitā, which seems

50 The first chapter (v. 15) of the Rātanaguṇasamcestāvagāthā demonstrates the conception of the Mother of the Buddhas in the early development of the Prajñāpāramitā thought (cf. Conze 1967 (1960): p. 125). D.C. Bhattacharya (1978: p. 45), on the basis of the iconography of the Goddess described in the sūdhānas nos. 159 and 152 in the Sūdhanamāla, sees the conception of the Goddess conceived in association with Five Tathāgatas as early as fourth century A.D., since the sūdhāna no. 159 is ascribed to the authorship of Asanga who belonged to circa. 300 A.D. He ascribes the composition of the sūdhāna no. 152 to the same period as no. 159.
51 Munimatālāṃkara ch. I. “The praṇāpāramita itself, the Bhagavati, is the essence of the Mahāyāna, the ekayāna precisely.” (trans. Ruegg 1977: p. 295).
relevant to the depictions of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā juxtaposed with Mahāvairocana in Alchi. He remarks: “The authors of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā saw the prajñāpāramitā as the only embodiment of the teaching of all Buddhas, i.e. as dharmakāya. Therefore all the respect that should have been paid to the Buddhas was transferred to the Prajñāpāramitā. The worship of the Prajñāpāramitā text is something that exceeds the worship of all other objects, mainly the worship of relics (buddhaśarīra).” While his remark is perceptive in drawing attention to the dharmakāya aspect of the prajñāpāramitā, the general conception of the goddess represented in his remarks should be re-considered in the context of the images of the goddess in Alchi. It has been believed in general that the background of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā is the worship of the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras and she is the personification of the book. We need to look at the historical fact in regard to this assumption. In the history of Buddhism, the mantrayāna branched out of the Mahāyāna, though the philosophy of the former adhered to the latter. In terms of bodhisattva practices, the mantrayāna distinguishes itself from the prajñāpāramitāyāna. If the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā is merely a personification of the Prajñāpāramitā texts in the sense of the early Mahāyāna sūtras, the profuse representations of the Goddess, having painted along with the maṇḍalas which accompanied the mantrayāna practice, sound inept.

1.4.2. The Goddess Prajñāpāramitā considered in her role in the mantrayāna

1.4.2.1. The goddess considered in the context of the tantric practice

D.C. Bhattacharyya presupposes in the preset of his study on the iconography of Buddhist images, that the iconic images have, in general, developed on the basis of the belief in mantric syllables. He states: “The excessive increase in the number of divine concepts was mainly due to the Buddhist belief, during this period, in the efficacy of the mantras.” According to his conception of the Buddhist iconography, the mantras, being sacred and having efficacy, became deified and developed “with the relevant

53 Mall 2005: p. 68.
iconographic specification". His view underlines the importance of mantra practice in the iconographic rendering of divinities.

Conze refers to some traces that display the dissemination of mantra practice within the early development of prajñāpāramitā literatures, even before the teaching of prajñāpāramitā was incorporated with tantric ideology. When the Large Prajñāpāramitā texts were composed, the forty-three dhāraṇīs were taught. The mantras and dhāraṇīs were multiplied in a number of short sūtras which were composed after 500 A.D.. Vajrapāṇi acquired a great importance in these texts. Conze states that the conception of the prajñāpāramitā had changed drastically under the tantric influence. He introduces a passage of the Adhyāyaḥṣaṅkikā (n. XII), which he recognizes as the one truly tantric exposition of the prajñāpāramitā.

“Thereupon the Lord Vairocana, the Tathāgata, again demonstrated this method of the prajñāpāramitā, called ‘the transformation into all beings’ (sarvasattvādhiśiṣṭānām): All beings are tathāgatagarbha, because they all have the self-nature (ātmatā) of Samantabhadra, the great Bodhisattva; vajragarbha are all beings because they are consecrated (abhiśiktataya) with the vajragarbha; dharmagarbha are all beings, because all vāk transform (or manifest; sarvākpravartanataya); karmagarbha in all beings, because all beings exert themselves in doing deeds.”

Here in this tantric text, the prajñāpāramitā is the method and the power on the basis of which the Ultimate Dharma is revealed in all beings. In tantric conception, the prajñāpāramitā is the power of transformation, thus, makes all beings impossible to be away from the Ultimate Dharma. All beings adhere in the Ultimate Dharma in their four aspects - tathāgatagarbha, vajragarbha, dharmagarbha and karmagarbha -, which are

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55 Ibid.
57 Ibid.: pp. 143-4
58 Ibid.: p. 146.
59 Adhyāyaḥṣaṅkikā 12, quoted in Conze 1967 (1960) pp. 146-7. I have modified the translation of Edward Conze given in his article because his translation does not clearly reveal the four kula concept implied in the text. Sarvasattvādhiśiṣṭānām was translated by Conze into ‘which sustains all beings’; tathāgatagarbhāḥ into ‘embryonic Tathāgata’; vajragarbhaḥ into ‘thunderbolts in embryo’.
Dharmagarbhā in my translation is the result of the assumption from Conze’s translation, ‘Dharma in embryo’. Conze translated sarvākpravartanataya into “because all speech comes to pass".
identical with the categories of four kulas in the Yogatantra. The transformation of vāk has been, especially mentioned as the ground how the Dharma and all beings are not different in the above tantric prajñāpāramitā text. It hints at the vital role of vāk in the concept of prajñāpāramitā in the tantric context.

1.4.2.2. Is the Vidya Queen in the Mahāvairocanaśambodhi Tantra identical with the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā?

In relation to the tantric concept of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā, I pay attention to the references to ‘Vidya Queen’ (Vidyarajñi), which occur frequently throughout the Mahāvairocanaśambodhi Tantra. In a number of verses, the word ‘Vidyā Queen’ is given in place of ‘mantra’. The general pattern where Vidyā Queen occurs in the text may be abbreviated as such: ‘the Bhagavat Vairocana spoke the Vidyā Queen: NAMAḥ SAMANTA-BUDDHĀNAM (or NAMAḥ SARVATATHĀGATEBHYO).....’ with mantras further following. The mantra that follows praises the nature of this Vidyā Queen in its parallel to space (gagana or kha).60

We come across some passages in the tantra that link the Vidyā Queen and Prajñāpāramitā. In a passage of the Tantra, Vidyā Queen has been praised as ‘the mother of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas’.61 When Buddhaguhya explains the meaning of the Vidyā Queen in his commentary to the tantra, it coincides with the description of the prajñāpāramitā.

"Vidyā means knowledge and here it refers to the prajñā of Enlightenment. Queen is because the prajñā of Enlightenment is the most excellent of all prajñās, it is a queen."62

The connection between Vidya Queen and Prajñāpāramitā is observed in another passage, when the Tantra gives the instruction about the ritual that should be done before the drawing of the vāk-maṇḍala.

60 See MVT IV. 12; VI. 29; X.1.
"Having done the ritual to transform the colours, he should make the mudrā or mantra of the Blessed Lady Prajñāpāramitā and recite this Vidyā Queen eight times."

It cannot be ascertained at this stage of the research, whether the Vidyā Queen and the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā are identical, or different. Or the connection between these two rendered in the Tantra could be assumed to represent the stage when their concepts had undergone assimilation. Another Goddess Gagana-Locanā may be shortly mentioned in relation to Prajñāpāramitā and the Vidyā Queen. Gagana-Locanā, adored as the Mother of Buddhas in the tantra, is described to be in the nature of prajñāpāramitā and the prajñā associated with the abhisambodhi. In the ubiquitous description of the Vidyā Queen in her similarity to space (gagana), we see the link between Gagana-Locanā and the Vidyā Queen. The problem of whether we should understand these divinities altogether as different names of one goddess is difficult to be answered now. Leaving this problem aside for a separate research, we can now only make certain that the Vidyā Queen and the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā are linked in the matter of their nature of prajñā, and that the concept of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā and her role in the mantrayāna practice can be explored on the basis of her affinity to the Vidyā Queen. Regardless of the problem whether she is identical with the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā or not, the concept of the Vidyā Queen is worth paying attention to, because her strong implication of vāk nature, while proving the importance of vāk in Buddhist tantras, could help us to bring to the surface the unexplored aspect of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in association with mantras and the concept of vāk.

1.4.2.3. The Vidyā Queen: Vāk

The references to Vidyā Queen are more or less always in connection with vāk and mantra practices. She seems to imply a profound concept in relation to the power of syllables. The following passage spoken by Vairocana in the tantra entails Buddhaguhyā’s commentary that clarifies that Vidyā Queen denotes the essence of the

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65 Ibid.
vāk cakra. The Tantra says,

"There is a mantra phrase which arises from the Maṇḍala of the cakra of the Tathāgata's vāk which is vast and penetrates into infinity; it is like a multi-formed gem, it completely perfects all aspirations, it is an accumulation of an immeasurable mass of merits, it abides in unimpeded realization and it is endowed with the power that is independent of the three times." 66

Buddhaguhya’s commentary clarifies that the above passage teaches about the mantras for the maṇḍala, 67 and describes about the vāk cakra who is the Vidya Queen.

"It (vak cakra) penetrates and encompasses all realms of beings. Wish-fulfilling Gem appears in various forms and carries out various actions so that beings may obtain what they desire. Likewise this Vidya Queen also manifests in various forms for the sake of beings and carries out various activities for them." 68

The above passage in the tantra explains in the mouth of Vairocana about the vāk-cakra in its nature of transformation and all-pervasion. According to Buddhaguhya’s conception, the Vidya Queen personifies the nature of transformation and all pervasion of the vāk-cakra. The Vidya Queen represents the power of the vāk-cakra, and the source of mantras.

The power of Vidyā Queen is explained to function at the two levels: absolute and relative.

"The strength to generate perception of that relates to the absolute level, and the strength to be unharmed by obstructions by all demons and opponents, through the power of this Vidyā, relates to the relative level." 69

Vidyā is understood as the power with which the tantric practitioners are unhindered by obstructions, which tells about the important place given to the Vidyā Queen in the

67 Here, the maṇḍala apparently means the kūya-maṇḍala since the passage is given in the chapter II which deals with the laying of the kūya-maṇḍala.
tantric practice. The Tantra teaches that one attains the unhindered reality through the empowerment of this Vidyā. The reality that would be realized through the power of the Vidyā Queen is the Sarvatathāgata.

“This Vidyā Queen reveals Sarvatathāgata, she does not let you depart from the confines of the path of the Three Dharmas and she causes you to perfect the Levels ad Perfections.”

Buddhaguhya explains about the meaning of ‘she reveals Sarvatathāgata’.

“By reciting this Vidyā, it will be as though you were seeing the svabhāva-mañḍala, the residence of Sarvatathāgata; the representational maṇḍala which has been drawn is shown after this Vidyā, or the maṇḍala of all the Buddhas is seen after reciting it.”

The involvement of the Vidyā Queen in the creation of the external maṇḍala is explicitly indicated above. The Vidyā Queen has been signified as the revealer of the Sarvatathāgata also in another passage of the tantra.

“The Bhagavat Vairocana entered the samādhi, called ‘Infinite Victory’. No sooner had the Bhagavat entered that samādhi than there emerged the Vidyā Queen called ‘Universally Unimpeded Power’, which arises from the sphere of Sarvatathāgata.”

As I have proposed earlier, the Sarvatathāgata may be understood as a designation for the tattva or the paramārtha, which means ‘the true highest Reality’, ‘essence’ or ‘heart’. The definition of the svabhāva-mañḍala in the tantra as the residence of Sarvatathāgata again confirms that Sarvatathāgata indicates the Essence, which is the dharmadātu. Subsequently, we can get to an understanding that the transformational power of the Vidyā Queen is associated with vāk, and it is this power that reveals the dharmadātu.

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Yet, the Vidya Queen is not only the revealer of the dharmadhātu, but she is the dharmadhātu itself. Buddhaguhya places the Vidya Queen in the status of the dharmadhātu, when he explains about her power, independent of the past, present and the future. He states, “that which is unhindered in the past, present and future is śūnya, in other words, dharmadhātu.” The tantra also states that the experiential range of the dharma-kāya and the Vidyā Queen is not different. Buddhaguhya adds that it is because of their similarity in perceiving the true nature of things.

Thus, from the above references, the characteristics of the Vidyā Queen can be summed up.

i) The Vidyā Queen is the essence of the vāk-cakra, therefore, the source of mantras.

ii) Through her power, the tantric practitioner attains the ultimate realization without hindrances.

iii) She is the revealer of the Supreme Essence (paramārtha; dharmadhātu).

iv) She is equated to the dharmadhātu. The experience of the Vidyā Queen, that is, the vāk-cakra, is not different from the experience of the dharmadhātu.

Among these four items, the latter three are mutually applicable to the concept of prajñāparamitā.

1.4.3. Comparison between the representation of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi and the textual descriptions of the Trika Goddess Parā

The characteristics of the Vidya Queen examined above in association with the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā, supports the possible relation between the Buddhist Goddess Prajñāpāramitā and the Trika Goddess Parā. In terms of the concepts, the Vidya Queen demonstrates a stark similarity to the Goddess Parā who has her origin in the philosophy of Parāvāk, the highest level of vāk.
The prescriptions designed for the image of the Goddess Parā in some Trika Śaivaite texts (including south Indian texts influenced by the Kashmirian texts),\textsuperscript{76} display a remarkable affinity to the depiction of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi. The name of the Goddess Parā varies, because the Goddess Parā of Kashmirian Trika is incorporated and superimposed by the local goddess of different regions. Therefore, we have the names, Kubjika or Tripurasundarī in parallel to the Goddess Parā. These goddesses who became popular, as Sanderson illustrates, have their theological base in the philosophy of Parāvāk.

Sanderson examined the descriptions given in various texts regarding the visualization of the Goddess Parā.\textsuperscript{77} Sanderson’s research shows that the descriptions of texts are not exactly identical, yet, there are certain common features that are expounded altogether by the texts. The descriptions of the Goddess Parā given are: as white as the moon or crystal, and in a white robe; one or three, or even four faces. When she is described with four hands, she holds the rosary and the book in a pair of hands; the cinmudrā (the thumb and the index finger joined in the form of circle) and the trident or the lotus in another pair of hands.

The images of Prajñāparamita depicted in Alchi appear in benevolent facial expressions, and with the dharmacakrapravartananamudrā. The hand attributes of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā depicted in Alchi are especially remarkable in their affinity to what are prescribed for the goddess Parā. Though slight differences in hand attributes, the lotus, the book, and the rosary are common in all the depictions of the Goddess Prajñāparamitā. The dharmacakrapravartananamudrā showed by the main hands of the Goddess Prajñāparamitā has been seen as the combination of the jñāna mudrā (touching the chest with the left hand) and the vyākhyāna mudrā (right hand showing the palm and the tip of the index finger touching the tip of the thumb), representing her jñāna aspect and the exposition aspect.\textsuperscript{78} The vyākhyāna mudrā appears identical with the cinmudrā of the Goddess Parā. It should be, however, noted that the six-handed

\textsuperscript{76} See Sanderson 1990.
\textsuperscript{77} Sanderson 1990: pp. 32-42.
form of Prajñāpāramitā does not correspond to the descriptions of the goddess Parā with either two or four hands. A Prajñāpāramitā image interpreted as the representation of Mahāvairocana in a female aspect in the second story of the sumtseg (Pl. 24) especially draws our attention. It is coloured in white, with clear three eyes, which is reminiscent of the three-eyed feature of the Goddess Pāra narrated in the second verse of the invocation in the Parātrīṃśikātātparyādipikā.

The iconographic similarity observed between the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi and the Goddess Parā seems reflecting their mutual interaction, if not assimilation. Their interaction seems to have been supported by their common association with Sarasvatī, the ancient Goddess of knowledge, who is also the goddess of vāk (Vāgdevī). Or, their similarity could have been caused from their independent association with Sarasvatī. The Goddess Parā is associated with Sarasvatī obviously in her aspect of ‘the embodiment of vāk (Vāgīśvari)’ or, ‘of the alphabet (Mātrkāsarasvāī, Lipidevī)’. The Goddess Prajñāpāramitā is related to this ancient Goddess, at the first hand more in her aspect of knowledge and inspiration. Therefore, she is adored in Buddhism as the promoter of the prajñā. The iconographic features of these two Goddesses could have been also based on those of Sarasvatī. The iconic features of these two Goddesses could have been also based on those of Sarasvatī. The iconographic descriptions of Sarasvatī given in the Viṣṇudharmottara are reminiscent of the features of both Goddesses: she is described as four-armed, white coloured, dressed in white garments and decked with many ornaments; her four hands hold such attributes as manuscript, white lotus, rosary, musical instrument, vessel (kamandalu) and so on. The rosary is said to represent the time, and the vessel of the Goddess carries the nectarine fluid of all Śastras. The reference of the water-vessel should be seen in relation to the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in the Pl. 51. And the feature of three-eyes in the

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79 Bhattacharya mentions that the description of the six-armed Goddess has not been discovered in Indian Buddhist texts. Cf. Bhattacharya 1978: p. 59. Yet, he informs that the Chinese Dhāraṇīsamuccaya, translated in about A.D. 1000, deals with a six-armed form of Prajñāpāramitā (Ibid. p. 60).
80 The text is the commentary of the Parātrīṃśikātātparyādipikā composed in Cidambaram. “May the Supreme Power [Parā] protect you, [she who is as brilliantly white] as a markless moon, three-eyed, adorned with the crescent moon [upon her hair], her [two] hands showing the gesture (mudrā) and the book.” Parātrīṃśikātātparyādipikā 2, quoted and trans. Sanderson 1990: p. 33.
81 Cf. Sanderson 1990: p. 43.
83 Ibid., p. 86.
same image may be related not only to the feature of the Goddess Parā but also to that of the Vajrasārādā form of Sarasvatī. As their iconographic resemblance mirrors, the concept of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā has been possibly incorporated with the vāk aspect of Sarasvatī.

Therefore, the association of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā with the archetypal Goddess of vāk, that is, Sarasvatī, and the Parā goddesses proposes the vāk aspect of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā, which is not isolated from her prajñā aspect. The importance of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā needs to be viewed in a broad context of tantric cultural background where sakti goddesses gained growing popularity on the basis of the philosophy and the practice of vāk. The Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in Alchi, when considered in her affinity to the Vidyā Queen, the Goddess Parā and Sarasvatī reflects the presence of the philosophy of vāk in Alchi, which could have influenced the geometric format of maṇḍalas as well as the whole space-planning of Alchi.

Concluding Notes

The visuals of maṇḍalas cannot be rightly understood away from their meditative dimension where the process of visual imagination is inseparably coordinated by mantras. Vāk, the source of mantras, may be envisaged as the bridge between multiple forms of maṇḍalas and the Ultimate Dharma. On one hand, it is the power of transformation, both in the centripetal and centrifugal orders as it reveals the dharmadhātu to sustain in all beings and takes the practitioner to the realization of the dharmadhātu. On the other hand, it is dharmadhātu as much as its experience is equated to that of the dharmadhātu. The conception of the Highest Divinity in the name of Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-Maṇjuśrī, or the references to Sarvatathāgata in relation to vāk demonstrates the tantric perception and proves the prevalence of the concept of vāk during the spread of mantrayāna. The possible connection between the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā and the Goddess Parā, though remains as a issue for further research.

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84 Vajrasārādā has a crescent in her crown, is three eyed, and two armed, carrying the book in the left hand and the lotus in the right (cf. Bhattacharya 1968: p. 351).
85 Āryasarasvatī, who is common among Buddhist Tantrics, being called Vajrasarasvatī, is in white complexion, holds in her left hand a lotus stalk with the prajñāpāramitā text on top (cf. ibid.).
may additionally support the association of *maṇḍalas* with the concept of *vāk*.

2. The Doctrine of *Vāk* in the Trika Śaivism

I will now focus my research on the theme of *vāk* elaborated in the Trika Śaiva philosophy. Although the doctrine of *vāk* has been dealt with in the academic disciplines mainly from the perspective of language or literature, the concept of *vāk* is not confined to the matter of verbal expression or sound, but encompasses all the sensual expression and cognition, especially including visuals. The exegesis of *vāk* essentially deals with the problem of the two extreme poles of the Ultimate and the phenomena, and suggests their non-duality by analyzing the transformational power of the Ultimate, called *Parāvāk*. Especially, the conception of external *maṇḍalas* as the reflective image (*pratibimba*) of the samādhi-*maṇḍala*, further based on the *svabhava-*maṇḍala* betrays a strong reminiscence of the basic worldview of the Trika Śaivism that has been formulated in the concept of *bimba-pratibimba*. As much as the *vāk* theory developed within Trika Śaivism is pivotal in explaining the logic of *bimba-pratibimba*, it may, in parallel, illuminate the relation between the external *maṇḍala* and the *svabhāva-*maṇḍala*, while providing us with valuable references to the three crucial points for understanding the aesthetics of *maṇḍalas* which the preliminary investigation in the Part I has brought forth: i) the qualities of *śūnya*; ii) external forms of *maṇḍalas*; iii) the transformational power explained in the context of the *mantrayāna*.

2.1. General Survey of *Vāk*

2.1.1. Notes on its history

While the *vāk* is known already in the *Rgveda* as the female aspect of androgynic *Puruṣa* and continued to be the theme of profound insights in the *Upaniṣads*, its earliest theoretical formulation is attributed to *Bhartrhari* (mid 5th cent. A.D.) in his

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86 See Falk 1943: pp. 3-14, 23.
Vākyapādiya. The exposition of the Vākyapādiya has been further developed in the philosophy of Trika Śaivism. The tantric philosophers who elaborated the speculation of vāk, including Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta are apparently influenced by Bhartrhari’s philosophy exposed in the Vākyapādiya. Whereas Bhartrhari explicates the three levels of vāk, the tantric philosophers add the highest principle to these three, therefore propose the four levels of vāk. The texts of Trika Śaivism are recognized as “the most systematic and valuable exposition” in regard to the four levels of vāk.

2.1.2. Sound in the Cosmological conceptions of India

We find various Sanskrit terms, meaning ‘the primeval sound’, when the traditional texts, from the Vedas onwards, explain the emergence of the world. Thus, we come across terms such as vāk, chanda, dhvani, nāda, śabda and anāhata. They indicate the vibrating energy of the creative source from which the entire objective world manifests. One may need an elaborate study to have a systematic understanding of these terms, and to answer whether it is ever worthwhile to position these terms in a hierarchical order that follows the sequence of the cosmogony. In the present research, I would not deal with these questions because the topic seems deviating from the present context. Instead, I pay attention to the fact that the multiple manifestations of the world have been conceived as the gross form of this sonic energy. The vision of the sonic energy having originated from the Highest Principle giving birth to multiple forms reminds us of the process of mandala-visualization where the syllable ‘A’ is the mediating principle between śūnya and the bodily form of deity. A has been speculated in Trika Śaivism in a remarkable similarity to that explicated in the Buddhist tantras. Especially in the Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa we find extensive references to A. A represents saṃvid (Divine Consciousness) and parāvāk at the level of the Highest (anuttara)
and at the same time it is the supreme matrix of sound\(^93\) and the energy of manifestation (kauliki)\(^94\).

The sound (vāk or śabda) is an important concept in understanding the cosmological ideas of India. The doctrine of vāk may be, first of all, placed within the broader framework of cosmological conception of India. The Vākyapadiya provides us with valuable sources in this regard. It starts with the following verse.

> “The Brahman who is without beginning or end, very essence is the Word (śabdatattvam), who is the cause of the manifested phonemes (aksaram), who appear as the objects, from which the creation of the world (prakriyā jagato) proceeds (vivarate).”\(^95\)

A clearer exposition about the role of sound in the world-creation can be represented by the often-quoted verse from the same text.

> “Knowers of tradition (the Vedas) have declared that all this is the transformation of the word (śabda). It is from the chandas that this universe has evolved.”\(^96\)

We see a more or less identical conception in the Svacchanda Tantra, a basic tantra of Trika Śaivism.

> “From the imperceptible form (adṛśta) of Śiva who is the ultimate source (parāmakāraṇa), emerged the sound (dhvanirūpa) which is very subtle (susūkṣma) and is extremely pure (susuddha). It is closely associated with

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\(^94\) Cf. PTV (p. 27). “A is the [totality of the] limiting power (kalā) not submitted to māyā, beyond hearing, uncreated, wondering at its own [essence] waveless sea of consciousness resting in the great light [of the Absolute]. It spread from the first to the last stage [of emanation], being the condition of the fullness of the supreme ‘I’ (pūrṇāham) in its total awareness of the universe (viśvāmarṣa) [as produced by] the effulgent spreading out of the Energy (śaktollūsa).” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 236).


pure light of knowledge (suprabhā).\textsuperscript{97}

The above verses explain how the creative source, that is beyond time and space, manifests itself into the multiple forms, and how these multiple forms are the empirical base for tracing back to the creative source.

The Śrīvidya texts, such as the Śāradā Tilaka and the Kāmakalāvilāsa, refer to nāda when they explain the process of world-manifestation. They present a picture of world-manifestation in the successive order from Parama Śiva, Śakti, nāda, bindu, and to three divisions of the bindu in the forms of bija, bindu and nāda. This picture in the reverse order appears to be what happens to yogis after an absolute concentration. We may be reminded that the Nāmasaṅgīti describes the Paramārtha in the form of bindu and also śūnya in bindu.\textsuperscript{98} The stages of sonic energy are more meticulously described in the Netra Tantra, when it explains the practice of recitation (uccāra) of OM. The exposition of the Netra Tantra is valuable because it refers to sub-divisions between Paramāśiva and Śakti, between Śakti and nāda, and between nāda and bindu, which are absent in the Śrīvidya texts.\textsuperscript{99} And it elaborates the description of kunḍalinī, which is the stage after the bindu from the viewpoint of cosmic manifestation and is equivalent to the Highest principle of sonic energy from the perspective of yogic practice.

These expositions of sonic energy described in hierarchical order, are crucial for understanding the process of yogic experience with prāṇa, which reproduces the cosmic manifestation in the body of an individual. On the other hand, the relationship between the Ultimate and the phenomena is better explained in the doctrine of the four levels of vāk. Since the question of the present research is the relation between the formless Absolute and the multiple forms in the aesthetic experience, I will mainly look

\textsuperscript{98} Cf. NS 143-5, trans. Davidson 1981: p. 36.
\textsuperscript{99} The Śāradā Tilaka and the Kāmakalāvilāsa give a similar account on the levels of sound condensation whereas the Netra Tantra provides more exhaustive narration on the same theme. Though the texts' account are not consistent to one another, they are common in the matter of their effort in making a correlation between the levels of sound condensation and the levels of vāk, or the tattvas. Various expositions by different schools on the theme 'the level of the condensation of the sound' are reviewed in Padoux 1992, pp. 119, 122, footnote 100.

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into the textual descriptions regarding the levels of vāk and draw upon the references to the emanation of sonic energy only occasionally.\footnote{Padoux summarizes the diverse ways of interpreting the cosmic manifestation of vāk in the followings: “The process of the emanation in relation to the vāc is variously described depending upon the texts and schools; however, it appears generally as unfolding from an initial luminous vibration or sound (nāda), which is an extremely subtle state of pure phonic energy, which through a series of transformations and condensations will become less subtle, forming a concentrate or a drop (bindu) of sound-energy, from which, when it divides itself, worlds, humans, and language will come forth. This creative evolution of the Word is also described as occurring through four successive stages, or else through the gradual emergence of fifty phonemes (varṇa), the mother-energies (mātrkā) of creation.” (Padoux 1992: p. 51).}

2.2. Introduction to the Four Levels of Vāk

2.2.1. The term vāk

The Sanskrit term vāk is often translated as ‘sound’, ‘speech’, ‘word’, or ‘language’. However, we should keep in mind that one of the most central characteristics of vāk is its multi-layeredness. Thus, it is difficult to define the term without looking into the four levels of vāk. Before proceeding to the detailed study of the four levels of vāk, it will be helpful to consider its various meanings from the perspective of modern philosophy, in order to get rid of our naïve conception of vāk as the discursive speech once more in the present.

Aklujkar urges the non-conventional conception of the ‘word (śabda)’ in the philosophy of Bhartrhari.\footnote{Aklujkar 2001.} He suggests different ways of understanding the term. Though his suggestion is meant for the Sanskrit term śabda, it is also applicable to vāk, as much as the theory of vāk has been developed on the basis of Bhartrhari’s philosophy. Four ways of understanding ‘word’ are presented by Aklujkar:

i) ‘word’ as standing for what it physically is, that is, as sound.

ii) ‘word’ as standing for the form in which it survives or exists, that is, as the impressions or images in the mind which correspond to the sound realizations we call linguistic units.

iii) By ‘word’ what we mean here is “a whole language, an entire system of
linguistic symbols” or “a set of language, a collectivity or linguistic systems” that a person knows.

iv) 'The word' is ultimately that principle, power, or force which is at the bottom of all language knowing. It is the entity that makes all individual languages possible. 102

Aklujkar’s philosophic investigation of the term ‘word’ is useful because these definitions of ‘śabda’ or ‘vāk’ help us to overcome the conventional modern meaning of ‘word’, as phoneme, morpheme, phrase, clause, or sentence which are merely distinct and fragmented verbal forms.

2.2.2. Four levels

"Man speaks something through vaikhari, ideates through madhyamā, experiences some indeterminate state through paśyanti and experiences inwardly some truth through parā."103

This verse from the Parātṛiṣikā-vivarana, Abhinavagupta’s commentary of a tantra venerated in the Trika Śaivism, succinctly expresses how a human being communicates and experiences in four levels of vāk, that is, vaikhari, madhyamā, paśyanti and parā. Before commencing the commentary to the text Parātṛiṣikā, Abhinavagupta, first of all, explicates the four levels of vāk, in the context of the Devi’s question on the identity between Anuttara (the Highest) and kaulika (bodily manifestations). As it is implied in the context of its exegesis, the levels of vāk are the essential principle on the basis of which the non-duality of the Absolute and the phenomenal objects is expounded. Here in this context, the stages of four levels are described as the transformation of the highest Lord through His Śakti.

"The highest Lord is always intent on creativity (visargaparamah) through His Śakti. He showers grace, manifests and withdraws without any restraint."104

In regard to the manifestation of the highest Lord, the commentary of Abhinavagupta portrays the transformation of the four vāk. Paravāk consists of Paramārtha that is the undifferentiated consciousness (cit-tattva) of the highest Lord (paramēśvara). When the ṭechāsakti (power of desire) is awakened in the state of complete undifferentiation, Parāvāk is mirrored in paśyanti where the desire to express is predominant, but the vācyavācakabhāva (what is expressed and what expresses) is still indeterminate, which means the subject and the object of the cognition is still undivided. The differentiation between the subject and the object starts in the stage of madhyamā. In the vaikharī stage there comes the determinate difference in between them, and the object of expression is endowed with physical characteristics. In such a way, the commentary illustrates that the book titled ‘Parātrīśikā’ resulted from the manifestation of Parāvāk through three stages of vāk.105

2.2.3. Association with the śaktis

We notice from the above introductory notes on the doctrine of vāk the following points: i) Paramārtha (the highest truth) of the Highest, which is the Parāvāk, has been first echoed in the paśyanti level in indeterminate form; ii) It has been conceived in subtle forms of the madhyamā level; and iii) It finally has been formulated in the communicative gross, physical forms in the vaikharī level. These characteristics of the four levels of vāk are associated with the different roles of śaktis. It is a function of a particular śakti that brings forth a particular characteristic to each stage of vāk, and each śakti plays a crucial role in determining the nature of the relationship between the

105 "So the inner content i. e., question-answer which appears in the consciousness of the highest Lord in an undifferentiated way because of its being the highest truth, is thought of in the paśyanti stage in an indeterminate form (in nirvikalpa form) with a desire to put it in apportionment of letter, word, and sentence; it is positioned with a sense of separateness in the madhyamā stage in a determinate form (i. e. in savikalpa form); it is finally expressed in the form of question and answer in the vaikharī stage i. e. in gross speech consisting of māyāya letter, word and sentence....The fact of question and answer (vastu) is an ever present reality which is in the first instance, i. e. at the level of parāvāk without division .... The Self who is the natural state of all existsents, who is Self-luminous, amusing Himself with question-answer which is not different from Himself, and in which both the questioner (as Devī) and the answerer (as Bhairava) are only Himself, reflects thus as I, 'I myself, being thus desirous of wonderful delight knowing the truth as it is, appear as question and answer.'" (PTV 1, trans. Singh 1988: p. 15. Sanskrit: p. 5).

"This question-answer in its entirety resides really in the divine Parāvāk whose quintessence is autonomy (svātantrya) which is independent of everything, which is unsurpassable and is able to bring about what is most difficult to accomplish, and which is not affected even by an iota of dependence on others." (PTV 5-9, trans. Singh 1988: p. 108).
subject and the object of the cognition. For instance, we have already seen that the rise of icchāsakti (power of will) in Parāvāk entails the stage of paśyantī vāk. However, the state of paśyantī vāk is determined by jñānaśakti (power of knowledge), therefore, paśyantī vāk is, though still in indeterminate form, characterized by the incipience of the differentiation between the subject and the object, or between what expresses and what is expressed (vācaka and vācyā).

The four levels of vāk are correspondent to the three Goddesses (Parā-Parāparā-Aparā) as well as the five main śaktis of Śiva (cit-ānanda-icchā-jñāna-kriyā).

"The Goddess Para (parā bhagavati), Consciousness-Power (sāṃvitprasaraṇti) not different from Bhairava on the point of expansion according to Her essential nature, is said to be supreme icchāsakti (voluntary Power). Her actual expansion as jñānaśakti (cognitive power) assumes the parāpara or paśyantī form and as kriyāśakti (conative Power) the aparā or madhyamā form etc."106

The following [Table 7] shows their correspondence.

[Table 7] Correspondence between the four levels of vāk, three śaktis and five śaktis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>four levels of vāk</th>
<th>three śakti-Goddesses</th>
<th>five śaktis of Śiva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>parāvāk</td>
<td>parā</td>
<td>cit-ānanda śakti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paśyantī</td>
<td>parāpara</td>
<td>icchāsakti &amp; jñānaśakti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madhyamā</td>
<td>parāpara</td>
<td>jñānaśakti &amp; kriyāśakti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vaikhāri</td>
<td>aparā</td>
<td>kriyāśakti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diverse ways of defining the Highest Principle converge to the notion of Anuttara ‘the Highest without beyond’ in Trika Śaivism.107 The non-dualistic vision conceives all these stages as the aspects of Anuttara. And, the Parā - Parāvāk or Parāśakti - is the

107 The term Anuttara encompasses concepts of the complete union of Śiva and Śakti, sāṃvit or cit (Divine Consciousness), Parāśakti, and Parāvāk.
pure state of Anuttara,\textsuperscript{108} which is characterized by the complete awareness (vimārsa, pratyvamārsa, cit, saṃvīti). When the doctrine of four levels of vāk is viewed in relation to its correspondence to ākāśa-Goddesses and the powers of Śiva, its distinctiveness is clearer. While the systems of divine power explain the cosmic creation and dissolution, the doctrine of vāk is invaluably relevant to the microcosmic reflection of the cosmic process, experienced especially in the act of ‘cognition’ or ‘expression’.

2.2.4. Etymology of the four levels

Before each level of vāk is studied, it will be worthwhile to contemplate on their names because it reveals the primary context in which the doctrine has been established. Jayaratha, in the commentary on Tantrāloka (III. 236)\textsuperscript{109} explains the etymological dimension of the three levels of vāk. According to his commentary, paśyanti (‘seeing’ or ‘visionary’) is the consequence of svāsvatāntaryā (own autonomy) of Parāvāk. “When Parāvāk wishes to appear externally without producing the multiplicity associated with the vācyavācacakrama (process of what is expressed and what expresses)”, it is called paśyanti, “because the light of cit still prevails” and “since she is a form of the Subject who sees (draśṭa)”.\textsuperscript{110}

Then next comes the madhyamā (middle) stage. It is called madhyamā because it intermediates between the Subject who sees and the object to be seen (drśya). Here the act of sight, or view (darśana) is predominant.

“This is a plane where, although the process made of what expresses and what is expressed begins to unfold in outline. Vāk nevertheless remains grounded in the intellect (buddhiṃātraniṣṭha) in a form that is both manifest and unmanifest (sphuṭā sphuṭarūpatvena).”\textsuperscript{111}

In the vaikhāri (corporeal) stage, the objective world predominates and the

\textsuperscript{108} “Whether in the initial stage of parā or the final stage of parā, both of which are the expression of revered parāsakti and also in its stage of expansion in the form of parāpara, it is throughout the display of the immutable anuttara.” (PTV 4, trans. Singh 1988: pp. 79-80. Sanskrit: p.30).

\textsuperscript{109} “When manifesting differentiation she is said [to assume] a three-fold body known as paśyanti, madhyamā, and vaikhāri, which is gross” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 170).


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
multiplicity is manifested clearly. This stage is called vaikharī because vāk becomes completely solid, bodily and extended through the development of phonemes, speech organs, the places of articulation, and the articulatory process.

It is clearly indicated that the three levels of vāk develop from the state of Parāvāk in terms of the relationship between the subject and the object. In paśyanti, the subject or the śabda (word), or the knower is predominant, whereas in vaikharī, the object or the artha (meaning), or the known preponderates. The madhyamā intermediates between the subject and the object: the śabda and the artha: the knower and the known. It is the act of seeing or knowledge itself.

The glance into the word meaning of the levels of vāk tells that the central concern of the doctrine is how the highest Subject is identified with the multiple objects, which confirms its open scope that is applicable not only to the linguistic field, but also to other processes where the identification between subject and object is crucial. Ultimately, it explains how the One, the non-dual state of reality can be explained in spite of the manifoldness of objects and subjects.

2.3. Studies of the Four Levels of Vāk

The four levels of vāk can be viewed in two ways in respect to their sequences.

i) Emanative process: from Parāvāk to vaikharī vāk

ii) Absorptive process: from vaikharī vāk to Parāvāk

The visualization of the maṇḍala - in that the imagination of śūnya finally brings forth the visualization of the bodily forms of deities - is analogous to the emanative process of Parāvāk. And the artists’ creations also analogize the emanative process of vāk.

On the other hand, the ritualistic process which is purposed for the oneness with

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112 It is clearly expressed in the Devi’s question that was followed by Abhinavagupta’s exposition of the four levels of vāk in Parātrīśikā-vivarana. Devi’s question was in the Parātrīśikā is: “How does the anuttara immediately brings about the achievement of the multiple manifestation, by the knowledge of which one becomes one with khecarī” (Parātrīśikā 1, see Singh 1988, p. 5).
the Divine, can be understood as tracing back from the bodily level to the level of pure consciousness, therefore, as the absorptive process of vāk. For instance, a practice with bijamantra exemplifies the absorptive process of vāk where one’s individual ego is dissolved through the physical sound of the bijamantra into the pure light of the Divine. And, the process of aesthetic experience could be appropriately understood as absorptive process of vāk, especially if we define the aesthetic experience on the basis of Abhinavagupta’s aesthetics. As much as the topic of vāk is dealt with in the present thesis in relation to the aesthetics of maṇḍalas, I will explore the doctrine in the absorptive sequence.

2.3.1. Vaikharī vāk

2.3.1.1. Vaikharī is not mere language, but a śakti in its essence.

Vaikharī vāk is the final stage of the emanative process of Parāvāk. It is often understood as ‘the physical language we speak’. Padoux, an erudite scholar on the textual expositions of vāk in Trika Śaivism, states the followings, while he summarizes the levels of vāk in his own words:

"Vaikharī is the final materialization of a continual, timeless, and unbroken process which, from parā and, metaphysically, without actually ever leaving her, starts with the Visionary (paśyānti) and, through the Intermediate (madhyamā), results in the Corporeal (vaikharī)." 

It is true that the discussion of vaikharī vāk in the traditional texts often entails the illustration of the process how phonemes are emanated. Thus it is rather natural that the vaikharī vāk is, at a first glance, equated to the category of physical language or speech, and that the phonematic aspect of vaikharī has been claimed as central in the exposition of vaikharī vāk. In consequence, vaikharī vāk, or further, the entire doctrine of vāk has been looked upon in the context of speech, in the domain of phonematics and grammar. Having accepted the general understanding of vaikharī vāk, the task of viewing vaikharī vāk in the context of aesthetics would be to go beyond the limit of its

definition as language or speech. We need to deliberate carefully the characteristics of \( vaikhari \) vāk from the textual sources and examine whether it is merely limited to language. If the doctrine of vāk can explain the relationship between the Absolute and the multiple phenomena, it should not exclude everything other than language in the multiple phenomena.

First of all, \( vaikhari \) vāk is defined as the state where the vācyā (what is expressed) and the vācaka (what expresses) are divided,\(^{115}\) therefore certainly consisting not only the vācaka but also the vācyā. If we suppose that the \( vaikhari \) vāk is merely physical speech, the vācyā aspect of \( vaikhari \) is difficult to be explained.\(^{116}\)

\( Vaikhari \) refers to the state “in which manifestation of difference of all the existents’ has proceeded fully (\( vaikhari praśratbāvahadhprakaśa-paryantaḥ \)”).\(^{117}\) \( Vaikhari \) denotes the entire manifested world rather than the limited sense of language.

If \( vaikhari \) is not mere language, a question arises, ‘why has \( vaikhari \) been over and over again described along with the emanation of phonemes?’ The next point that is to be observed crucial in the expositions of \( vaikhari \) may be related to this question. That is its association with the gross level of prāṇa that flows in a human body. Texts often describe the phonetic aspect of \( vaikhari \) in link with the breathing process. The association of \( vaikhari \) with prāṇa is explicated in Rājānaka Rāma’s commentary of \( Spandakārikā \) 48.\(^{118}\) He states,

"The sole support of the form of Speech\(^{119}\) known as the Corporeal Voice (\( vaikhari \)) is the vital breath (prāṇa) that manifests the individual phonemes, etc. It manifests when the wind of the vital breath, impelled by the (conscious)


\(^{116}\) Padoux also mentions that \( vaikhari \) consists of vācyā and vācaka: \( "Vaikhari, therefore, consists of all the elements of the 'significants' empirically manifested and perceptible to the ear, namely of 'gross' phonemes and speech... But \( vaikhari \) also consists of all that has to be expressed (vācyā), namely 'gross' images and representations belonging to conceptual thought, and material objects which form the manifested universe, which the Word brings into existence and words denotes." \) (Padoux 1992: p. 220)


\(^{118}\) I follow Dyczkowski’s numbering of kārikās in his translation of the \( Spandakārikā \) (Dyczkowski 1994) because the available sources of Sanskrit manuscripts have different chapter divisions.

\(^{119}\) Dyczkowski translates vāk as 'speech', which might mislead the understanding of the doctrine of vāk. But, here I present his translation without change.
exertion applied according to the intention of each speaker, strikes the chest and other.”120

Further he explicates,

“When it (parāśakti) assumes the form of Corporeal Speech (vaikhari vāk), it is said to be the gross power of action because its manifestation depends upon the pulse (parispanda) of the individual soul’s vital breath (prāṇa).”121

This commentary brings to light that the vaikhari vāk is manifested in the body with the support of prāṇa, and starts its function when one wishes.122 Here the vaikhari vāk is the stage before, or the precondition, of the physical language or any expression out of our body and mind. We find another remarkable account from his commentary, which tells that the vaikhari vāk is subtler than the physical sound of phonemes.

“It is a form of sound common to all (sāmānyadhanirūpā), having the form of the letters (varṇa) which are divided into volwels, consonants, and so forth, but it proceeds without being affected by the variety of those who speak it. This is how the aspect of the Word that is called the Corporeal, the receptacle of the breath (prāṇamātrāsrayā) manifested with the division of the phonemes, and so forth, expands (vivṛttiḥ).”123

The above quotation is puzzling if we are preoccupied with the idea that ‘the vaikhari vāk is none other than physical speech’. We here notice that the phonemes, sentences or languages are merely gross forms of vaikhari vāk, and its subtle dimension is the ‘sāmānyadhanirūpa’, which is not affected by the multiplicity of forms. Thus, vaikhari vāk appears not only in the form of explicit verbal sounds of phonemes but also in the subtle form of dhvani, which has a universal character. A verse from the Tantrāloka confirms that vaikhari vāk should be understood more in its subtle

121 Ibid., p. 132.
122 According to Rājānaka Rāma, the icchāsakti corresponds to madhyamā vāk (SpV. 48 by Rājānaka Rāma, trans. Dyczkowski 1994: p. 132). Then we can interpret that the action of vaikhari vāk is triggered by the icchāsakti in the madhyamā vāk. Therefore, we read in the above commentaries, “set in motion according to the will of the person”, or “impelled by the (conscious) exertion applied according to the intention of each speaker”.
dimension than being the limited level of physical language.

"That which is the cause of arising the manifested phonemes is the gross vaikharī, whose work (effect) is speech etc."¹²⁴

This verse clarifies that the speech organ and articulation of language are merely the expansion of gross vaikharī.

2.3.1.2. Vaikharī is the direct cause of the objective world.

Recalling to the question, 'why has the vaikharī vāk been over and over again described along with the process of pronouncing phonemes?', we can now answer that the language is one of the most appropriate examples that represents vaikharī vāk. Because the vocal speech is, first of all, produced physically by means of contact of prāṇa with the bodily organs. Distinct phonemes stand for the function of prāṇa, which is the vehicle of the vaikharī and the channel through which the vaikharī manifests. Vaikharī is apparently a subtler and universal than the physical language. Phonemes are the gross forms of vaikharī, mere examples of the expansion of vaikharī vāk.

Rājānaka Rāma names the phonemic manifestation of the vaikharī 'varṇavaikharī', and additionally refers to its musical manifestation (svaravaikharī).¹²⁵ The vaikhari vāk that produces the phonemes is the same principle that produces the distinct objective world.

"When [with the movement of the breath, the Word] reaches the cavity of the mouth and divides itself according to [the different] points of articulation [of phonemes] - the throat and the rest - it is called the Corporeal. This [Word], due to the impressions of the external world, transforms itself into such

¹²⁴ TĀ III. 244b-245a. (vol. II, p. 582):
yā tu sphaṭānāṁ varṇānmārupattai kāraṇaṁ bhavat ||
sā sthūla vaikharī yasyāṁ kāryaṁ vākyādi bhūyasā ||

¹²⁵ "Again, just as the expansion of this (power) in the form of the Corporeal Voice of phonemic sounds (varṇavaikharī) is infinitely (varied), so is its development in the form of the Corporeal Voice of music (svaravaikharī) with its diversity of notes (svara), scales (grāma), ascending and descending patterns (mūrcchana), runs (tūna), classes of melodic modes (jāti), and modes (rāga), etc." (SpV 48, trans. Dyczkowski 1994: p. 131).
objects as pots and the like and can thus be grasped by sight and the other [senses]." 126

The examples of the gross form of vaikharī would be infinite because the vaikharī vāk "is expressed in varied scriptural and worldly forms (śāstrīyalaukikādi-bahubhedan vyaktayām)." 127

We may conclude that vaikharī in its essence is not material but in the category of energy. It is the receptacle of prāṇa, and appears in the form of vācyā and vācaka in dependence of prāṇa (vital energy) of a living being.

2.3.1.3. Vaikharī is on the plane of aparāśakti and kriyāśakti.

Vaikharī vāk appears in the form of vācyā and vācaka. From the above examination of textual sources, I come to the conclusion that the vaikharī vāk is rather the energy. It is aparāśakti: the energy that brings the differentiation between vācyā and vācaka, or between object and subject that is the entire phenomenal reality. Here, the sphere of objects dominates over the sphere of subjects, and the principle of māyā, which is also the manifestation of Śiva, hinders the identification between the subject and the object.

"The aparā is placed where the world of objects predominates, dominated by Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Indra, when they take in themselves māyā and the rest. This power, however, comes to them thanks to the grace only of the Supreme Lord (paramesvaraprasādajam)." 128

Vaikharī vāk is on the plane of aparāśakti where the power of action (kriyāśakti) predominates. As is implied in the fact that the elaborate accounts on the vaikharī vāk are found in the context of aparāśakti and kriyāśakti, the exposition of vaikharī vāk has its importance primarily in the context of the soteriology of non-dualism. It is

127 PTV 4, trans. Singh 1988: p. 79. "Kalhayāmi means: 'I am expressing it by use of appropriate names the series of utterances upto vaikharī that arise from the venerable parāśakti and are expressed in varied scriptural and worldly forms ...'"
emphatically said that the vaikhari vāk is the source of fetters and bonds when its origin from Parāvāk is not recognized, but once the knowledge of its true nature is attained, it is the source of liberation.\textsuperscript{129}

The understanding of vaikhari vāk as aparāśakti and kriyāsakti, is decisive in the doctrine of vāk, because without the knowledge of its essential nature ‘it is the source of fetter’ and it will obstruct one’s way to the Divine.\textsuperscript{130} If vaikhari vāk is understood merely as the gross forms of language or the objective world, it is indeed the source of bondage to objects and concepts. In such a case, the next stage of madhyamā cannot be induced.

2.3.2. Madhyamā vāk

2.3.2.1. Madhyamā has the form of dhvani beyond prāṇa, and is supported by antahkarana.

Madhyamā vāk is the intermediate stage in between paśyantī and vaikhari. Vaikhari is supported by prāṇa. Through prāṇa, vaikhari vāk, which is essentially energy, would manifest herself in bodily forms. Madhyamā vāk that precedes vaikhari in the cosmogonical process exists beyond prāṇa. Rājānaka Rāma states about madhyamā vāk:

“Its nature is a peculiar resonance (dhvani) that has neither beginning nor end and arises spontaneously within the body of each living being independently of the effort exerted by vital breath.”\textsuperscript{131}

We are informed that though the madhyamā vāk is accompanied by prāṇa because of its

\textsuperscript{129} Cf. SpK 48: \textit{seyam kriyāmitkā śakīh śivasya paśuvartinī}

\textit{bandhayitrī syamārghastā jñātā siddhupapādikā}

“This Śiva’s power of action, residing in the fettered soul, binds it, (but) when (its true nature) is understood and it is set on its own path, (this power) bestows the fruits of yoga (siddhi).” (trans. Dyczkowski 1994: p. xvii).

\textsuperscript{130} “When this wealth of Vāk is recognized in this way to be the power of the Supreme Lord, it bestows the highest perfection, but when it is conditioned by its association with the many fettered souls, it is the cause of bondage.” (SpV. 48, trans. Dyczkowski 1994: p. 132).

dhvani nature, it is beyond the level of prāṇa. In the description of dhvani nature of madhyamā, its timelessness is emphasized.

‘Madhyamā vāk arises within the body of each living being.’ Where do we find madhyamā in our body, then? The texts say that its support or vehicle is antahkaraṇa. Abhinavagupta renders an analytical description of madhyamā vāk:

“The madhyamā, he (Utpaladeva) writes, is that energy of self-awareness (vimarsaśakti) which activates the internal organ (antahkaraṇa), which is to say manas, buddhi and ahamkāra resting (viśrāntaṃ) on the substratum of vital energy (prāṇādhāre), the eightfold subtle body (purvaśātaka), in the central place between [the flow of the breaths: madhyabhūma].”

Madhyama, in essence, is vimarsaśakti, and the antahkaraṇas - buddhi, ahamkāra and manas - are the field of its action. It is worth refreshing the remark of Abhinavagupta in regard to the locus of the antahkaraṇas. They reside in ‘the substratum of prāṇa’ and ‘in the madhyabhūmi (central place between prāṇa and apāna)’ therefore, it is beyond the prāṇa. Somānananda also indicates that madhyamā manifests when vāk activates the ‘antahkaraṇas’, and is reached through two flows of prāṇa and apāna. The madhyabhūmi is the point in between prāṇa and apāna, which is a door to approach to the madhyamā vāk where distinct thoughts are restored to indistinct reality and whose nature is vimarsaśakti.

2.3.2.2. The objectivity is covered by the subjectivity.

Somānanda uses the term ‘vijñānarūpatva’ in the expression of the antahkaraṇas in the Śivadṛṣṭi (II, 6). These antahkaraṇas are empirically manifested in the form of internal thoughts. Thought-constructs (sāmkalpa) and discursive thoughts (vikalpa)

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133 “When this sound (śabda) reaches a plane of thought (vijñānarūpatva) where the desire to express the objects appear, this is called the madhyamā.” It is further continued, “This is due to the movement of bindu and nāda (bindunādamarutkramāḥ).” Utpaladeva comments upon this passage: “This word is called the madhyamā. Due to the movement of bindu and nāda means due to the process/ sequence of prāṇa and apāna.”(ŚD II, 6 and commentary, pp.41-2, trans. Padoux 1992: p. 214, footnote 113).  
134 See footnote 133 in Part II.
appear in the madhyamā. In the stage of madhyamā the differentiation between the vācaka and the vācyā emerges, which means the division between the subject and the object. "The madhyamā reveals the duality of vācaka and vācaka." However, the internal thought based on antahkaraṇas activated by the madhyamā has both distinct and indistinct forms (parāpara). "Owing to the reflective awareness attached thereto (vimarṣavyāpāraḥ), madhyamā shares the nature of ‘parāvāk’, which is the undifferentiated reality. On the other hand, the distinct forms of vaikhari vāk latently rest in madhaymā. Abhinavagupta draws an example of a child to explain that the distinctive names and forms - the constituents of the objective world and the direct effect of vaikhari - exist already in the madhyamā.

"The phonemes [making up the words] that he is aware of and that are audible pertain to the plane of vaikhari, in regard to which he is as if born blind [that is, he can hear but does not know to what the words refer]. It is therefore necessary that vaikhari, together with the places and organs of speech articulation which make it up, should already exist internally within madhyamā."137

The manifestation of the objective world in the madhyamā stage is neither physical nor empirical. And as it is precisely exemplified by the case of a child, the objective world, though manifested, remains dominated by the subjectivity. The case of a child represents the madhyamā stage from the viewpoint of cognitive development. The relationship between the subject and the object - or between the vācaka and the vācyā - in the madhyamā vāk certainly enfold a critical point in relation to aesthetic experience. The following elucidation of Abhinavagupta about the madhyamā is revealing because it lays a connection between the madhyamā stage and the stage of initial identification between the subject and the object during the aesthetic relish.

"It (madhyamā vāk) consists of a form of knowing (vedana) that is a covering [by pure consciousness] of the clearly manifested object of


cognition; just as in vācyā is vācaka, here vācyā also is superimposed [on vācaka]. Such an imposition, consisting of a reciprocal mixing and covering [of these two elements], can happen only if vācaka is entirely [superimposed] on vācyā, which is all the manifest, and if all the manifest [is imposed on vācaka], and not otherwise. A cloth cannot cover another one if it is three or four fingerbreadths shorter. And this omnipresence of all in all (viśvātmakatvam) is due to this mutual mixing up of the natures proper to [vācyā and vācaka].”138

Madhyamā consists of the process of knowing (vedana), which is defined as ‘a covering of the clearly manifested object (sphūtavedyapracchādaka vedanarūpā)’. Madhyamā is revealed in the process of knowing because the antahkaraṇas, which is vijñānarūpā, are the support of madhyamā. ‘The process of knowing’ denotes ‘the reciprocal mixing and covering of vācyā and vācaka’, which takes place in the state of complete superimposition of vācaka on vācyā. ‘A reciprocal mixing and covering of two elements of vācyā and vācaka’ is precisely a description of the state comparable to the initial identification during the aesthetic experience. We should be reminded that the madhayamā has been also defined as a form of ‘seeing’ (darśana).139 The identification between a viewer and an object in the aesthetic relish is a state exactly where ‘a reciprocal mixing of the viewing subject and the viewed object’ takes place. If we assign the stage of madhyamā in parallel to the stage of identification, how can we answer the question, ‘Does the subjectivity predominate over the objectivity in the initial identification during the aesthetic experience?’ In the aesthetic experience, the objectivity seems predominating over the subjectivity at a first glance, because the selfhood of the viewer is forgotten and only the object of appreciation comes into fore in the aesthetic realm. However, in a deeper observation, it is a process where the objectivity of the viewer melts in the subjectivity of the object, therefore the relative objectivity of the individual is overcome. The discursive thoughts and the phenomenal constituents of the viewer rest in the ‘subjective being’ of the object. If the argument is based on the above account, the process of identification between a viewer and an object is itself a symptom of transcending the objectivity, because ‘a reciprocal mixing

138 PTV p. 148, trans. Padoux 1992: p. 210. I have the Sanskrit terms of ‘vācyā’ and ‘vācaka’ intact, while Padoux translates them ‘the expressed’ and ‘the expressing’. For the term ‘vedana’, I have used ‘knowing’ instead of ‘knowledge’ in order to emphasize the dimension of ‘action’.

and covering between vācaka and vācyā is preconditioned by the superimposition of vācaka on vācyā.

The relevance of the stage of madhyāma to that of identification in the aesthetic experience is explicit when Abhinavagupta explains the gross form of madhyāma. He refers to “the sound (dhvani) produced by a drum or any other similar instrument” as an example of the gross form of madhyāma, “because their sound is both distinct and indistinct (sphuṭāsphuṭarūpatva)”.

He explains that it is the undivided aspect (avibhāga) of madhyāma that makes it attractive (or pleasing aesthetically). Here Jayaratha adds,

“By being attracted to that (the undivided), the state becomes like “identification (tanmayībhāva).”

2.3.2.3. Madhyāma is on the plane of icchāsakti, jñānasakti and kriyāsakti.

Textual sources associate madhyāma vāk variedly with icchāsakti, jñānasakti and kriyāsakti.

The Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa emphasizes that “the plane proper to madhyāma is on the level of isvara, which is kriyāsakti (power of action).” As we have seen madhyāma vāk being defined as vedana or darśana (act of knowing or seeing), it is the action that intermediates between the knower and the known in the cognitive process; and between the viewer and the viewed in the aesthetic relish.

Because madhyāma vāk acts in the field of antaḥkaraṇas, especially buddhi, it is said to be in the plane of jñānasakti. Abhinavagupta who explained the association of the madhyāma with the kriyāsakti in the Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa, affiliates it to the

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141 TĀ III. 242b (vol. II, p. 581).
jñānaśakti in the Isvaraprtyabhijñāvivrtivimarśini.144 The text says that when the antaḥkaraṇas are activated by the madhyamā vāk, it operates its proper function, which are samkalpa (intentional thought activity), niścaya (judgment) and abhimāna (self-reference). They constitute the dualistic thought construction (vikālpa). Thus, madhyamā145 is revealed as thought (cintana).

"Because that which is what is expressed by thought comes between [paśyanti and vaikhari] it is [called] the madhyamā. Its nature is that of the energy of cognition (jñānaśaktirūpa).”146

According to Rājānaka Rāma, in his commentary to the Spandakārikā, icchāśakti corresponds to madhyamā vāk.147

2.3.3. Paśyanti vāk

2.3.3.1. Paśyanti vāk is the intense and synthetic awareness (parāmarśa) of the undivided whole, but icchāśakti is in play in the direction of differentiation.

From the viewpoint of the cognitive process, paśyanti is the stage prior to the thought construction of madhyamā that is followed by the distinct expression of vaikhari. According to Abhinavagupta, paśyanti vāk is the initial stage of the insightful knowledge (prathamajñānakāla), and there is no distinction between the vācaka and the vācyā (vācyavācakaviśeṣayoh abhedāḥ).148

One synthetically grasps the undivided whole in the paśyanti stage.

"This Śakti which is full of the awareness (vimarśa) of Grace for the entire world is, to begin with, non-different from paśyanti who is parāmarśamayī i.e. who is always cognizant of the essential nature of the

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144 IPVV 1.5.13 (vol. 2, p. 188), trans. by Padoux (with the help of A. Sanderson) 1992: pp. 207-8.
145 ‘Vimarśmayī vāk’ in the text.
148 PTV 1 (p. 4): “At the time of initial indeterminate knowledge in paśyanti in which there is no distinction in the word (vācaka) and the referent (vācyā), there was obviously not any sense of difference between the word and its referent.” (trans. Singh 1988: p. 8).
Divine and who has a hundred powers which are boundless in operation.”

Here, *paśyantī* is clearly denoted as ‘parāmarśamayī’ (consisting of synthetic awareness), while the term ‘parāmarśa’ is also one of the attributes of *Parāvāk*, as we read in Jayaratha’s commentary on TĀ III. 236, “she is that who is in the form of *Parāvāk*, and who is the parāmarśa whose nature is the *ahaṁ* (Absolute I”).

*Paśyantī* is described very similar to *Parāvāk* in nature as much as it is the first expansion of *Parāvāk*. However, *Parāvāk* is described as ‘vimarśamayī’ (consisting of Self-reflection) or *ahaṁ-pratyavamarśa* (reflective awareness of *ahaṁ*), whereas *paśyantī* is said to be *idaṁbhāvarūpasya pratyavamarśa* (reflective awareness of the objectivity) which is based on *ahaṁ* (*ahaṁbhāvavīśranti*).

In *paśyantī* the objectivity has not arisen, and pure subjectivity prevails. Although the subjectivity (*ahaṁ*) prevails in *paśyantī*, the objectivity (**idham**) is in incipient rising. The synthetic awareness (parāmarśa) of “the subject who sees (draśṭṛ)”, that prevails the *paśyantī* stage, is accompanied by the *icchāśakti*, the will to differentiate. In consequence, the cause of the emergence of *vācyā* and *vācaka* is established, and “the lineament of differentiation starts”. Because the *icchāśakti* is awakened in *paśyantī* to function, the differentiation is initiated, and *paśyantī* is described in the category of *parāparā* (or *bheda-bhedha*: difference and non-difference) as like the *madhyamā*. However, in the *paśyantī* level, the *ahaṁ* (**I-ness, subjectivity**)

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150 Jayaratha’s commentary of TĀ III. 236 (vol. II, p. 577): *asyeti parāvāgarūpasya ahamānaḥ parāmarśasya*...

151 PTV pp. 82-83: *paśyantā api parābhaṭṭārūppayāḥ prathamaḥ prathamaḥ prāśāh prathamaprasaratvāt*..


154 Ibid.

155 PTV pp. 6, 15: *bhedaśūnaṃ parābhaṭṭārūpāyaḥ prāśāh prathamaḥ* (cf. Padoux 1992: p. 189, footnote 53). Padoux (1992: p. 190) defines the *paśyantī* stage as “a transition between the complete undifferentiation and the commencement of differentiation”. He explains that the *icchāśakti* “corresponds to the moment that follows immediately after that of the first complete and undifferentiated awareness. This moment is characterized by a subtle vibration (parisāmpandā) of consciousness ... a first nondiscursive stirring of the will toward this objectivity” (ibid., p. 194).
is still prevalent, whereas the idantā (This-ness, objectivity) is formed in the madhyamā.

Paśyantī vāk corresponds to sadāśiva tattva, and is identified with the icchāśakti according to Abhinavagupta. Somānanda, in the Śivadṛṣṭi, draws an example of a potter in the context of the paśyantī in the form of icchāśakti. As like a potter whose act of making a pot is initiated by cognizing the will, the icchāśakti of paśyantī is preceded by “the subtle expansion of consciousness” (सुक्ष्म उल्लास सिद्ध). Alternatively, paśyantī vāk is described as consisting of jñānaśakti in association with Sadāśiva, in contrast to madhyamā vāk that is ascribed to the plane of kriyāśakti in association with Īśvara. For example, we read,

“...paśyantī where the differentiation is incipient, and madhyamā where the differentiation appears, that are in the form consisting respectively of jñānaśakti and kriyāśakti, in the essence of Sadāśiva and Īśvara...”

When we read Abhinavagupta’s remark, it appears that the division between the icchāśakti and the jñānaśakti is indefinite:

“Itchāśakti has for its nature the desire to know the object which is to be known (bodhyabubhutsāsvabhāva). The desire to know is, in fact, nothing else in essence but knowledge itself (bodhasvabhāva), for there the [prospective] object is already revealed in the full light of manifestation.”

2.3.3.2. Forms of objects of knowledge are resorbed in the stage of paśyantī vāk.

One can intentionally approach the paśyantī vāk through the right means. Paśyantī is close to Parāvāk, which is an aspect of Anuttara, the Highest, the Absolute. However, it is not only transcendental beyond one’s grasp, but one can experience it by means of

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157 ŚD 2. 84-5. (p. 91): “Just as the agent, be it a potter..., or any other person, becomes aware (vimarsā), in the form of an act of will (icchārūpeṇa), that ‘a pot should be made’, likewise here (paśyantī), the same situation [occurs]. How could the will that thus precedes [action], develop if there was not... a subtle expansion of consciousness intent on the prospective object?” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 194, footnote. 66).

158 PTV p. 6: paśyantīyāṃ yatra bhedāmsasyāsūtranāṃ yatra ca madhyamā bhedāvabhāsah, tatra ubhavautra jñānakriyāśaktimaye rūpe sadāśīveśvarasūtre.

due condition. The text mentions the memory and the mental concentration (samādhi) as the right means.

A passage from the Vṛtti of Vākyapadīya quoted by Abhinavagupta in his Isvarapratyabhijñāvivrtivimarśini, portrays the paśyantī vāk at the experiential level. In this case, it is samādhanā (meditative concentration) that brings one to the paśyantī level:

“Paśyantī, although the sequentiality is entirely resorbed in her (pratisamāḥtakramantah satyapabhede), possesses however the energy [that animates sequentiality] (samāviṣṭakramaśaktiḥ). She is both mobile and immovable and is attained by mental concentration (sā acalā ca calā pratilabdhamayaśaṃmādhanā ca). The forms of the objects of knowledge appear in her as immersed in consciousness, their form being either resorbed, or absent (samāvinniśhajñeyā kārā pratilmākārānirākārā ca). All this appears in her in a variety of discrete aspects or as forms fused into each other, or it may appear as having lost all form (paricchinnārthapratyavabhāsā samārsṭārthapratyavabhāsā ca sarvārthapratyavabhāsā praśānta pratyavabhāsā ca iti).

The description of the paśyantī vāk in the state of meditation given above is important specifically in the context of the aesthetic absorption, because it illustrates how the multiple objects appear in the state of paśyantī vāk. They lose their distinct forms, first of all, as they are immersed in saṃvid (Divine Consciousness). However, the author illustrates more than one way how forms exist in the paśyantī stage:

i) they appear in subtle forms, while retaining their specific characteristics;
ii) they are inter-fused into one another and create a unity;
iii) they become void.

The observation of the three different descriptions reveals that they signify the transformation from the level of subtle forms to the complete dissolution of forms. The forms of the object of knowledge lose their nature as distinct forms, which is the immovable (acalā) aspect of paśyantī. On the other hand, within the paśyantī, there

160 Cf. IPVV 1.5.13 (vol. 2, p. 195): “One must consider the plane of sadāśiva (sadāśiveśvaradāśa) as a great paśyantī (mahāpaśyantī) in comparison with the innumerable paśyantīs of the individual knowers subject to māyā.” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 201).
occurs the transformation of subtle forms owing to energy, and it consists in the mobile (calā) aspect of the paśyantī.

Abhinavagupta in his Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa refers to the act of recollection through which man experiences paśyantī vāk.

"Paśyantī is touched (vimṃśati) solely through ‘the act of stringing together’ of awareness (bodhasūtraṇamātrenā) of anything that is desired (abhīpsitaṁ), and which is specifically awakened by a fit cause (samucitakaraṇaniyama-prabhodhitam)."

He continues that one recalls (smṛtitvimṃśati) out of many mental impressions, such as dark-blue etc. only what is awakened by the memory as cause (smṛtibjaprabhodhakaicityā). Here, the distinct forms are unmanifested (nāhi prathamajñākāle bheda'ra āśphurat). It is remarkable that Abhinavagupta, in this context, takes the example of a visual, viz. meca ka (dark-blue colour or the eye of a peacock, tail). The visual example explicitly referred to by Abhinavagupta implies that the paśyantī vāk is attained not only by verbal language also through the memory of visuals. These textual descriptions of the paśyantī vāk hold a valuable reference, which conduces the discussion of doctrine of vāk concomitantly to the aesthetics of visuals.

What needs more attention here is the topic of ‘memory’ (smarāṇa) because it opens the door to paśyantī vāk. Abhinavagupta, in the Tantrāloka, equates the memory to consciousness (samvitti) established in the manifested multiplicity, in its highest sense. The memory is said to be non-discursive (avikalpa) as well as discursive

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162 PTV p. 4: tatastu paśyantī yadyat abhīpsitaṁ tattadeva samucitakaraṇaniyama-prabhodhitam bodhasūtraṇamātrenā vimṃśati...

Padoux translates (1992: p. 193) the verse, "Paśyantī becomes aware through the sole movement of consciousness of anything which, desired [by it], it specifically awakened by a definite cause."

163 PTV p. 4: yathā anekabhāvabhāvajñānasamskārasamskṛtāyā meca kadhiyāḥ smṛtibjaprabhodhakaicityāt kinciteva smṛtivimṃśati.

164 TĀ 5. 137-39: "Memory (smṛti), a recalling to mind (smarāṇa), is at the root of all the modalities of existence (pūrva sarvabhāvaḥ sustutah); verily its innermost nature is the mantra (mantrasvarūpa). It is that which allows the apprehension of the deeper nature of these modalities when they arise (sarvabhāvaḥ sarvajñākāla). Memory, [indeed], induces this nature. Coloring [or taking hold of] all objective modalities, as it is present in the multiplicity of forms, it partakes of the innate nature of all things (svaśvabhāvaḥsva..."
In memory, although the distinct objects are represented (vimarsaviśeṣātmakavikaplarūpa), thus discursive, the potency of distinctive expression (śabdabhāvanā) is enveloped (saṃvartitaśabdabhāvanārūpa). How can these two contradictory descriptions, that is, discursive and non-discursive, co-exist? In regard to this question we should presuppose that in the state of memory there occurs the ‘transformation’ from the discursiveness to the non-discursiveness, or vice versa, which is consistent with the calā (movable) aspect of the paśyanti stage, referred to in the Vṛtti, on the Vākyapādiya (1. 142) in the context of saṃādhana.

2.3.3.3. The gross paśyanti is nāda.

The above descriptions of paśyanti vāk reached by the mental concentration or by the memory present us a picture of paśyanti vāk as the internal subtle synthesis of multiple forms. It appears unlikely that the paśyanti vāk is experienced with any of our five sense organs, or it is designated to any external objects. However, the paśyanti is also described as something that can be directly experienced by our senses. For instance, the paśyanti is conceived to be in the nature of ‘such a subtle murmur’ (sūkṣmasaṃjalpasvabhāva), which is yet based on the aural sense. In the Tantrāloka, Abhinavagupta states,

“The gross paśyanti (sthūlapaśyanti) that is in the form of resonance (nādarūpini) as light and beautiful as a series of musical notes (svarasandarbhasubhagā), is not divided into phonemes, and so forth.”

Here, it is the undivided flow of musical notes, not being divided into each distinct unit,
that is taken as an example of nāda and defined as the gross paśyantī.

Then, what is nāda? Nāda is, in the Netratantra, associated with the sadāśivatattva, as the paśyantī vāk is so. The text defines nāda as the sound that fills the world when the sphoṭa (a form of sound; dhvanirūpa) from the invisible form of Śiva expands.\(^{170}\)

Abhinavagupta defines that nāda is “what is left of the experiencer’s synthetic self-awareness (svātmaparāmarśaśeṣatā) when all differentiating thought (vikalpaṁjanadīnām) disappears”.\(^{171}\)

According to Jayartha’s commentary of the Tantrāloka, nāda is the unstruck (anāhata), almost unmanifest, sound (dhvani),\(^{172}\) and the plane of the pure consciousness (saṃvidam) transcending the universe.\(^{173}\) It is puzzling that we read the description of Parāvāk in the context of nāda, which has been assigned to the gross paśyantī in the same text. However, this statement is unobjectionable, most of all because the paśyantī is very close to Parāvāk in nature.

Kṣemarāja, in his commentary to the Netratantra, gives a detailed account about the Parā aspect of nāda;\(^{174}\) it is the pure light of consciousness (paracitprakāśarūpa)

\(^{170}\) NT 21.61-63 (vol. 2, pp. 287-88): “When, from the invisible form of Śiva the sphoṭa, which is a form of sound (dhvanirūpa), expands, impetuously filling the world with sound (dhvanināpāraya), it is called nāda, O Master of the Gods, and the Sadāśiva.” (trans. Padoux 1992: pp. 97-98, footnote 33).


\(^{172}\) TĀ V. 131 comm. (vol. 3, p. 1060). Synonyms of nāda are given in the Nāda Kārikā 16-7: “Therefore the existence of nāda (nādah parāḥ) is established which is synonymous with sumāṅgalā, mālini, mahāmāyā, samanā, anāhata, bindu, aghoṣa, vāgbrahma, kundalinītattva and the category of vidyā. These names have been stated in different Āgamas.” (trans. Chakravarty 1992: p. 12).

\(^{173}\) TĀ V. 75 comm. (vol. 3, p. 1000): ‘nādadasām śrayet’ iti vimaraṇmikaṁ viśvottānāṁ saṃvidamāsādayedītivātahāḥ!

\(^{174}\) NT 21.63 comm. (vol. 2, p. 288): saiva nādabhaṭṭāraka kṛtakāhαntedantā-saṃmāṅḍikaranyavimārasāmakaparacitprakāśarūpāḥ iti nādah sadāśivah iti saṃmāṅḍikaranyoker āśayah - “This blessed nāda is the pure light of the supreme consciousness when it becomes aware both of itself as the repository of objectivity and of this objectivity which dwells within itself, as being uncreated, of identical nature and as dwelling in the same substratum (which is itself). Such is nāda. And it is sadāśiva, namely the receptacle for the utterance of this identity in nature and substratum (or relating to the same object and residing in the same subject: sāmānīyādīkāranyā)” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 101, footnote 46).
and reflective awareness (vimarsa-imaka) where the subject (ahanta) and the object (idanta) are uncreated (akrata), and the subject of the objectivity and the objectivity in
the subject are identified (sana-mayadhikaranya), which is the state of sadashiva.

A Srividya text, the Saradha Tilaka175 explains the cosmogonical process in the
terminology of sound, in which nada (nada) is the permeating sound principle, like a
resonance, in contrast to the concentrated state of bindu. The text, after describing the
Absolute in state of permeation with vaka, says,

“Out of the supreme Lord (parameśarā), overflowing with existence, consciousness, and bliss (saccidānandavibhavā), endowed with kalā
(sakalā), was born the [phonic] energy (acicchakti). Out of that came forth
nada (tato nado) and out of nada (nada) bindu (bindusāmbhavā), which is
a manifestation of the supreme energy (parasaktimayaḥ), and which itself
divides into three (sākṣat tridhā 'sau bhidyate punaḥ). Its three portions
are called: bindu, nada, and bija.”176

According to the text, there are two levels of each of nada and bindu: nada before the
parāsakti is concentrated into the form of bindu, called ‘paranada’; and nada at
another level that occurs after the division of bindu, called ‘aparanada’. The actual
manifestation of parāsakti starts from the form of bindu, which gives out three
divisions - bindu, nada and bija - for the further creation.177

175 The Saradha Tilaka (Forehead-ornament of Sarasvatī) is a basic matric digest along with the text
Prapancasāra. The author of the text, Laksmana Desikendra was a Śaiva religious
leader, reported to have been a pupil of Utpaladeva. Laksmana Desikendra is commonly placed to the 11th cent.
A.D. About the text, see Goudriaan & Gupta 1981: p. 134 f.
The text continues to explain the cosmogonical process till the empirical world is created. Out of the three
divisions, that is bija, bindu and nada - sabdabrahman comes into existence and assumes the form of
kundalinī. Through the rise of the kundalini, the phonemes (varṇa) arise. Then speech, the gods, then the
In the Śaiva Siddhānta text, Mrigendra Agama kriyāpada (I. 2.) bindu is the outcome of nada which
again is the resultant of sakti (saktarnada 'bhavat binduḥ). When the anāhata sound becomes condensed
in the inner recess of the mind as inner cognition (anahsamkalpa), it gradually becomes well-shaped like
a round ball of speech (sampinditavagrapaḥ). It is named bindu because it is nothing but a drop (binduriva
177 According to the text, the aparā bindu is of the nature of Śiva, bija of that of Śakti, and aparā nada is
the union, the mutual relation between Śiva and Śakti (cf. ST 1.8-9).
The stages through which \textit{parāśakti} is concentrated to bring forth the empirical creation is elaborately dealt with in the \textit{Netratantra}. Here, we encounter three levels of \textit{nāda} in between \textit{sakti} and \textit{bindu}: \textit{nādānta}, \textit{nāda} and \textit{nirodhinī}. The difference between \textit{nāda} and \textit{nādānta} (literally meaning ‘the end of \textit{nāda}’) is illustrated in Kṣemarāja’s commentary of the \textit{Netratantra}. He states that Śiva, the eternal knower, becomes aware, in an undivided way (āmarśa) of the \textit{paranāda} that is like “the indistinct murmur of a brook” (avyucchinnadrutananadīghoṣa), and at the same time aware of the world and universe filled with \textit{nādānta}, which is like “the echo of a bell without sound” (dhvaninā ghanṭānuraṇanarūpena nādāntena jagat viśvam āpūrayan).\footnote{Cf. NT 21. 63, comm. (vol. 2, p. 288); cf. Padoux 1992: p. 102.} Here we notify that \textit{nāda} is the indistinct continuous resonance, whereas \textit{nādānta} is the moment when the subtle indistinct vibration of \textit{nāda} is dissolved close to the state of absolute non-manifestation. On the contrary, when \textit{nāda} moves on towards manifestation, it becomes \textit{nirodhinī} or \textit{nirodhikā}. It is a state where \textit{nāda} rests (viśrāmyati), and brings up (unmajjayati) the deep pervasiveness (adharavyāptim) for the manifestation by merging into its own pervasiveness (svavyāptinimajjanena).\footnote{Cf. NT 21. 64 comm. (vol. 2, p. 289), trans. Padoux 1992: pp. 103-4.}

The relevance of the concept of \textit{nāda} in the context of the doctrine of \textit{vāk}, especially \textit{paśyantī} \textit{vāk}, is evident from Kṣemarāja’s exposition of \textit{nādānta}.

“The \textit{nādānta} starts to radiate forth in order to bring the universe into manifestation, being replete with the energy of the supreme Word (\textit{paravākśakti}) wherefrom it originates.”\footnote{NT 21. 63 comm. (vol. 2, p. 288), trans. Padoux 1992: p. 102.}

Here it is clear that the \textit{nādānta} originates from \textit{Parāvāk}, and it is the all-pervasiveness without manifestation that precedes the subtle manifestation of sound in the form of \textit{nāda}. \textit{Nādānta} may be imagined as a state in between the \textit{Parāvāk} and the \textit{paśyantī}, or as the highest level of \textit{paśyantī}. \textit{Nirodhinī} is situated between the \textit{nāda} at the \textit{Sadāśiva tattva} and the \textit{bindu} at the \textit{Īsvara tattva}, and according to the \textit{Netra Tantra} it is at the level where those aspects of the knower arise.\footnote{Cf. NT 21. 65-6 (vol. 2, pp. 289-90), trans. Padoux 1992: p. 104.} It is said to be the level
where the dynamism peculiar to mantras appears, thus, it is also called mantrakalā.\textsuperscript{182} The association of the mantravīrya particularly with the nirodhinī can be comprehended better when we are reminded of paśyantī being defined as “the initial creative state of the energy of the highest mantra” in the Parātriśika-Vivaraṇa.\textsuperscript{183} The observation of the state of nāda and its diverse levels may help our comprehension of the transformations of forms in the paśyantī vāk, which says about its calā aspects.\textsuperscript{184}

2.3.3.4. Is paśyantī vāk comparable to bindu?

The paśyantī vāk is the initial creative moment, where the unmanifested and undivided Whole, after inconceivable subtle developments in the para level, starts unfolding its dimension in the level of parāparā. It may be said that the paśyantī vāk is at the border between Parā and aparā. In the cosmogonic process described in the Śāradā Tilaka and the Netratantra, the bindu is the stage that is positioned in between parāsakti and aparāsakti. Bindu that is divided into the three divisions stands for the beginning of the actual manifestation, which may be comparable to the madhyamā vāk where the actual forms are manifested. The various stages - from Paramesvara to parābindu according to the Śāradā Tilaka, or from unmanā to bindu in the Netratantra – are analogous to the sequential development of forms from Parāvāk to paśyantī. Comparable to the various stages of transformation in the paśyantī vāk, the stages starting from bindu to Paramesvara seem signifying the process of swallowing the manifestated back into the absolute unmanifested source.\textsuperscript{185}

The relation of the paśyantī to the bindu is difficult to be ascertained because the textual sources give inconsistent descriptions of each concept and of their relations. Nevertheless, looking into the exposition of bindu in parallel to paśyantī would help in discerning the various stages of forms within the paśyantī, because both of them are the initial moment of manifestation.

\textsuperscript{183} PTV 1 (p. 5): paramahāmantravīryavaisrṣṭirūpāyā...
\textsuperscript{185} The expositions of the bindu given in the Śāradā Tilaka and the Kāmakalāvilāsa tells that “the bindu and its division are therefore... the same gathering up and then dividing movement of Śiva’s energy” (Padoux 1992: p. 116).
The literal meaning of bindu is ‘a point’ or ‘a drop’. As the geometrical point, it is positioned in between form and formlessness, therefore in itself implies multi-layered metaphorical meanings. It is the source from which everything emerges out and to which all the created beings return. Synonyms of the bindu are given in the Ratna-Traya-Parīkṣā: śabdatattvaghoṣa (essence of the sound element), vāgbrahma, Kuṇḍalini, dhruvam (the stable), vidyā (knowledge), sakti, parā (the transcendent one), nāda, mahāmāyā, vyoma, anāhata (the unstruck sound). While bindu has varied layers of meanings, its sound quality seems persistent due to its intimate association with nāda. In the Sanskrit phonematic system where the vowels are seen as the expansion of the energy of Śiva, anusvāra is the bindu into which all the vowels from a to au gather and from which the manifestation of Śiva with the agency of Śakti starts.

Instead of making an exhaustive survey of the multi-layered concepts of bindu, I here concentrate on a particular aspect, which is more related to paśyantī vāk. As in the paśyantī vāk where the subjectivity prevails and the objectivity is in a dissolved form, bindu is conceived as the Knowing Subject. The bindu in this sense is the nature of pure light as consistent to its being assigned to the plane of Sadāśiva. Kṣemarāja, in his commentary to the Śivasūtras, defines bindu as supreme light: binduḥ paraṃprakāśaḥ. When Abhinavagupta explains that the first principle, ‘prakāśatattva’ abides in the knower, the knowledge and the known, he continues,

“This pure light (prakāśamatra), shining while these three luminous aspects (dhamatraya) remain, is called bindu (vindu) in the scriptures. It is regarded as Śiva’s bindu (sivavindu).”

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188 Cf. PTV 5.
191 TĀ 3. 130b-1a. (vol. II, p. 486). ittham prakāśātattvasya somasūryāgniṁ sthitā || api mukhyam tatprakāśamatravāṁ na vyapohyate ||
In Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrasāra* I, the light of Śiva, though it itself is of no-form, is said to bring all forms through *kriyāsakti*. When the phonemic emanation is explained, *bindu* is also equated to be the knowledge (*vedana*) and the subject of light.

“Then, at the end of the power of action, all that was to be done and has been accomplished is about to enter into the Absolute, but, before doing so, it all exists as the *bindu* which is essentially knowledge (*vedana*) and pure light (*prakāšamātra*).”

If we are bound to the meaning of *bindu* as the point of concentrated energy or geometrical point, it is difficult to understand its description as the penetrating light of Subjectivity, which is transcribed as ‘*vindu*’ in Sanskrit. Let us take another passage which illustrates the aspect of *bindu* as the pure light and the Knowing Subject. In the *Tantrāloka* III. 110-111, we read,

“Even at this stage that transcendent power (*anuttarasakti*) though making its form clearly manifest and taking on limitations of the impurities of objectivity (*jñeyakalā*), it is yet always of the form of *bindu* (*vindurūpiṇī*). When *kriyāsakti* develops fully (*uditāyāṃ kriyāsaktau*) in the realm of knowable objects, the instrument of knowledge, and the experiencing subject (*somasūryāgnidhāmanī*), the undifferentiated light (*prakāśa*) which pervades all is our Supreme *Bindu* (*vinduḥ paramo*).”

Jayaratha comments on the above verses.

“This (*vettīti vinduḥ*) is the autonomous knower (*svatantraḥ pramātā*) in the very act of knowing. Its nature is light, supreme indivisible (*avibhāgaḥ parah prakāśaḥ*) He never loses anything from its original nature.”

The above references signify that the *bindu*, especially written as *vindu*, is the principle of light and awareness which is unchangeable even in the turbidness of objectivity, and that it is the shining state of true awareness where three conditions of knowledge, that is, *pramātr*, *pramāna*, and *prameya* are amalgamated in unity. The use of the term

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194 Here, *sūrya*, *soma*, *āgni* signify knower, knowledge, and known - *pramātr*, *pramāna*, and *prameya*.
'vinduh' emphasizes a particular concept of bindu as the conceptual point where the multiple objectivity touches the Subjectivity. Here it may be appropriate to quote a verse from the Paratrisika-Vivaraṇa once again:

"Paśyanti is touched (vimṛṣati) solely through 'the act of stringing together' of awareness (bodhasūtraṇamātreṇa) of anything that is desired (abhīpsitaṃ), and which is specifically awakened by a fit cause (samucitakaraṇāṇiyama-prabhodhitaṃ)."\(^{197}\)

The association between two concepts, bindu and paśyanti, which have been brought together due to their functional parallelism, is further strengthened under the bodha aspect of bindu. The aspect of bindu as pure light and awareness is apparently none other than the narrative description of the bodha (enlightenment or awareness). Especially when the bindu is described as ‘cognizing the Bhairava nature of the heart’\(^{198}\) in the Paratrisika-Vivaraṇa, it is precisely the bodha that sees the Śiva nature of the individual heart. As the bindu is recognized as the symbol of the bodhicitta in tantric Buddhism, the bindu being written in ‘vindu’ could be a signifier of the bodha.

2.3.4. Parāvāk

2.3.4.1. Parāvāk is in the plane of parāsakti, that is, Anuttara.

Parāvāk is the state of complete undifferentiation within its Oneness.\(^{199}\) There is complete absence of any objects.\(^{200}\) Yet, it pervades throughout the stages of paśyanti, madhyamā and vaikhari, and it is always present in all experients and objects, because it is beyond time and space or any convention.

\(^{197}\) PTV p. 4: tattasa paśyanti yad yat abhīpsitaṃ tattadeva samucitakaraṇāṇiyama-prabhodhitaṃ bodhasūtraṇamātreṇa vimṛṣati…

\(^{198}\) PTV p. 230: Bhairavātmavedanārtiḥpatayā bindvātmaṅkaṁ हṛdayam (“Hṛdaya is in the nature of bindu that is represented in the cognition of its Bhairava nature”).

\(^{199}\) “The parā vāk which is non-dual i. e. identical with the (supreme consciousness) is present in all experients always in her integral nature uniformly in all states i. e., even at the level of paśyanti, madhyamā and vaikhari.” (PTV trans. Singh 1988: p. 8. Sanskrit text : p. 2). Cf. IPK I.5.13, author’s vṛtti: “This is the First Word (ādyā vac), in which the expressible is undifferentiated, without beginning or end in that it is constituted by perpetual consciousness, autonomous.” (trans. Torella 2002 : p. 121)

\(^{200}\) “In the parā (supreme) stage, there is, indeed, total absence of any object whatsoever.” (PTV I, trans. Singh 1988: p. 12).

179
The nature of Parāvāk is concisely expressed in the words of Abhinavagupta:

“What is the stage of parā vāk (parāvāgbhūmiḥ) is the power of non-mayāya word (amāyīyaśabdasakti) and is of the nature of the highest truth (paramārthasvabhāva). It is unconventional (asāṃkṣetika), natural (akṛtaka), having as its essence the stamp of the highest truth (pāramārthikasaṃskārasāra), and is inspired by the truth of the energy of the mantra of I-consciousness (vakṣyamāṇayena mantravrīrya bhūtāṃśacoditā).”

We observe here that Parāvāk is placed at the level of the Highest, Paramārtha. In the doctrine of vāk, Parāvāk is described often with the vocabularies that represent the nature of sakti tattva, for example vimarṣa, sphuratta, svatantrya and camatkṛti.

Though the sakti aspect of Parāvāk is emphatically mentioned, Parāvāk essentially inheres in the inseparable relation between Śiva and Śakti. Therefore, the light (prakāśa) is an important aspect of Parāvāk, without which there would not be any pulsation that brings forth the manifestation. In the following verse, Parāvāk is envisaged as the pulsation (sphuritam), the pure light (prakāśa) in nature, the Self (aham), and the uninterrupted highest truth.

“Beginning with paśyantī up to vaikharī, the parā vāk full of the wondrous delight of her own self (svacamatkṛti), resting within her own self which is all Light (prakāśa), continues pulsating (sphurati). That pulsation is indeed the Self (aham) which is uninterrupted highest truth (avicchinnatā paramārtham).”

While Parāvāk is described as the union of Śiva and Śakti - pure light (prakāśa) and the citi or pratyāvamarṣa - it is seen as the heart of Parameśvara, that is, the Highest according to the tattva system. The vṛtti of the Iśvarapratyabhijñākārikā (I.5.14) by Utpaladeva, in an expressive way, mentions Parāvāk – as identical with Citi - as the foundation of everything, including the divine Self:

203 IPK 1,5,14: “It (she; parāvāk) is that which is said to be the heart (hṛdayam) of the supreme Lord (parameṣṭīnaḥ), insofar as it is his essence.” (trans. Torella 2002: p. 121).
"It (she) is not to be understood as the counterpart of non-being (abhāvapratiyoginī) [but] it also pervades non-being (abhāvavāpinī); it is existing (sattā), being (bhavatā), the subject of the action of being (bhavanakarttā); permanent (nityā), because untouched by space and time (deśakālāsparśāt)... It constitutes the foundation of the self of the supreme Lord, who is all things (sā viśvātmanah paramēśvarasya svātma pratiṣṭārūpā); the various āgamas call it the ‘heart’ (hrdayam).”

Parāvāk cited as the ‘heart’ of the Highest Divine renders a crucial basis for recognizing the Parāvāk as Anuttara, which is occasionally called Parāśakti. A verse from the Pratyabhijñāhrdayam of Kṣemarāja presents an integral view over the kernel terms:

"Having the form of parāśakti, citi, the goddess, who is the absolute freedom, consisting of the awareness of anuttara (anuttaravimārśamayī), non-different from Śiva, is the cause (of the world)."

Citi, that is an aspect of the Parāvāk, is defined as ‘having the form of parāśakti’ and ‘consisting of awareness of anuttara’. Though it would be a extremely difficult task to systematically construct the specific relationship among the concepts of prakāśa, citi, parāśakti, vimarsa and anuttara, we can certainly draw a preposition that the Parāvāk is not merely equated to the sakti tattva, but placed in correspondence to the Divine Absolute, expressed in the words, Anuttara or Paramārtha.

2.3.4.2. Parāvāk is the pratyavamarṣa (reflective awareness), the essential nature of citi

One of the main characteristics of the Parāvāk that draws our attention is the citi-pratyavamarṣa, i.e. divine consciousness-pure awareness. Parāvāk is defined as the “power of the activity of consciousness (citikriyāśaktiḥ), that is reflective awareness

205 TĀ III. 249a (vol. II, p. 585): anuttarā parecchā ca parāparatayā sthitā.
207 Cf. IPK I. 5. 13.
In the *Iśvarapratyabhijñārikā*, Utpaladeva explains Parāvāk in relation to *citi*,

"Consciousness (*citi*) has as its essential nature reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśātmā*); it is the supreme word (*parāvāk*) that arises freely (*svarasodita*). It is freedom in the absolute sense (*svātantryametanmukhyam*), the sovereignty (*aśvarya*) of the supreme Self (*paramātmanah*)."

The above verse apparently identifies *citi* with *pratyavamarśa*. It specifies that *Parāvāk* is self-manifested (*svarasodita*), and is the *citi-pratyavamarśa*. The author’s *vṛtti* of this verse dwells on the exposition under the subject matter of *Parāvāk*. In the *vṛtti*, *Parāvāk* is defined as the ‘primeval vāk’ (ādyā vāk), which is ‘in the nature of eternal *citi*’ (*nityacitsvarūpa*), and the terms such as *svātantra* and *aśvarya* are used to express the nature of *Parāvāk*. *Parāvāk* is envisaged as the divine consciousness (*citi*), the subject of pure awareness (*pratyavamarśa*). When Abhinavagupta in the *Iśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛti* elaborates the aspect of *Parāvāk* as the source of conventional language, he draws upon the aspects of *pratyavamarśa* and *camatkāra*:

"*Pratyavamarśa* is ‘sounding forth’ by nature that expresses internally (*antarabhidhipakṣaṅkāśabdamāvasabhāvah*). This *śabdana* (sounding forth) indeed has nothing to do with the ‘conventional’ (*sanketa*). The uninterrupted *camatkāra* (*avicchinna-camatkāra* that is seen as an internal nod of the head gives life to the letters *a* etc. that is the conventional sound on the plane of *māyā* (*akliratmanasvabdhāvad*). She is the basis of the awareness of fragmented objects (*adipratyavamarśāntarabhitti-bhūtatvāt*). From ‘being fullness’, she is *parā*, and from ‘speaking and expressing the world by *pratyavamarśa*’, it is called *vāk*. Thus, she, essentially in the form of *citi* (*citrīpatayā*), resting in her own self, manifests (*udita*) and produces (*sadānastami*). She is the eternal ‘I’ (*aham*)."

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208 IPK 1.5.14, author’s *vṛtti*: *saiva pratyavamarśātmā citikṛtyāśaktītāḥ*

209 IPK 1.5.13. *citiḥ pratyavamarśātmā parāvāk svarasoditaḥ*

*svātantryametanmukhyam tadaisvaryaṁ paramātmanah* (trans. Torella 2002: p. 120).

210 IPK 1.5.13, author’s *vṛtti*: "This is the First Word (ādyā vāk), in which the expressible is undifferentiated (*abhinnavācyā*), without beginning or end in that it is constituted by perpetual consciousness (*nityacitsvarūpatenādāyantā*), autonomous (*paratantra*). This is pure freedom (*svātantryam*), independent of any other reality, which has the name of ‘sovereignty’ (*aśvarya*)."

(trans. Torella 2002: pp. 120-1).

By means of the pure awareness (pratyavamarśa), the Parāvāk expresses all forms (abhilāpti pratyavamar śena) and resides in all levels of cognition. But, the pratyavamarśa itself is not involved in producing conventional form. The pratyavamarśa is devoid of mental constructs (vikalpa), which means that it is without conventional forms. It is the camatkāra aspect of Parāvāk that rolls the process of manifestations on. It implies that the pratyavamarśa, in the nature of ‘sounding forth’ (śabdanavabhāva), lies under all form without being obstructed. That Parāvāk expresses the world through the pratyavamarśa denotes that the pratyavamarśa embodies Parāvāk in the world. Especially, the awareness of the Self (ahampratyavamarśa), itself being the light (prakāśatma), is Parāvāk. Parāvāk, being different from audible ordinary sounds, is the expression of ‘sounding forth’ (śabdanāṁabhilāpa), the permeation in the form of divine consciousness (sāmvidrūpāvesī) and the shining light within (antaravabhāsamānāḥ).

2.3.4.3. Parāvāk permeates through the three levels of vāk.

Trika Śaivism presents a picture of the entire world as constituted of sound and elaborates the various levels of vāk. Parāvāk, equated to Anuttara or Parāsakti, is the one who effects the congruency among the levels of vāk. The analytical description of Abhinavagupta quoted above (IPV 1. 5. 13), substantiates how the distinct forms originated from Parāvāk. The verse renders that it is due to the śabda-natured pratyvamarśa and camatkāra that Parāvāk manifest all forms. In the doctrine of vāk, even the vaikharī is present in Parāvāk (parābhāṣṭārikāsāmvidantargatam tu

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212 IPK 1. 6. 1. ahampratyavamarśo yaḥ prakāśātmāpi vāgyvapūh |
   nāsau vikalpaḥ sa hyukto dvayākṣepī vinīścayaḥ ||
   “The reflective awareness ‘I’(ahampratyavamarśa), which is the very essence of light, is not a mental construct (vikalpa), although it is informed by the word (vāgyvapūh). For a vikalpa is an act of ascertainment (vinīścayaḥ) presenting a duality” (trans. Torella 2002: p. 128. Sanskrit: p. 27).

213 Ibid. ahampratyavamarśo yaḥ prakāśātmāpi vāgyvapūḥ......


215 PTV 3. “Abiding as she does in the form of power of hearing, she has that sovereign power (svātantrya) which consists in effecting congruous and suitable connexion by blending all sound in a meaningful whole...... For one attentively intent on knitting the words in a sensible whole, there may be clear comprehension to some extent. Therefore in such a case, it is the congruous connexion of the words which can be of use. It is the goddess parāsakti who brings about the congruous connexion.” (trans. by Singh 1988: p. 68. Sanskrit text: p. 24).
vaikharīpadam),\textsuperscript{216} so is Parāvāk in the vaikharī.

Parāvāk is the primeval undivided state from which all the powers of other levels of vāk originate. Parāvāk denotes the state before the differentiation or limitation is brought by the māyā. Thus, it is defined as the state of nirvikalpa (devoid of thought construction). Being itself nirvikalpa and suddhavimārsa (pure awareness), the Parāvāk shines forth all the manifestations in differentiated forms. The other levels of vāk are the forms brought forth by the radiant pulsation (sphurattā) of Parāvāk whose nature is light (prakāśa), being raptured in the wonder of her own (svacamatkṛti).\textsuperscript{217} Without Parāvāk, there would be no manifestation, and the world would be completely insentient.\textsuperscript{218} As the source of all manifestation and expression, it is not affected by the conventional rules, but persists under all the forms as “the effulgence (vānmahasi) of the highest mantra (mantravapul)”.\textsuperscript{219} Here it is important to notice that mantra often stands for Parāvāk, which means that something perceivable can be elevated to the status of the Highest.\textsuperscript{220}

One of the evidences that Parāvāk pervades even the vaikharī stage is demonstrated in our experience that the cognition of distinct objects is not possible without the indistinct consciousness. While elucidating the pervasiveness of Parāvāk in the entire range of manifestation, Abhinavagupta states that the apprehension of distinction in the vaikharī or in the madhyamā is not possible without vimārsa (pure awareness) of Parāvāk, and the sovereignty of vimārsa never ceases.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{218} “Without her (the parā vāk) there would accrue the condition of non-manifestation, in pāhyantī, etc. and thus would arise the contingency of absolute insensateness (jaññatā).” (PTV1, trans. Singh 1992: p. 9. Sanskrit text: p. 2).
\textsuperscript{219} PTV (pp. 193-4) All of this (diversity of divisions of phonemes) “abides in the great effulgence (mahāmahasi) of the mantra of parāvāk (paravaṇmantra), which is pure conscious awareness (suddhavimārṣa), subject neither to māyā nor to the conventions [of ordinary speech] (amāyīyāsāṃkṣeta).” The Pārāśākritkā-Vivarāṇa gives us a concrete example how a seer experiences the Parāvāk. “Thus the sages see that the unconventional body of the [supreme] mantra (aśīṃketikāṃ mantravapul) takes on mutually differing forms and they teach that it must be revered since it is that which brings about the conventions [of ordinary speech].” (trans. Padoux 1992: pp. 185-6).
\textsuperscript{220} For mantra conceived as Parāvāk, see Padoux 1992: p. 185, footnote 45.
\textsuperscript{221} PTV 5-9: “In the being of this indeterminate I-consciousness (vimārsa), its sovereignty of the creativity never ceases. In vaikharī stage or in madhyamā stage in which there is subtle māyīya objectivity, this kind of apprehension of difference (bheda-vimārsa) is not possible if it is completely excluded from
Abhinavagupta, throughout the *Parātrisikā-Vivaraṇa*, repeatedly asserts that all other three levels of *vāk* inhere in the *Parāvāk*. He explains, especially taking the example of phonemes, that the objects of distinct experience - whether one mutters and envisions inwardly or externally - are present in *Parāvāk*.\(^{222}\) He affirms,

"Therefore, though the condensation of the phonemes becomes distinct only in the *vaikhari*, yet it abides primarily in the supreme verbum (*parāvāk*) which is all inclusive (*sarvasarvātma*).\(^{223}\)

He explains that the difference in the *vaikhari* stage is due to the organs that generate the distinct experience, and in the state of *Parā* these organs exist in the undivided whole (*sarvasarvātma*).\(^{224}\) The difference of *vaikhari* exists inwardly in the *madhyamā* and the *paśyanti* levels as well. Without the difference in these levels the power of senses that supports the distinct experience would not exist even in *vaikhari*. And the distinct internal thoughts would not occur.\(^{225}\) In this way, the *vaikhari* is reasoned out to inhere in the *madhyamā*; the *madhyamā* in the *paśyanti*; and the *paśyanti* in the *Parāvāk*. Ultimately, all these levels are restored to the undivided state of *Parāvāk*.

"So by this repeatedly thought-out reasoning, entering more and more in the interior, cherish that consiousness (*pariyātām sanvidam*) which is a mass of awareness and is all-inclusive, and therefore the abode of guttural and labial energies (also), and in which inheres that creative I-consciousness, viz. *aham* (*vimarśātma*) which is the very quintessence of autonomy (*svātantryasāra*), which is the venerable phoneme, the highest mantra (*mahāmantraraśupavāraṇa-bhaṭṭāraka*), and is (always) inherent within.\(^{226}\)"

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223 Ibid. Sanskrit text: p. 64. evaṃ ca ghanibhāvo’pi vaikharīrūpe yadyapi sphuṭibhavati, tathāpi sarvasarvātmanī parāvāgavapiṣu mukhyatayāvatiṣṭe

224 Ibid.

225 Ibid.

226 Ibid., p. 176. Sanskrit text: p. 64.
3. Vāk in Mantra Practice

The practice of *mantra* is indispensable in understanding of *maṇḍalas* and the bodily forms of *maṇḍalas* are said to derive from the *mantric* syllables. It will be relevant here to illustrate how *mantra* is employed in approach to the Ultimate on the basis of the doctrine of *vāk*.

3.1. Hierarchic Levels among Mantras

In the *Parātrīśkā*, the multitude of the phenomenal world is described in the form of the expansion of syllables in correspondence to the 36 *tattvas*. The correspondence between the *tattvas* and the syllables is established for the purpose of *nyāsa* (assignment of *mantras* on the various parts of the body). It means that the speculation of the syllables as the manifestation of the Ultimate has developed as a ritualistic tool to establish the connection between the individual body (microcosm) and the multiple deities who are the personifications of the Ultimate (macrocosm). The distinct sound comes into being at the *madhyamā* level and the creative force charged in letters has been named *Mālinī*, the Goddess of *madhyamā*. The creative force carried in the syllabic sound represents the *tattvas*, the components of the world. The *nyāsa* ritual combines the mental visualization, *mantras* and the touch of *mudrā*. But here, the sound employed is not the ordinary language with discursive characteristic, but the generation of human voice with symbolic value.

*Mantras* are countless in number and have similar forms to the ordinary language. It is significant that there is a hierarchy among *mantras*; there are *mantras* that are regarded as superior because they lead one to reach a higher goal. There are different levels in *mantras*, in the Trika philosophy according to the *upāyas* (path or method). *AHAM* is used in *sambhavopāya*; *SAUH* and *KHPREM* for *śāktopāya*; and a number

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227 Cf. PVT 5-9. “In these letters of Mālinī, the structure of the *śākta-śarīra* has been described in (Mālinī-vijaya) for the purpose of *nyāsa*. Thus the principle that ‘everything else is in everything’ has been completely demonstrated.” (trans. by Singh 1988: p. 149. Sankrit text: p. 53).

of different mantras in the āṇavopāya.\textsuperscript{229} If the mantras are oriented to worldly wishes, they are regarded as inferior. The superior mantras, such as OM, AHĀM, or SAUH, are viewed as the seed of the whole creation, as compared to Parāvāk.\textsuperscript{230}

The Spandakārikā compares various mantras to various organs of the body:

"Seizing that strength (bala), mantras, endowed with the power of omniscience, perform their functions, as do the senses of the embodied. It is there alone that they (mantras), quiescent and stainless, dissolve away (nirañjanāḥ) along with the adept’s mind (sahārādhakacittena) and so partake of Śiva’s nature (Śivadharmināḥ)."\textsuperscript{231}

The commentary of Rājānaka Rāma elaborates the analogy of mantras to the bodily organs:

"As the sense organs perform different functions while being part of the same living being, while belonging to the same individual consciousness, likewise mantras, although equally vivified, in essence, by the infinite power of the divine spanda, have each their particular role and field of activity."\textsuperscript{232}

It is notable that the mantras are viewed as constituting the same consciousness – the spanda in this context - and each mantra plays a particular role as a bodily organ does in the animating body. Thus, as there are some organs in the body that are central to life, there are mantras that are more important in the animating body of cosmic consciousness. For instance, SAUH, the mūlamantra of Parātrīśikā, is compared to the heart of the divine consciousness, therefore, called ‘heart’ (hrdayaṁ) or amṛtabīja. The potency of the whole universe lies in the form of the bijamantra SAUH,\textsuperscript{233} and all the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{229} Cf. Padoux 1992: pp. 380-1.
\item\textsuperscript{230} Padoux expresses his comprehension of mantras: “The manifestation of Speech, at the highest level, often assumes the form of either OM or AHĀM... or else of SAUH, the ‘heart bīja,’ or of any other mūlamantra. Mantras, in this respect, though consisting of phonemes, are looked upon as their source: as the supreme Word. In such a perspective, the utterance of a mantra is identical with that of the Word which creates the world.” (cf. Padoux 1992: p. 160).
\item\textsuperscript{231} SpK 26-7, trans. Dyczkowski 1994: p. xvi.
\item\textsuperscript{233} Cf. Parātrīśikā 25. “As the great banyan tree lies in the form of potency in its seed, even so this universe with all the mobile and immobile beings lies in the seminal mantra (saun), the very heart.” (trans. Singh 1988: p. 244. Sanskrit Text: pp. 92-3). Cf. ibid. 10: hrdayaṁ bhairavātmanah, and TĀ IV. 192-3
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
perfections given in the Bhairava Tantra are said to be achieved by this heart mantra.\footnote{PTV 18, trans. Singh 1988: p. 204. Sanskrit Text: p. 77.}

3.2. \textit{OM} \textit{Uccāra}

3.2.1. Practice of \textit{OM} \textit{Uccāra}

The \textit{bhījanamātra} \textit{OM} is also regarded as supreme, and its utterance is practiced to reach the true nature of the Divinity. We find abundant references to the \textit{uccāra} (yogic practice of \textit{mantra} utterance) of \textit{OM} in the \textit{Svacchandatantra} and in the \textit{Netratantra}. Through the practice of \textit{uccāra} of \textit{OM}, the upward movement of the breath energy \textit{ḥamsa} reaches the highest point, called \textit{unmanā}.\footnote{In Trika Śaivism, \textit{uccāra} of \textit{OM} is a code name for \textit{kundalinī}-yoga practice.} The twelve stages of \textit{OM} are given in the following order: \textit{A; U; MA; bindu; ardhachandra; nirodhikā; nāda; nādānta; sakti; vyāpinī; samanā; and unmanā.}

The practice starts with the successive utterance of \textit{A, U, MA}. The nasal sound of bindu (point) is uttered after \textit{MA}. Then one travels through the stages of \textit{ardhachandra} (half-moon), \textit{nirodhini} (the hindering), \textit{nāda} (resonance), \textit{nādānta} (end of resonance), \textit{sakti, vyāpinī} (the penetrating), \textit{samanā} (‘with thoughts’, the mental) and finally to \textit{unmanā} (‘without thoughts’, the trans-mental). The experience of the levels of sound is accompanied by the travel through the subtle \textit{cakras} in the body. Here, the \textit{bindu} of \textit{anusvāra} is the point where the sound transforms from the physical dimension to the subtle.\footnote{The \textit{uccāra} practice of \textit{OM}, as given in these texts, is described in Padoux 1992: pp. 405-7.} The subtle sound vibration becomes almost dissolved at the \textit{nādānta} stage and absorbed into the pure energy at the \textit{sakti} stage. The stages after \textit{sakti}, from \textit{vyāpinī} to \textit{unmanā} are referred to be of Śiva nature, and described with the term ‘śūnya’. The \textit{vyāpinī} is \textit{sakti} immanent to the manifestation, and it is called \textit{mahāśūnya}. The \textit{samanā} is associated with the fifth void, the ‘void of tranquility’, which transcends time and space.\footnote{SvT 4. 262 (vol. 2, p. 166): \textit{Śivatattvagato hamsa na caret vyāpako bhavet} (“having reached the Śiva \textit{tatva}, \textit{hamsa} subsides and becomes all-pervading”, trans. Padoux 1992: p. 95, footnote 28).}

\footnotetext[234]{According to the NT, the utterances from \textit{A} to \textit{bindu} are correlated with the gross elements, from the earth to water.}
The unmanā is defined as the ‘niṣkalam atmatattvam’ (the undivided Self) and ‘sābhāsaṁ nirābhāsaṁ param tattvam anuttamam’ (the highest including all the manifestation and beyond all the manifestation). The unmanā is the supreme transcendental energy, one with Śiva and virtually identical with him. Associated with the supreme Śiva (Paramaśiva), unmanā is described as the state completely pervaded by Śiva (śivavyāpti). And it is associated with the sixth void, ‘void beyond void’ (śūnyati-śūnya).

3.2.2. Correspondence between the twelve stages of Oṃ Uccāra and the four levels of Vāk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twelve stage of uccāra of Oṃ</th>
<th>Four levels of vāk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>akāra (A)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ukāra (U)</td>
<td>vaikharī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makāra (M)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bindu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ardhacandra</td>
<td>madhyamā (&amp; paśyantī)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nirodhikā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāda</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>nādanta</td>
<td>paśyantī</td>
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<tr>
<td>śakti</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>vyāpinī</td>
<td>Parāvāk</td>
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<tr>
<td>samanā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>unmanā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

240 NT 22. 22 (vol. 2, p. 324).  
242 Cf. NT 21.61 comm.; TĀ 11. 20; VBh 51; SvṬ 4. 388.
Although it would be persistent to make an impregnable equivalent between the twelve stages of *uccāra* and the four levels of *vāk*, there is a certain correspondence in between these two systems. (Table 8)

There could be a controversial opinion about the demarcation of *madhyamā* and *paśyantī*. Yet, the stages from *śakti* onwards may be consented to be parallel to *Parāvāk*. The stages of *śakti*, *vyāpinī*, *samanā* and *unmanā* are described in similar terms to what we have observed under the topic of *Parāvāk*.

The speculation and the practice of *OM* *uccāra* is the outcome of the intense experience of sound. Among its several points worthy of further discussion, what is significant for the present research can be arranged in the following points:

i) The transformation of sound observed in the *uccāra* displays a correspondence to the transformation of the *vācyā* and the *vācaka* through the four stages of *vāk*.

ii) The stages of unmanifest energy from *vyāpinī* to *unmanā*, classified as the *Śivatattva* are described in the nature of *śūnya*.

These two points would be dealt with later. Here, it has to be merely emphasized that the process of *uccāra* of *OM* provides us with a detailed classification of sonic forms, which supplements the four divisions of *vāk*. The accounts of the stages from *bindu* to *unmanā* help us in envisaging the subtle dynamism that takes place from *paśyantī* to *Parāvāk*. Especially, at the levels from *vyāpinī* to *unmanā*, with their characteristics defined in the terminology of *śūnya* may conduce the comparison between *Parāvāk* with the notion of *śūnya*.

3.2.3. Power of mantras deriving from their adherence to *Parāvāk*

Turning back to the topic of mantras, another aspect of mantras should be mentioned, which is crucial in the efficiency of mantras.

Uttered sounds of mantras exist at the *vaikharī* level, or at best at the *madhyamā*
However, the true power of mantra (mantrārtha) derives from its being based on Parāvāk. The Tantraloka instructs, taking the example of SAUH and KHPRE¥, that it is the paramāśa that endows mantras with their efficient power. Without it, mantras are lifeless. From the following verse, we notice that the superior mantras are characterized in their nature of 'heart' and in their aspect of vimāśa-prakāśa, which consist in the Parāvāk.

"This synthetic and intense reflective awareness (parāmarśa), uncreated (akṛtrimam) and immaculate (anābila), peculiar to these [two mantras − SAUH and KHPRE¥], is known, [the masters] say, as 'I' (aham). It is the very Light of Light (parakāśasya prakāśatā). It is the efficient power (vīryam) in the nature of the heart (hrdayātmakam) − of all the mantras. But for it they would be lifeless, like a living being (jīvā) deprived of heart."244

We read in the Śivasūtra (II.1), 'citta mantrāḥ' − 'mantra is citta'. Kṣemarāja explains in his commentary that citta “is that by which one cognizes (cetyate), one becomes aware of (vimṛṣate) the ultimate reality (paraṁ tattvam)”.245 And he equates citta to ‘the reflective awareness (vimāśarūpam) and consciousness (saṁvedanam) of mantras like prāśada (SAUH), the praṇava (HUM or OM) “which are in the nature of the fullness of pulsating radiance (pūṛṣasphuratta)”.246 Thus, mantra is comprehended, in its ultimate sense, as citta, vimāśa or saṁvedanam in the nature of full radiance. According to the same commentary, the mantra is “that by which one deliberates (mantryate) secretly, or contemplates inwardly, and that by which one becomes aware of not being different or separate from the supreme Lord”.247 Therefore, the proposition of “citta mantrāḥ” speaks for the function of mantra in awakening the ultimate truth, the Parā, which is the undivided state. The reference of the mantra in equivalence to ‘citta’ is also found in the Buddhist context. Kṛṣṇācārya248 in the

246 Ibid.
247 Ibid.
248 "In his caryā songs, Kṛṣṇācārya proclaims himself to be a Kāpālika Yogi,” (cf. Farrow & Menon in the introduction to the translation of HT and YRM, 1992: pp. xi-xii).
Yogaratnamālā, a commentary of the Hevajra Tantra, relates mantras to the bodhicitta:

“The Mantra is that which when recalled (manana), saves (trāna). Thus Mantra, the nature of which is the non-duality of Voidness (śūnyatā) and Compassion (karuṇā), is the Enlightened Consciousness (bodhicitta). For the purpose of different practices mantras are composed of ā and other letters of the alphabet.”

The Yogaratnamālā refers that mantras are originated from bodhicitta. Thus, it is the aspect of ‘citta’ that charges mantras with power and efficiency. Without citta, mantra is a mere collection of bodily phonemes. Mantra, being the citta of a devotee, connects him to the deity of the mantra, and without citta the power of identification with the deity cannot arise.

Not only is the mantra a means to approach the Parā dimension of the Reality, but also represents itself Parā. In the following verse from the Śivasūtravimarśini of Kṣemarāja, mantra is unambiguously portrayed in the nature of Parāvāk:

“That whose body is knowledge is the blissful One in the form of the totality of sounds (bhagavān śabdārāśīh), whose soul is the pulsating radiance, the awareness of the perfection of the absolute ‘I’ (pūrṇāhāṃvimarśātmā sphurattā), consisting in the undivided totality of the universe (aṣeṣāvisvābhedamaya). Such is the secret... of mantras.”

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250 YRM, beginning of I. 2: “The different mantras, beginning with om followed by other syllables, are called mantras because they issue from the Enlightened Consciousness (bodhicitta)” (trans. Farrow & Menon 1992: p. 25).
252 ŚŚV 2. 1: “The mantra is not a mere conglomerate of different syllables. It is the very mind of the devotee (ārādhakacittam) who, through intense awareness (vimarṣāparatvam) of the deity of the mantra (mantrādevatā), acquires identity (sāmarasyam) with the deity.... As said in the Tantrasadbhāva: ‘The life (jivabhūtā) of mantras is she who is considered as the imperishable Energy (sakti).’” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 384).
253 ŚŚV II, 3, trans. Padoux 1992: p. 385; cf. ĪPV 1,5,14: Here Abhinavagupta states that the heart is reflective awareness and the supreme mantra (ḥṛdayaṃ vimarṣārūpaṃ paramantrapakam). “The mantra is the heart of everything (sarvasya hi mantra eva ḥṛdayaṃ).... It is in the nature of the free activity of consciousness (mantraḥ ca vimarśātma), and the latter consists in the energy of the supreme Word (vimarṣaṇaṃ ca parāvācchākhtimayam). [It is said] indeed in the Āgamas that but for these [mantras] there would be neither words (śabda), nor objects (artha), nor movement of consciousness (citer gatih).” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 386).
On the other hand, Parāvāk is often described as the ‘highest mantra’:

“This energy [which creates the worlds] abides first of all in the absolute consciousness beyond time and space, made of the supreme great mantra.”

Or,

“This energy of the supreme Word (parā vāksakti), which is not different from the light of consciousness (citprakāśa) is in the nature of the supreme great mantra (mahāmantrarūpa), eternally present and manifest. She is the active and living reflective awareness of the absolute ‘I’ (pūrṇāhaṃvimarśamayī).”

4. Parāvāk and Śūnya

4.1. References to Śūnya in the Trika Philosophy

4.1.1. Parāvāk corresponding to various levels of Śūnya in the system of uccāra

The twelve stages of the uccāra of OM illustrate the continuity between the cosmic consciousness and the prāṇa of our body. By bridging two poles with subtle concepts in between, their non-dualism is realized. The study on the sensual experience of sparśa, based on the Trika tantras, specifically points up the metamorphosis at the level of sakti in between the subtle sound (nādaḥ – nādānta) and the śūnya (vyāptinī – samanā – unmanā). A passage from the Tantrāloka verifies the understanding of the sakti in her experiential form of touch (sparśa), and tells a great deal about what happens in between the manifested energy that produces forms and the transcendental energy that is beyond forms. In the Tantrāloka (11. 29-31ab) we read in the context of tattvas,

254 PTV 1, pp. 3-4: sa ca sakti...prathamataram paramahāmantramayāṁ adeśakālakalitāyāṁ saṁvidi nirūḍhā... (trans. Padoux 1992: pp. 386-7).
256 Fürlinger (forthcoming).
"In the earth, at the end of guṇa principle (from water to guṇa) and māyā (i.e., from puruṣa to māyā) there exist smell, taste and visual form, respectively in the order of their comparative subtlety. In accordance to this established reason even at the end of the sakti principle there is a certain subtle form of touch, for experiencing which yogins are all the time longing. But consciousness (sambhvat) at the end of (above stated) touch shines as pure consciousness (śuddhacit) with the characteristic of void (vyomarūpa). Having risen (rūḍha) there, one reaches the Highest (parām) whose nature is light by its own (svaprakāśātmikām)."

This passage succinctly introduces the paradigm of the non-dualistic soteriology of Trika Śaivism, establishing relations among sensations on the level of subtle body, tattvas (levels or categories of manifestation), śūnya, sanvid, prakāśa and Parā. Here, sanvid in the form of vyoman (the void of immensity) characterizes the stages after the saktitattva and indicates the highest state of Parā.

I should once more clarify why I look up the system of uccāra. It is because the stages of uccāra correspond to the four levels of vāk, and the four higher levels of uccāra seem unfolding the multi-layeredness of Parāvāk. Parāvāk is the name for the undivided Ultimate, and this undivided Ultimate is experienced with variation of intensity. This state of a practitioner is described in the terminology of śūnya in the uccāra system. The Svacchandatantra refers to the six successive stages of śūnya in correspondence to the uccāra system. It mentions three śūnyas before vyāpinī: ārdhvasūnyam, adhvasūnyam, and madhyasūnyam. Vyāpinī, samanā and uñmanā are allocated respectively to the fourth, fifth and sixth śūnya.

When the Svacchandatantra shows in the beginning of the chapter XI how the world came into being, it gives us an idea of the levels of śūnya. Kṣemarāja comments on them in the framework of the uccāra system. The process of world creation in the description of the tantra starts from the stir (ksabhā) of the void (vyoma) by the heat (svatejasā) of Śiva, the effective cause of the world (nimitta kāraṇa). Then, it continues:

257 TĀ II, 29-31a, trans. Chakravarty 1999: p. 304. His English translation rūpa into ‘colour’ has been replaced by ‘form’ in the above.
260 Cf. SvT 11. 3a - 4a. (vol. II, p. 308-9)
“From that, śūnya has arisen, from śūnya, sparśa (touch) has arisen (samudbhavā). From that nāda has arisen....”261

Kṣemarāja’s commentary specifies the first śūnya as the samanā, and the second śūnya as the vyāpinī, which is “the śūnya of Anāśrita Siva”:

“This void (śūnya) attains the state of vyāpinī, in the nature of manifesting the entire universe and dissolving it into non-being within the venerable Anāśrita (Śiva).”262

This commentary clarifies that samanā signifies śūnya with the subtle vibration after the stir, and unmanā is the original state of Śiva ‘before the stir’. Thus, śūnya of unmanā can be understood as the pure openness without even a subtle transcendental vibration. Vyāpinī is the state of pervasion.263 As the above explanation of Kṣemarāja portrays, vyāpinī is associated with the śūnya of non-being, the state where the lustre of the entire world is absorbed into absolute tranquility. Thus, it is designated as ‘mahāśūnya’.264 The attainment of the unmanā level signifies complete fusion with the Śiva nature (śivavyapti), and it leads one to ‘the compact mass of cit and ānanda (cidānandaghana)’.265

Various levels of śūnya have been discerned in the system of uccāra. That the high levels of uccāra has been described in terms of śūnya in varying degrees displays that the dynamics exists not only in the category of being but also in that of non-being. The śūnya from the sakti to the samanā level - which can be categorized as non-being as consistent with the fact that they are called śūnya - is a state in which there is still subtle energy or vibration though transcendental. Unmanā is without any dynamics.

Through the textual references to śūnya given in the context of the uccāra system, I attempted to see the relation of the Parāvāk to śūnya. As a result, it can be proposed

261 SvT 11. 5. (vol. II, p. 310)
263 SvT 4: 261. comm. (vol. I, p. 208) vyāpiṇyāṁ tvakkeśaṁ paśaḥ vyāpiṁ labdhvā.....
that within the Parāvāk there are various levels of śūnya.

4.1.2. The Highest described in the nature of śūnya in Trika texts

We often encounter references to śūnya in the Trika texts, in the description of the Highest (Anuttara), as we have already observed above. Here we may find its common viewpoint shared by Mahāyāna Buddhists. The concept of śūnya, broadly speaking, represents the state where all the creation is immanent, yet without any movements. Abhinavagupta in his Tantrāloka (29. 133-135) uses the term śūnya for ‘the original state’ before the dynamics of manifestation has occurred and after they have returned. It says,

“If, with the consciousness of the Heart (hrdayasamvityā) thus exercised by means of any practice whatsoever, the quiescent form (śāntam rūpaṃ) of Śiva manifests, one then gains access to the appeased state (śāntam sivapadam), similar to an unruftled sea. When one becomes established in that state, the whole host of the divine energies of the [main] wheel stand still, free of fluctuation, suspended in the void (śūnya), in undivided beatitude (nirānanda).”

Here, the śūnya is the original state of cosmic consciousness, the unobstructed state reached when one realizes the truth of the consciousness of the Heart. Similarly, in the Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa, Abhinavagupta uses the term śūnyarūpa to describe the state of vyoman of hrdaya (‘the open emptiness of the heart’) that is the receptacle of creation.

While viewing śūnya as the state of highest consciousness, what is really remarkable is that even ‘the śūnya after śūnya’ has been conceived. As we have seen in the description of unmanā, the highest state that can be reached through yogic practices is said to be śūnyātisūnya beyond śūnya, yet still characterized as śūnya. The Tantrāloka assigns the term śūnyātisūnya to the supreme level of Paramāśiva, who is

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267 PTV 4, comm., trans. Singh 1988: 78. Sanskrit text: p. 29. When Abhinavagupta comments on the verse 4 of the Parātrīśika: “Kauliko ‘yaḥ vidhirdevi mama hrdayomnyavasthitah” (“The plan of creation in accordance with kula abide in the ether of my heart”), the term śūnyarūpa is used to describe the state of hrdayoman where all the manifestation is held wholly in implicit manner in the receptacle of the creation, which is ‘the heart’. The heart is one of main metaphors in Trika Śaivism for the dynamic, creative, experienceable, immanent-transcendental dimension of the Absolute, that is Śakti, Citi or Parāvāk.
taken as a thirty-seventh tattva above Śiva.

"Beyond the śivatattva, is the śūnyatīśūnya, without any support (anāśrīta), that is beautiful enlightenment (bodhasundaram), free (svatantryāṇam), and without any differentiation (sarvāvibhāgātma). The thirty-seventh tattva is called ParaŚiva."268

The śūnyatīśūnya has been postulated as the all-inclusive principle of the 37th tattva, beyond the highest of the 36 tattvas. The Svacchanda Tantra presents the seventh śūnya above the sixth śūnya of unmanā, and calls it ‘aśūnyaśūnya’ (void of non-void).269 One of the meanings of Anuttara given by Abhinavagupta in the Parātṛśikā Vivaraṇa signifies ‘beyond ākāśa’, that is ‘beyond śūnya’, which exemplifies the conception of the Highest beyond the śūnya.270

In the passage from the Tantrāloka above, ‘śūnyatīśūnya’ is a term for the Highest beyond the highest manifestation. However, a higher state than śūnyatīśūnya has been postulated in the commentary of Pratyabhijñāḥṛdayam (4). It states that ‘śūnyātīśūnyā’, being equated with terms such as prakāśabhedan (non-different from the Light) or anāśritaśiva, is the first state after ParamaŚiva flashes forth who desires to manifest the universe.271

Attributing the term ‘śūnyatīśūnya’ to Anāśritaśiva is inconsistent with the reference above where it indicates ParamaŚiva. However, we cannot place these concepts always systematically since their descriptions in words are the outcome of subjective experiences and rely on the personal expressions of those experiences. As Jayaratha clarifies while commenting on the above passage (TĀ 11. 21-22a), the 37th tattva is postulated to clearly denote the nature of both transcendence and immanence.

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268 TĀ 11.21-22a (vol. V, p. 2105).
269 Cf. SvT 4. 292 (vol. 1, pp. 217): cf. Padoux 1992: p. 96, footnote 29. The Yoginīḥṛdaya (3. 174 ff) describes the meditation of the six voids which are correlated with the kalās of the bija up to unmanā. Beyond these there are the great void (mahāśūnya), which is the supreme level (paraṃ tattva), cf. Padoux ibid.. Cf. Silburn 1969.
270 PTVI: "Anuttara is now analysed as anut + tara. ‘A’ in anut means avidyamāna (not existing), ‘nut’ in ‘anut’ means impulsion i.e. successive action (kramātmakā-krīyā) depending on the duality of going and coming i.e. movement in space and time. So ‘anut’ means that in which there is no impulsion of the successive movement. This ‘anut’ is well-known among people as ākāśa (ether) etc. i.e. śūnya or void. ‘Tara’ is a sign of comparison, meaning better, higher. So, ‘anuttara’ means higher even than ākāśa.” (trans. Singh 1988: p. 25. Sanskrit text: pp. 9-10).
in the highest principle, whereas the 36th tattva could be thought as only transcendental.\textsuperscript{272} He says, “However, there is no such tattva really existent.”\textsuperscript{273} Therefore, what is important to recognize is that the śūnyatīśūnya, whether designated to Anāśritaśiva or Paramaśiva, has the nature of both transcendence and immanence. The unimaginable Highest beyond the śūnyatīśūnya of Paramaśiva has been postulated in the notion of the 38th tattva (Tantrāloka XI. 22b-23a). It is not different from the 37th tattva in nature, but it designates ‘the highest’ which is beyond any experience and any definition (anavacchīnna).\textsuperscript{274}

4.1.3. Diverse notions of śūnyā in Trika Śaivism

At this point, it should be reminded that the śūnyā in Trika Śaivism does not always stand for the state of the Parā level, as is the case with Mahāyāna Buddhism. When the Vījñānabhairava teaches to meditate on the śūnyā of the five senses, the śūnyā denotes the non-substantiality of the phenomena.

"By meditating on the five śūnyas which are like multi-coloured sense-organs of peacock’s feather, one enters the heart of the anuttara, the śūnyā."\textsuperscript{275}

In the Vījñānabhairava, we see that objects with empty forms have been taken as the objects of the meditation, for example, the silence after sounds\textsuperscript{276} or the open land\textsuperscript{277} and even the physical body as void.\textsuperscript{278} These verses themselves reveal that these forms of śūnyā are adapted for the realization of the higher level of śūnyā. Due to their resemblance, either in physical form or in concept, they conduce the way to the Parā level of śūnyā, thus they are keenly taken for the meditation.

\textsuperscript{272} TĀ 11.21 comm., vol. V, p. 2106.  
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid.: “nahi vastutah kimcidevam tattvam saṃbhavati.”  
\textsuperscript{274} TĀ 11. 22b-23a, vol. V, p. 2107. However, the 37th and 38th tattvas are same in nature, representing the highest state of undividedness (avibhāga), freedom (svatantratva), and consisting of cit (cinmayatva), cf. TĀ 11.28.  
\textsuperscript{275} VBh 32, trans. Swami Lakshman Joo 2002: p. 33. Ṣhikhipāksaiścitra-ruṣair maṇḍalaiḥ śūnyapaṇcakam dhyāyayo ‘nuttare śūnye praveśo hṛdaye bhavet II  
\textsuperscript{276} Cf. VBh 41.  
\textsuperscript{277} Cf. VBh 60.  
\textsuperscript{278} Cf. VBh 43.
Śūnya, in a different context, is a state of experients (pramāṭṛi), that is bound to māyā and limitation. Kṣemarāja in his Pratyabhijñāhrdayam explains that the manifold (nānā) universe is brought by the reciprocal adaptation of the object (grāhya) and the subject (grāhaka). The verse is followed by the commentary about the eight states of experients. The state of śūnya pramāṭṛi, also called pralayākala pramāṭṛi, has insensible prameya. The śūnya here is the low state where the consciousness (cit) is in the form of contraction. It is the unawareness, similar to the experience of deep sleep.

The different dimensions of śūnya unfolded in Trika Śaivism reinforce the idea that the śūnya is not a mere speculative concept or object of knowledge, but an object of experience. That is how different notions could have developed under the notion of śūnya. But the śūnya at the low level is not dissociated with the śūnya at the Parā level. The gross śūnya has been placed above the distinct forms (sakala), and preferred for the purpose of reaching the Highest (Anuttara). Although all objects originate from the Highest in the non-dualistic worldview, the objects that reflect the śūnya dimension in their forms have been taken up to attain the Awareness.

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279 Cf. PHr 3, trans. Singh 1987 (1963): pp. 52-4. The eight states of experients are as follows: 1) Śiva is at the 7th level. 2) At the 6th level of ‘mantramahesvaras’, sadāśivatattva governs; the experience is dominated (ācchādita) by the consciousness of I (ahanta), and the idam is incipient (asphuṣa); the object is both identified with and differentiated from the subject. 3) At the 5th level of ‘mantrēśvara’, īśvaratattva governs; the entire universe is experienced as ‘I am this’; the idam is distinct (sphuṣa). 4) At the 4th level of ‘mantras’, the suddhavidyā tatwa governs. 5) The 3rd level of viṣṇukalas exists above the māyā tatwa. Viṣṇukalas are devoid of agency (kartrta), and in the nature of pure awareness (śūdha-bodhātmānah); the object of knowledge (prameya) – sakala and pralayākala are identified (tatabhedātām) with the experients. 6) śūnya or pralayākala. 7) The 1st level of experients, ‘sakala’ station from māyā to earth; the prameya is limited and different from themselves. (cf. ibid.; Lakshmanjoo 2000: pp. 51-63).


281 Cf. Ibid.: p. 60.

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4.2. *Parāvāk* in comparison with the notions of the Absolute in Vijñāvāda Buddhism

4.2.1. Śūnya in Mahāyāna Buddhism

In the above 4.1. I have paid attention to the śūnya nature of *Parāvāk* observed in Trika Śaivism. Now let us briefly look into the concept of śūnya expounded in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Śūnya, at the level of physical emptiness or non-substantiality has been also notified in Buddhism in general, especially in the philosophy of early disciples of Gautama Buddha and of the mādhyamikas. The dialectics of negation fully developed by Nāgārjuna’s Śūnyavāda is a model to prove the emptiness of forms and languages. Nāgārjuna’s dialectics dealt with the phenomena refuted them as being invalid. This can be interpreted as an attempt to show the imperfection of the vaikharī level of existence. The apparent negation of the language, which is pronounced by most of the Mahāyāna philosophical schools is due to “its limited capacities for expressing the truth of things, and its tendency to foster delusion”. It is certainly the characteristics of the vaikharī vāk. Ultimately the method of negation was used to restore the existence from the phenomenal level to the higher level. ‘The higher level of reality’ implied in the dialectics of negation is hinted in the affirmation of Nāgārjuna, “the nirvāṇa is not different from sāṁsāra, and the sāṁsāra not different from nirvāṇa”.

One should keep in mind that Mahāyāna Buddhists were not satisfied with a mere

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282 Kaśmīrīja in the *Pratyabhijñāhrdayam* explains that different philosophical traditions represent partly what the complete system of Trika Śaivism has achieved. There, the followers of Buddha have been introduced as “maintaining that the fundamental principle is only a continuum of cognitions.” And the Mādhyamikas have been viewed, “considering abhāva (non-being) as the fundamental principle” (cf. Pṛṛ 8, trans. Singh 1963: p. 66).


284 Mulamadhyamakakārikā XXV. 19-20. na sāṁsārasya nirvāṇāt kīṃcīd astit viśeṣaṇam, na nirvāṇasya sāṁsārāt kīṃcīd astit viśeṣaṇam l nirvāṇasya ca yā kośīh kośīḥ sāṁsāraṇasya ca, na tayor antaram kīṃcīt susūkṣmayam api vidyate l “There is not the slightest difference between sāṁsāra and nirvāṇa. There is not the slightest difference between nirvāṇa and sāṁsāra. Whatever is the limit of nirvāṇa, that is the limit of sāṁsāra. There is not even the slightest difference between them, or even the subtlest thing.” (trans. Garfield 1995: p. 331).
negation of the phenomena, but attempted at grasping the higher truth and thus, developed various meditation techniques. While rejecting the vaikharī level of phenomena as complete, they pursue for the vision of the Ultimate Truth. Thus, we see that the Vijñānavādins renders a further speculation of śūnya where we encounter the affirmation of śūnya as the Ultimate with the descriptions similar to those for Parāvāk.

In the Madhyāntavibhāga of Maitreyanāth, the laksana (characterizing form) of śūnya is explained with:

".....the non-being of duality (dvāyābhāvo), and being of this non-being (abhāvasya bhāvad). It is neither a being (na bhāvo) nor a non-being (nāpi vābhāva)."285

Vasubhandu’s commentary explains that here duality means the dual positions of the object apprehended (grāhyā) and the subject apprehending (grāhaka), and śūnya is to be known as both ‘non-being (abhāva)’ and ‘true nature (svabhāva)’.286

"How is it not non-being? Because of the being of non-being of duality (katham nābhāvo yasmāddvayābhāvasya bhāva)."287

Here, it is important to notice that śūnya in Buddhism designates not only the negation of the dualistic apprehension, but also the affirmation of non-dualism. Further, Vasubhandu in the commentary of the text gives sixteen kinds (bheda: divisions) of śūnya:288

- adhyātmaśūnyatā (śūnya of the internal sense-fields = bhoktṛśūnya: śūnya of the experiencer)
- brahmābhāsūnyatā (śūnya of the external elements = bhajanāśūnya: śūnya of

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286 MV Bh I. 13a, trans. Anacker ibid.

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the experienced)

- adhyātmabahirddhāsūnyatā (śūnya of the internal and external elements = dehaśūnya: śūnya of the body)\(^{289}\)
- mahāśūnyatā (the great śūnya = pratiṣṭhāvastuśūnya: śūnya of the habitat)
- śūnyatāśūnyatā (śūnya of śūnya = śūnya of śūnya through which those śūnya are seen)
- paramārthaśūnyatā (śūnya of the ultimate truth = śūnya of all that is seen under the ultimate truth = śūnya of whatever object of understanding a bodhisattva may resort to)
- samskṛtaśūnyatā (śūnya of the conditioned)
- asaṃskṛtaśūnyatā (śūnya of the unconditioned)
- atyantaśūnyatā (śūnya of the greatness)
- anavarāgraśūnyatā (śūnya of inferior and superior)
- anavakāraśūnyatā (śūnya of no-rejection)
- prakṛtiśūnyatā (śūnya of nature)
- lakṣaṇaśūnyatā (śūnya of defining marks)
- sarvadharmasūnyatā (śūnya of all laws or events)
- abhāvaśūnyatā (śūnya of non-being)
- abhāvasvabhāvaśūnyatā (śūnya of the own-being of non-being)

It is important to realize that śūnya is here not merely a negative state of nothingness, but the central notion which explains the various modes of existence. We make out that śūnya is experienced in multiple dimensions from the Ultimate to the phenomenal. The Ultimate Śūnya (paramārthaśūnyatā) presents the śūnya as the highest reality, which apparently directs to the śūnya referred to as the source of maṇḍalas in the visualization, and which is comparable to the śūnya aspect of Parāvāk, the Creative Source.

The Buddhist śūnya also corresponds to the pratyavamāraṣa aspect of Parāvāk.

\(^{289}\) Vasubhandu’s commentary (MV Bh) on the verse MV I.17 (trans. Anacker 1984: p. 219) clarifies that the body as the seat of the internal sense-field (experiencer) and the external objects experienced (adhyātmabahirddhāsūnyatā) means the śūnya of body.
“Śūnya is the Ultimate (paramārthatā) because of its scope of exalted knowledge (āryajñānaratva).”

Now I attempt to further investigate the parallelism between Parāvāk and other concepts of the Ultimate conceived in Mahāyāna Buddhism. When the external maṇḍala is said to be a reflective image (pratibimba), the source of its reflection is to be traced not only in the concept of śūnya but also other parallel notions representing the Ultimate, such as tathāgataragarbha, dharmakāya and ālayavijñāna. I now draw attention to the notions of ‘the Ultimate’ especially referred in the Vījñānavāda texts, because these concepts explain the creative dimension of paramārthaśūnya, and more explicitly expose the dynamic aspect of the Ultimate, therefore, draw a remarkable parallelism to the concept of Parāvāk. To recognize the transformational aspect of the Ultimate conceived in both traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Trika Śaivism is critical in dealing with my question - how the Buddhist maṇḍala resembles śūnya - from the perspective of the Trika theory of vāk. The affinity observed in the concepts of the Hightest Vāk and the Highest Dharma would establish the justifiable ground for comprehending Buddhist maṇḍalas on the basis of the theory of vāk, and the close look into the qualities of the Highest Vāk and Her transformation may illuminate in analogy the relationship of the Ultimate Dharma to rūpa of maṇḍalas.

4.2.2. Parāvāk and Dharmakāya/ Dharmadhātu

The Madhyāntavibhāga explicitly states that dharmadhātu is a synonym of śūnya. ‘Dharmadhātu’ has been ascribed, in a commentary of Abhisamayālaṃkāra, ‘Prasphutapadā’, with the nature of ākāśa (extensive space) and prakṛtiprabhāsvara (naturally luminous). The attribution of prabhāsvara is also found in the notion of...
śūnya.

“How is śūnya neither defiled (na kliśṭā) nor impure (nāpi cāsuddhā)? - Because of the luminousness of citta (prabhāsvaratvāccittasya).”

The nature of limitlessness and light may well be comparable to citi and prakāśa dimensions of the Parāvāk. The all-pervasiveness is more emphasized in the notion of dharmakāya, which is compared to the space pervading all form. Then, what is the difference between dharmakāya and dharmadhātu?

In the exposition of the two aspects of dharmakāya given in the Ratnagotravibhāga, we find that the dharmakāya includes the dharmadhātu as one of its two aspects. The text says,

“The Absolute Body (dharmakāya) is to be known in two aspects [One] is the dharmadhātu which is perfectly immaculate, [The other] is its natural outflow (niṣyanda), the teaching Of the profound [truth] and of the diverse guidance.”

On the other hand, the dharmadhātu has been also explained in two aspects of the Profound and the Extensive in the Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra. As we have mentioned earlier, the transformational aspect of the dharmadhātu has been referred in

the penetration (nirvedhabhāgīya) of the gotra as the ground (ādhāra) for practice (pratipatti). Dharmamitra’s exposition of the nature of the gotra included the explication of dharmadhātu: “Concerning the nature of the gotra it has somewhere been stated to be the dharmadhātu [as in the following scriptural statement]: ‘O Jinaputras, what is termed the gotra of the bodhisattvas assumes the dharmadhātu, it is as extensive space (ākāśa), and it is naturally luminous (prakāśiprabhāsvara); the bodhisattvas residing in it are born in the family of the Buddha-Bhagavats of the past...future...and present.” (T.T. vol. 91, Éa: fol. 54a4-54b2, trans. Ruegg 1977: pp. 289-93).


“Just as space (ambaram) is considered to be all-pervading always,
Similarly it is held to be always all-pervading;
Just as space pervades all visible forms,
Similarly, it pervades all the multitudes of living beings.”

association with the emergence of manḍalas, mantras and mudrās. The Akṣayamatatinirdeśa well expresses the double relations between the essence and the phenomena in association with the notion of dharmadhātu. According to the text, the dharmadhātu is constituted by twenty-two realms, which are four elements, six sense organs, six perceptions based on the sense organs, and six sense objects. Though they are the main constituents of saṃsāra, the dharmadhātu goes beyond saṃsāra by having in no case any character (lakṣaṇa) amounting to a function of these realms, or elements.298

Thus, we notice that the distinctive use of dharmakāya or dharmadhātu is rather subject to the context. What is relevant to the present discussion is that the exposition of twofold aspects betrays a strong reminiscence of the doctrine of vāk. The Parāvāk corresponds to the dharmakāya in the sense that it encompasses both the highest principle and its manifestations. At the same time it is parallel to the notion of dharmadhātu that remains pure in spite of its manifestation in all forms and all cognitions. And the aspect of outflow is comparable to paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī whose knowledge consists in the teachings of the Reality. Asaṅga’s commentary to the Ratnagotravibhāga explains 299 that the first aspect of ‘dharmadhātu’ is perfectly pure (suviśuddha) and is the acting sphere of non-discriminative wisdom (avikalpajña). The second aspect is the natural outflow from the dharmadhātu (dharmadhātu-nisyanda), which is the cause for attaining the dharmadhātu.

“It (dharmadhātu) produces (prabhava) the communication (vijñāpti) among living being according to their faculties in discipline (yathāvainayika)”.300

Dharmadhātu is the Truth in the form of teaching (deśanā-dharma).301 It is distinctly associated with the inner spirit of the teaching. The commentary explicitly

298 The text is quoted in Wayman & Tajima 1992: pp. 53-4.
300 Ibid.
301 Ibid.
refers to dharmadhātu as the cause of bringing forth the vijñāpti (image of cognition), which we may attribute to the vāk aspect of the Highest (Anuttara).

4.2.3. Parāvāk and Ālayavijñāna

4.2.3.1. Twofold nature of Ālayavijñāna

The concept of Ālayavijñāna is directed to the Origin of the multiplicity and the state where everything lies invisible and unmanifested, but potentially existent. Thus, the past, the present and the future co-exist in the Ālayavijñāna. In the way as dharmakāya or dharmadhātu has been comprehended in twofold aspects – one in their unchangeable aspect and another in their transformational aspect –, Ālayavijñāna is also said to have two aspects. The Ālayavijñāna is the source of seven vijñānas in the system of eight-vijñānas. Here the term vijñāna includes the meanings from the pure uninterrupted state of consciousness to the daily discriminative cognitions. In the system of eight vijñānas, Vījñānavādins explain the relationship between these two poles. The Ālayavijñāna is absolute on one hand, and transforms (pravṛtti) on the other hand. The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra calls the transcendental aspect of Ālayavijñāna ‘pāramālaya-vijñāna’, expressing its supreme quality, and its aspect that undergoes transformation (parināma) is called ‘vijñāptir ālaya’.302 The former is ālaya as it is in itself and is known as prabandha (‘ceaseless’). The latter is the ālaya as the ground of mental representation (vijñāpti), and is known as lakṣana (‘sign’ or ‘manifested’). It is primarily undefiled, but it appears in the dualistic mind-set devoid of purity, as it is soiled by external defilements.303 The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra explains that Ālayavijñāna is not momentary when it is together with the habit-energy (vāsanā) of the non-outflows (anāsrava), but it is momentary when it is together with the manas and habit-energy (vāsanā) of evolving vijñānas.304 Here, we see the conception of the Ultimate both in the negative and the affirmative terms, as is consistent with that of śūnya both as ‘being and non-being’ or ‘neither being nor non-being’. In its absolute aspect, it is envisaged as the waveless ocean, which reminds us of the same description for saṃvīt or cit in the

Trika Śaivite texts. The *Lahkāvatāra Sūtra* says,

"It (*ālayavijñāna*) is like a great ocean in which the waves roll on permanently but the [deeps remain unmoved; that is, *Ālaya-*] body itself subsists uninterruptedly, quite free from fault of impermanence, unconcerned with the doctrine of ego-substance, and thoroughly pure in its essential nature."\(^{306}\)

This passage clearly presents the notion of the Absolute which is uninterrupted by space and time, and is all-pervasive.\(^{307}\)

### 4.2.3.2. Manas and Vaikharī

While *ālayavijñāna* is pure and unaffected, it lays the basis for all the existence and all the cognition. Due to its *pravṛtti* aspect (aspect of manifestation), it transforms itself to seven other *vijñānas*. In its aspect of manifestation, it is the seed that contains everything (*sarvabājakam*).\(^{308}\) In the saintly state (*arhatva*), the seventh consciousness, called *manas*, is produced (*vyāvṛtī*) out of *ālayavijñāna*, and in turn the latter becomes the object of *vijñāna* (*ālambam*) of *manas*; in this state, *manas* is in the nature of always reflecting (*mananātmakam*) and indeterminate (*avyakrtam*) though it is obstructed (*nivṛta*), being always conjoined with four afflictions.\(^{309}\) *Manas* is conscious of the presence of *ālayavijñāna*, but misunderstands it as 'ego', thus affects the perception of six other *vijñānas* that is, cognition through six senses.

The relationship between *ālayavijñāna* and *manas* is, to some extent, analogous to that between the *Parāvāk* and the *vaikharī*.\(^{310}\) One of the major characteristics of


\(^{310}\) *Prāṇa* is the sole support of *vaikharī*, and *saṃvit* is one of the synonyms of *Parāvāk*. The relation between *saṃvit* and *prāṇa* has been explained by Kallata quoted in Chakravarty 2001 (1988): p. 141: 'prāk *saṃvit* prāne pariṇaṭā' ('consciousness in its first creative upsurge manifests itself as *prāṇa*'). And
manas is the function of discrimination. We have seen that the vaikharī is also characterized by its nature of 'distinction', and that its function of distinction binds one to the world of phenomena. In the system of eight-vijñānas, the reality is produced by the manas' discriminative cognition through six senses, thus, the manas corresponds to the vaikharī vāk. It depends on the manas whether one sees only the world of phenomena consisting of six sense-cognitions, or one grasps the solitary reality (viviktadharma) of ālayavijñāna. Manas has the dual objects of cognition: one is the ālayavijñāna and another is the six sense-cognitions.311 When manas interprets the six-vijnānas as the act of ego in the discriminative dualistic framework (vikalpa) not seeing their basis of the ālayavijñāna, one is bound to the world of phenomena. Then what turns the manas to see the Reality, which is the ālayavijñāna? It is the realization of the śūnya nature (specifically niḥsvabhāvatā) of the six sense-cognitions312 that reframes the relation between the Absolute and the world of phenomena, and turns the view of manas to see that the data of sense-cognitions are mere reflections of ālayavijñāna. The fatal role of manas in producing images of distinct objects may be compared to the characteristic of the vaikharī that binds one to one's own production of distinct objects. Yet at the same time manas holds the key to grasp the nondualistic Reality between the Absolute and the world of phenomena. Therefore, we see in the system of eight-vijñānas, that the realization of the negative śūnya is the basis of realizing the higher śūnya; the śūnya as a result of negation leads one to the way to the Absolute Śūnya.

4.2.3.3. Ālayavijñāna and pratibhā

A Trika Śaivaite text, the Parātrīśika-Vivarana, renders us a direct reference to ālayavijñāna of the Buddhist in parallel to the Parāvāk.313 Abhinavagupta refers to 'ālayavijñāna' at the end of his elaboration of the 'pratibhā' as the undivided whole,

Chakravarty adds, “Prāṇa so to say mediates between Consciousness and the external manifestation in space and time.” (ibid.)


and as the source of all the ideas and recollections. Here, *pratibhā* means not merely 'the poetic inspiration' as is often translated in the realm of aesthetics, but it designates the undivided consciousness (*nirvikalpa saṃvid*), as identical to *Parāvāk*. It is explicated that the *vikalpa* cannot arise itself without *svātantrya*, thus it is based on the undivided consciousness (*saṃvit*), that is called 'the Supreme Goddess Pratibhā' (*pārameśvari pratibhā*). Then it continues,

"Those who are adept in discrimination (*vivekakusāla*) have experienced ālaya-vijñāna in this very way."\(^{314}\)

Here, 'the adept in discrimination' apparently indicates the logical school of Buddhism affiliated to the Viśṇuavādins.

### 4.2.3.4. Eight Viśṇānas and Four Vāks

It should be emphatically noted that the notion of ālayavijñāna represents the *paramārthaśūnya* as the creative source that lays the existential basis for everything. Thus, we often encounter the overlap of the notion of ālayavijñāna with that of *tathāgatagarbha*, the womb of the Enlightened Ones.\(^ {315}\) The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* says,

"Tathāgatagarbha known as Ālayavijñāna evolves together with the seven viṣṇānas."\(^ {316}\)

In this context, I draw upon a particular aspect of *Parāvāk*: *Parāvāk* is the ground on the basis of which all the levels of *vāk* exist, whether in subtle or in gross forms; all the levels of *vāk* inhere in *Parāvāk*; and *Parāvāk* is manifested through all the levels of *vāk*. As the duality is viewed in the eight-vijñāna system as the adherence of the *manas* to the six sensory viṣṇānas and the non-adherence to the *tathāgatagarbha-ālayavijñāna*,

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\(^{314}\) Ibid. Sanskrit text: p. 37. In this verse, ālaya-vijñāna is compared to the undivided highest consciousness, pratibhā, and obviously we can place Buddhist's 'ālaya-vijñāna' in parallel to the Parāvāk. But Padoux (1992: p. 200) places it at the level of *pasyanti* and gives a reference from *IPVV* where Abhinavagupta identifies *icchāśakti* with the ālaya-vijñāna. Cf. *IPVV* 1.5.5. (vol. 2. p. 99, 1.7.): *icchākhyāālaya-vijñāna*.


in the doctrine of vāk the duality is attributed to the non-realization of the Parāvāk inhering in paśyanti, madhyamā and vakhari. As the realization of śūnya nature of these eight-vijñānas makes the duality cease, the dual states of vaikari etc. are restored to the non-dual state of Parāvāk by overcoming the adherence to distinct parts of cognition.

4.2.4. Parāvāk and Tathāgatagarbha

As the dharmakāya and the ālayavijñāna are described as having two-fold nature in the Vijnānavādins’ texts, so is the case with the notion of tathāgatagarbha. The tathāgatagarbha has two natures: one is called prakṛtisthagotra, compared to gold, which is immaculate; and another is samudānīta gotra, compared to the seed that undergoes evolution. It should be noted that garbha means not only the womb (yoni) but also the germ or the foetus. It has the aspect of the indivisible receptable where everything evolves, yet at the same time it is the seed of evolution. In the doctrine of tathāgatagarbha, we find the expression of a non-dualistic approach to the Reality, as the following verse of Asaṅga demonstrates:

“O Śāriputra, the ultimate Truth is a synonym of the mass of living beings (sattvadhaṭu). The mass of living beings is, O Śāriputra, nothing but a synonym of tathāgatagarbha. Tathāgatagarbha is, Śāriputra, nothing but a synonym of the dharmakāya.”

In the above passage, all objects in the phenomenal world are viewed essentially identical with the Ultimate. Here, we observe successive identifications: paramārtha with the world of sentient beings, the world of sentient beings with tathāgatagarbha, and tathāgatagarbha with dharmakāya. And the central message of these identifications is that all things have tathāgatagarbha and are possessed by tathāgatagarbha. It is said that it is not the sense-vijñānas that is subject to transmigration and undergoes pleasure and pain, but the tathāgatagarbha.

319 Also see another quotation given in RGV I. 148 comm., trans. Takasaki 1966: p. 287. “The Tathāgata, being Reality (tathātā), is [identical with] the Matrix of these living beings (garbhah sarvasattvānām).”
In the non-dualistic philosophy of *tathāgatagarbha*, everything is equal due to the existence of *tathāgatagarbha*. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (I. 27) says,

“The multitudes (rāṣi) of living beings are included in the Buddha’s Wisdom (buddhajñāna),
Their immaculateness is non-dual by nature,
Its result manifests itself on the Germ of the Buddha (buddha gotra);
therefore, it is said: all living beings (sarve dehinah) are possessed of the Matrix of the Buddha (tathāgatagarbha).”

According to the verse, the (buddha) gotra is the quintessence of the non-duality of the phenomenal world and the *tathāgatagarbha*. It is the key concept for establishing the non-dualistic vision. According to Asaṅga’s commentary, that all the living beings are always possessed of the Tathāgatagarbha has three meanings: “i) the dharmakāya of the tathāgata penetrates all living beings (tathāgata-dharmakāya-parispharaṇārtha); ii) the tathāgata, being the tathātu, is the undifferentiated whole (tathāgata-tathatā-

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322 Takasaki (1966: p. 21) gives the basic idea of interpreting the word gotra: “...among the Buddhist literatures is ‘gotra’ = ‘dhiitu’ = ‘hētu’, or ‘gotra’ = ‘bīja’... In India, however, by a common use, this word means ‘family’, ‘clan’ or ‘lineage’, and analogically, it is used in the sense of ‘germ’, ‘mine’ or ‘matrix’.”

Snellgove translates the term gotra as ‘fold’, when it is used in the meaning of ‘category of people’, which is divided in terms of their spiritual ability. “The *Lankāvātārasūtra* describes no less than five folds, those of Disciple (Śrāvaka), of Lone Buddhas (Pratyekabuddha), of the Tathāgata (i. e. for Bodhisattvas), of uncertain people, and of those who never desire salvation.” (Snellgrove 1987: p. 110) However, the term ‘gotra’ underwent a semantic change. In the earlier concept of the gotra-division, only those who belong to the tathāgata gotra (lineage) could raise the bodhicitta and attain the ultimate nirvāṇa. Thus, the term came to mean ‘the essence of buddhahood’ or the seed which has to be brought into maturity through the training of the mind. “The Sanskrit term used for ‘essence’ in this particular sense is *garbha*, which normally means ‘womb’ or ‘embryo’.” (Ibid.: p. 112) The *garbha* meaning both ‘womb’ and ‘embryo’ encompasses both ‘the fold’ and ‘the substance’.

An objection against the doctrine of the varieties of the *gotra* has been raised since it has been stated that, because there is no differentiation in the dharmadhatu, the gotra cannot contain differences. It is stated in the *Daśadharmakāśītra*: “Just as one knows [the presence of] fire [by inferring it] from smoke......similarly one knows [the presence of] the gotra of the intelligent bodhisattva by means of [its] inferential mark. Concerning the inferential mark in this context, [54a] this refers to the fact that there are certain particular natural marks in a case where there exists some person possessing a particular sense-base (*aśītana*). But “it is not correct to speak of an inferential mark (*liṅga*) that indicates the presence of gotra where there is existence of the dharmadhatu, because the dharmadhatu is universal (sāmāṇyavarīma). Hence the Lord (bhaṭṭāraka, viz. Maitreyanātha) has stated that here the gotra has the dharmadhatu as its nature. Nevertheless, it is not the case that there are [therefore] no varieties [of the gotra]; although it is settled that in reality the gotra is one, still what the comparison has indicated to be the intended meaning is that the postulation of difference as such depends on peoples’ special *āśītanās* due to nature or to the process of perfection.” (trans. Ruegg 1977: 290-1)
vyatirekāraḥ); and, iii) there exists the germ of tathāgata [in every living being] (tathāgata-gotra-saṃbhavārtha).

However, the discrimination is valid between the Buddha and the objects of the phenomenal world, in the matter of whether the original tathāgatagarbha is purified or obscured. As ālayavijñāna is described as ‘sarvaśīkṣākam’, tathāgatagarbha is the seed (bija) of all, and the seed of tathāgata, that is, the cause (hetu) of the existence of the phenomenal world as well as of the acquisition of the nirvāṇa. The relation of the pure essence of tathāgata (tathāgatadhatu) to the defilements of the phenomenal world, is analogized by the germ (āṅkurāḥ) and the husk of a seed (bija).

Tathāgatagarbha is explained to be both śūnya and aśūnya. It is śūnya in respect of ‘being devoid of defilement’, and it is aśūnya in respect of ‘being’ the anuttara dharma (highest principle). Asaṅga quotes a verse from the Āryasrīmālasūtra (221) at this point:

"Tathāgatagarbha is devoid (śūnya) of all the sheathing defilements, which differentiate and separate. Tathāgatagarbha is by no means devoid (aśūnya) of the buddhadharma which are indivisible, inseparable, inconceivable and far beyond the sands of the Gaṅgā in number."
Here, it is noteworthy that defilements, the veil of *tathāgatagarbha*, is described as the state of ‘differentiation’. And *tathāgatagarbha*, which is the essence of a being, is envisaged in the state of ‘non-differentiation’. From the studies on *vāk* we are familiar with a pair of ‘non-differentiation and differentiation’ as the definition of ‘the ultimate and its evolutes within it’. It has been noticed that one of the central themes explicated by the doctrine of *vāk* is the dynamics between *Parāvāk* and the three levels of *vāk*, respectively defined as the non-differentiation and differentiation (*bhedābheda* or *vibhagāvibhaga*). The *tathāgatagarbha* is explained to be *buddhadharma* that is “inconceivable, indivisible, inseparable from the wisdom (*amuktajñā*)”\(^{328}\).

*Tathāgatadhātu* (= *gotra*), in the nature of the undifferentiated (*asambheda*), is the sphere or domain (object) of the highest knowledge.\(^ {329}\) In other words, *tathāgatagarbha* stands for the undivided whole which *jñāna* in its highest level reveals. The highest knowledge implies the realization of the undivided whole, which can be interpreted as *paramārtha-jñāna*. In regard to the cognition of *tathāgatagarbha*, the commentary of the *Ratnagotравibhāga* (I. 155) says,

> “Indeed, without the introduction to the knowledge of the highest truth of *śūnya* (*paramārtha-jñāna*), nobody can attain or realize the non-discriminative sphere (*avikalpadhātu*) [of the Tathāgata].”\(^ {330}\)

The Absolute, represented in the names of *dharmadhātu*, *ālayavijñāna* and *tathāgatagarbha* in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, has been conceived in twofold nature: the unchangeable immaculate and the transformational. The transformational aspect of the Absolute lays the basis to explain how the realm of phenomena is not different from the Absolute. *Parāvak* explicated in Trika Śaivism, while being described as *Paramārtha* untouched by space and time, transforms to and sustain in the realm of perceptible objects by means of transformations into *pāsyanti*, *madhyamā* and *vaikhari*. Therefore, misleading. *vinirbhāgairktajñānaḥ sarvklesāiḥ* has been translated by Takasaki as ‘all the sheath of defilements, which are differentiated and separated’. However, the clause describes the nature of the defilements. Thus, *Tathāgatagarbha* is *śūnya* of all the defilements, which are sheathing, differentiating and separating.


we notice that the fundamental conception of the Absolute inbuilt in the doctrine of vāk in Trika Śaivism accords with that of Mahāyāna Buddhism. While the Vajrayāna Buddhism demonstrates in its mantrayāna practice the keen awareness on vāk as the transformational nature of the Absolute, the conceptions of the Absolute considered in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism make evident that the non-dualistic philosophy of Mahāyāna Buddhism fundamentally corresponds to the vision of vāk conceived in Trika Śaivism.

5. The Doctrine of ‘Vāk’ as a Theoretical Basis for Understanding the Aesthetics of Maṇḍalas

5.1. Non-dualism of the two poles in the doctrine of vāk

5.1.1. Creation and concealment

Though three levels of vāk – pāśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī - ultimately originate from Parāvāk and essentially inhere in the Parāvāk, they are not Parāvāk so long as they remain in the state of differentiation between the vācyā and the vācaka.331 It is significant that the vaikharī vāk, though seen as the state in which the divine bliss disappeared, is not disgraced as ‘the state fallen apart from the Divine’. It is the divine power of concealment that veils the real nature of the Divine in vaikharī vāk. And at the same time, vaikharī vāk is comprehended also as the completion of the divine creation. For the manifestation of forms, two poles of divine nature are predominantly involved: creation and concealment.332 The creation of multiple forms is here seen as the concealment of divine nature. The light (prakāśa) is obscured, thus the state of bliss (ānanda) is eliminated. And the pure awareness (pratyavamarśa) is intruded by the

331 PTV 5-9: “Thus the vaikhari herself, who has acquired development through madhyamā, so long as she remains in herself with words and their referents perfectly manifest, expressing mutual diversity and having the net-work of the categories of existenc within herself, so long she is aparā. The development of the madhyamā stage which inheres in parā is known as parāparā, and also the growth of pāśyantī. In her own self, parā is the divine goddess.” (trans. Singh 1988: p. 156. Sanskrit text: p. 55).
discerning mind in the hand of māyā. Without concealment of the true nature of the Divine, multiplicity of forms cannot be accomplished. Kṣemarāja says in the Parā Praveśikā,

"Thus, it (akṣtrimāham; parameśvara) is the origin (kartrītva) of the life (ajādātavam) of this world, at the same time, the world (jagatah) is the result (kāryatvam) of and dependent (adhīna) on the covering of light (aprakāśatvam)."

The Divine by His or Her own freedom emits (sphurati) the world within the absolute Light (prakāśa). It is the beginning of the creation, which is often described in the context of Parāvāk. The forms, thereforeafter manifested, are seen as the condensation of the divine vibration and the limitation of the real nature, but not principally separated from it. The condensation means the imprisonment of the nāda nature of the Divine into the hard shell of the objects of senses and the petrification of the śabda nature into the varṇa, that is both phonemes and colours.

5.1.2. Aesthetic experience on the basis of the non-dualism

When the concept of creation and the created are comprehended in such a philosophy in that the revelation and the concealment are inseparable, what could be the significance of ‘seeing multiple forms’ or ‘hearing multiple sounds’? In the background of this philosophy, the ultimate goal of such activities would be to restore the forms from the vaikharī level to the Parā level, which means the redemption of the ānanda experience of light and pure awareness. It is the experience of Parāvāk that has been the major theme of the aesthetic discussions of India. Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka describes aesthetic experience as follows:

"The enjoyment of rasa takes the form of melting (drutī), expansion (vistara), and radiance (vikāsa). This enjoyment is like the bliss that comes from realizing [one’s identity] with the highest Brahman."

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333 Parā Praveśikā. p. 3.
Bhāṭṭa Nāyaka’s expression implies that the aesthetic experience has the same objective as the spiritual experience. When the Svācchandaśāstra (4.275) teaches about the meditation on each level of uccāra, the spiritual experience at the śakti level (śaktigati) is described to be “sparśa in the nature of supreme joy (sparśa ānandātmā)”. Śakti in the uccāra system is the stage from which the practitioner enters the level of mahāśūnya. In this sense, we can consider the experience of ānanda in relation to the experience of śūnya. Kṣemarāja’s commentary to the same tantra provides a similar reference to ānanda in spiritual experience:

“After having adopted (gēhitvā) the form of ‘end of sound’ (nādāntarāputam) and come to rest (layaṇī yāti) in the reality of śakti (śaktitattve), he/she – when nādānta has ended (prasamya) – takes refuge (śryati) in the ‘opening Brahman’s’ (brahmavile) to the touch of joy of the Self (ānandasparśātmatam).”

It is noteworthy that the experience of śakti is described along with the term ānanda, the extreme bliss. From the viewpoint of aesthetics, ānanda is a state that occurs simultaneously with camatkāra, ‘the wonder’, and both terms of ānanda and camatkāra demarcate the culmination in the aesthetic experience. On the basis of the understanding that the experience of ānandasparśa happens at the śakti level, it can be inferred that the experience of camatkāra (wonder) also occur at the śakti level, that is, in between the experience of subtle resonance and that of śūnya, and the experience of śūnya comes after the experience of camatkāra. Then, it is deduced that camatkāra signifies the wonder that arises at the time when all the manifested energy is absorbed and enters to the transcendental energy, that is, śūnya.

A question arises, now: ‘Can one aesthetically experience śūnya when the culmination of aesthetic experience is defined by the term camatkāra?’ If camatkāra occurs when the subtle forms are dissolved and before the state of śūnya pervades, aesthetic experience even at its highest point does not reach śūnya. Swami

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335 SvT 4.275 comm. (vol. 1, p. 212).
Lakshmanjoo, who was a contemporary practitioner of Trika Śaivism, asserts that the Parā is not possible to be experienced in this body.\textsuperscript{338} Then, ānanda and camatkāra, which are both aesthetic and spiritual in nature, would be regarded as the experience of the highest stage of the paśyanīti vāk, where one has the glimpse of Parāvāk.

5.2. Why are maṇḍalas distinguished from ordinary visuals?

5.2.1. Question on the sanctification of mantras and maṇḍalas

Ordinary language represents the product of vaikharī vāk, determined by convention rules and constituted by mental constructs. The innate dualistic nature of the ordinary language is surmounted in the doctrine of vāk and restored to the non-dualistic Parāvāk, the undivided Source. The mantra represents the direct revelation of Parāvāk. Here, I will shortly dwell upon the relation between mantras and ordinary languages because it is analogous to that between maṇḍala paintings and ordinary visuals.

In the doctrine of vāk, even ordinary languages are seen as originated from and grounded by Parāvāk in the same way as the mantras are. In spite of that, mantras are regarded as distinguished from ordinary languages. One may object the distinction between the ordinary language and the mantra by questioning: 'if everything in the objective world is originated from Parā, there cannot be any hierarchy among things.' This objection may be applicable to the maṇḍala paintings: 'if the visual forms are all originated from the formless śūnya, as the Buddhist texts say, then there is no differentiation between the maṇḍalas and ordinary objects'. A similar objection is actually demonstrated in the attempt of some contemporary artists at denying the border between the ordinary daily objects and the objects of arts. The relationship between the ordinary language and mantras can be viewed in parallel to that between the ordinary visual objects and maṇḍalas. It ultimately brings us to the question why maṇḍala paintings are regarded to be more spiritual than ordinary visual objects, if all the manifestations have been resulted from the Primeval Origin and are a germ of it. If mantras are sanctified as higher on a certain basis, on the same basis the maṇḍalas can

be distinguished from ordinary objects. Therefore, the speculation on mantras can be
looked upon in order to solve the question why especially maṇḍalas are specified as a
means for meditation.

5.2.2. Relation between mantras and ordinary language

Let us pay attention to what characterizes mantras. Mantras consist of a syllable,
or a group of syllables. They can be intelligible or unintelligible. There are even
mantras that cannot be pronounced. However, not all mantras have a distinguished
form. A mantra can be a sentence or a group of sentences that is intelligible with the
appearance of ordinary speech. In the matter of how to define mantras, Padoux answers,
“mantra is a formalized utterance declared to be a mantra, ‘revealed’ by those texts and
masters who are entitled to do so.”339 Mantra is regarded as ‘revealed’, not man-made.

Mantras are governed by sacred rules, and traditionally inherited. The practitioner
should observe specific rules to pronounce a mantra. However, once a person is
established in the state of Parāvāk, his word stands beyond the conventional rules. The
Tantrāloka says,

“whatever he who is established in the uncreated heart
(akṛtrimatattādayārūţho) does, breathes or reflects, it is regarded as the
recitation of mantra (japa).”340

This example is worthy of attention because it implies that the ordinary language can be
the mantra if it results from Parāvāk.

The above consideration of the formal aspects of mantras tells us that the formal
appearance cannot be a criterion in defining mantras. The differentiation between
ordinary languages and mantras on the basis of formal aspects is highly artificial. A

340 Cf. TĀ IV. 194: “One who has reached this uncreated heart, whatsoever he does, whatever he animates
or thinks, all this is regarded as mantric recitation.” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 390) A person who achieved
the undivided state of parāvāk, while speaking, is free from conventional rules of language, that is
vaikharī.
mantra can be a collection of lifeless phonemes at the level of vaikhari, and ordinary speech can be a radiating mantra of Parāvāk. It is the matter of ‘how predominant is citta’, which is the consciousness by which one identifies with the undivided One, the Ultimate (anuttara). In Buddhist terms, it is more specifically the citta in the orientation towards ‘bodhicitta’ distinguished from manas (mind inclined to the act of thought-construction) that charges mantras with the power to lead one to the state of the un-divided. What has to be clarified is that the ordinary language is believed to have a more tendency towards discursive thoughts whereas the mantra orients towards the non-discursive awareness. What has to be considered essentially in mantras is not the particular way of composing letters, but their inherence to the Parāvāk. Because of the predominance of ‘citta’, the mantra is differentiated from the ordinary language. Furthermore, the difference of levels occurs among mantras in dependence of how directly they represent the Parāvāk state.

5.2.3. Maṇḍalas that are meant for the identification

In analogy to the relation between mantras and ordinary languages, the essence of maṇḍalas distinguished from ordinary objects can be considered. As the mantras that have limited function to fulfill worldly goals have been regarded low in the mantrayoga, the maṇḍalas designed with meticulous rules to fulfill limited goals do not represent the essential characteristic of maṇḍalas. As is the recitation of mantra ideally a process of one’s identification with the deity, so is the visualization of a deity in the form of maṇḍala. A maṇḍala is a cosmic form of the divinity, with which a practitioner is ideally identified. This identification is attempted ‘by entering the maṇḍala’. Without ‘entering the maṇḍala’ a maṇḍala remains as an external object. When it does not become one with the self, it does not enter the self. Thus, ‘entering the maṇḍala’ also

341 Cf. TĀ IV. 192-3; ŚSV II. 1.
342 Cf. ŚSV II. 1.
343 Cf. PTV 5-9. Abhinavagupta quotes the Trikaḥṛdaya: “...it is not only the position of the letters of a mantra, but the power of creative energy (vīrya) that is inherent in it that matter. It is by being preserved with that creative energy, that the mantras are really preserved, otherwise what remains constitutes merely a number of letters (vārṇa).” trans. Singh 1988: 150. Sanskrit text: p. 54.
344 Kṣemaraja, in the ŚSV 2. 1, says, “[The mantra] is the very mind of the devotee who, through intense awareness of the deity of the mantra, acquires his identity with that deity.” (trans. Padoux 1992: p. 384).
means ‘manḍala entering the individual self’. In this process of identification, there occurs the intermingling of the concepts of the subject and the object. The subject and the object, once they are intermingled, produce an indistinct form of cognition, which is the state of madhyamā in the beginning. The rigid boundary between the subject and the object is dissolved through the action of identification, for which manḍala are created.

5.3. Three forms of vaikharī, madhyamā and paśyantī: sthūla, sūkṣma and Para

5.3.1. Sthūla form

The Tantrāloka explicates three forms - sthūla, sūkṣma, and para - of each of three levels of vāk - vaikharī, madhyamā and paśyantī. The gross forms of vaikharī, madhyamā and paśyantī have been already surveyed above. The gross paśyantī is exemplified by the harmonious oneness of beautifully arranged musical notes in the form of nāda. The sound of a drum, which is both distinct and indistinct, stands for the gross madhyamā. And what causes the physical speech is the gross vaikharī. The exposition of the gross forms of the three levels of vāk is of particular interest from the perspective of the aesthetics, because it unambiguously opens the space for the sensual objects to be placed above the limited state where the pure light is obscured and the pure awareness is obstructed by the dualism of the subject and the object. The examples of the paśyantī vāk and the madhyamā vāk are taken from the objects which one can experience through aural sense.

According to the exposition, the matter of aesthetic pleasure is decided by how much the dualism of the subject and the object is surmounted to generate ‘the harmonious oneness’. In the context of gross paśyantī, Abhinavagupta writes.

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345 TĀ III. 237a (vol. II, p. 578): tāsāmapi tridhā rūpaḥ sthūlasūkṣmasthā
“Undivided unity that consists in aesthetic pleasure (mādhuryam) is called śakti.”

He asserts that the one who is immersed in the nāda form that is close to saṃvit (divine consciousness), instantly experiences the state of tanmayībhūti (unity) by virtue of their similarity. It is remarkable that saṃvit is said to be similar to nāda due to its harmonious unity of distinct sounds in spite that it has no form.

In case of gross madhyamā, the aesthetic quality derives from the element of the indistinct and the undivided. The sound of a drum is aesthetically pleasing because it consists of a single undivided note (avibhāgasvaramālī), and its repetitive rhythm (tālapāṭha) is also in the nature of the undivided. Jayaratha comments at this points that the absorption into the undividedness of the gross madhyamā leads one to the state of unity (tanmayībhāva).

In contrast, the gross vaikharī that causes distinct sounds bound to the organs of emission, such as physical speech, is too harsh to bring forth the aesthetic pleasure.

5.3.2. Sūkṣma and Parā forms

Abhinavagupta explicates that each of the gross forms of three levels of vāk is commenced by the anusandhānam (intention of a definite aim). For example, nāda is preceded by the determinate intention of ‘I play Śa’; the gross madhyamā by the intention of ‘I play sweetly’, and the gross vaikharī by the intention of ‘I speak’. The subtle form (sūkṣma) of three levels of vāk, which is anusandhānam, may well correspond to ‘icchā’, the will which characterizes parāparā śakti as it is given in the further exposition of the Tantrāloka. śakti of the parāpara śakti results in the act of producing particular forms. Anusandhānam should be understood as the spontaneous apprehension of a form, which entails the intention of manifesting such a form. Abhinavagupta states,

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347 TĀ III. 238b. (vol. II, p. 579): avibhāgaikārūpaṇam mādhuryam śaktirucyate II
348 TĀ III. 249. (vol. II, p. 585) The verse explains the three śaktis of Śiva that bring forth the manifestation: parā, parāparā, aparā. Parā is anuttara; parāparā is the will (icchā); and the aparā is the power of unfolding called ‘knowledge’.

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"The individual anusandhānam of three (levels of vāk) is indeed clearly apprehended (sāṃvedyate)".349

The Parā form precedes each of the sūkṣma forms of paśyanti, madhyamā and vaikharī. Three parā forms are defined as "where Śiva, the para-cit (supreme consciousness) resides".350 Jaideva Singh explains that the original forms of paśyanti, madhyamā and vaikharī that inheres in the source, parā, are called parā paśyanti, parā madhyamā and parā vaikharī.351

5.3.3. Significance of exposition of the sthūla paśyanti and the sthūla madhyamā

It is significant that the Trika Śaivism envisages the three gross states of paśyanti, madhyamā and vaikharī. It will be attractive to categorize the three states of para, sūkṣma and sthūla in correspondence to the three levels of vāk, therefore simply epitomizing the conception to be the subtlest paśyanti, subtle madhyamā and gross vaikharī. However, the doctrine of vāk establishes other compounds as well, such as sūkṣma vaikharī, para vaikharī, sthūla madhyamā, parā madhyamā, and sthūla paśyanti, sūkṣma paśyanti. In this philosophical background, the sensual objects are to be apprehended as the manifestations not only of the vaikharī vāk, but also of the madhyamā or of the paśyanti vāk. In other words, the three stages of vāk are manifested in the forms that can be experienced through the senses. Gross vaikharī is based on the subtle vaikharī, which is the definite intention and desire for such a form. The subtle vaikharī springs from the original vaikharī at the parā level. In this way, the madhyama and the paśyanti also have their gross manifested form being based on the subtle form of will to bring forth such forms. And these wills originate from their parā states. Therefore, vaikharī, madhyamā and paśyanti inheres in Parā in the state of the undivided. Parā is the direct cause not only of paśyanti, but also of madhyamā and vaikharī because they exist in parā as parā paśyanti, parā madhyamā and parā

349 TĀ III. 247a (vol. II, p. 583): prthagevanusandhiinatraya'! sa,!,vedyate kilā!
350 TĀ III. 248a (vol. II, p. 584): tatparaṃ triyayam tatra śivāḥ paracrātāmakah!
351 Singh 1988: p. 109, note. The Parā forms of paśyanti, madhyamā and vaikharī are compared to the 'bimba', whereas their state which is manifested is pratibimba.
vaikharī. In parā, everthing shines and is apprehended not separated from parā.352

The important proposition of the doctrine of vāk, especially in relation to the aesthetics, is that there are vaikharī objects, madhyamā objects and paśyantī objects. As we have learnt in the earlier section, it is clearly instructed in the doctrine of vāk that the difference and diversity exists even in the paśyantī and the madhyamā levels. But only at the stage of vaikharī, the difference is distinct and perceptible as the powers of senses are fully awakened. In order to comprehend another dimension of vāk explicated in the three forms of the three levels of vāk, the dualistic structure of our understanding should be overcome in that vaikharī indicates the external objects, the madhyama the mental image or thought, and the paśyantī the subtle beginning of cognition. The mental impressions and thoughts are also the manifestation of vaikharī if they are distinct and discursive. On the other hand, the external objects can be categorized as the madhyamā or the paśyantī if they reveal the un-differentiated nature of parā. Thus, what decides the levels of vāk is the relation between the whole and multiple parts, regardless of the matter whether it is physical or mental. When the unity of the whole predominates over the parts in an external object, it is restored to the parā state and the object is called ‘paśyantī’. But when the parts of an object predominate and the vision of the whole is obstructed, the object is not restored to the state of unity, thus, is called vaikharī. Therefore, we learn in the Tantrāloka that the appreciation of the external objects in representation of madhyamā or paśyantī leads one to tanmayībhāvā (the state of unity),353 where one experiences the undivided whole, to some extent. It is probably this belief on the basis of which the concept of dhvani poetry came into being. Discuss about the aesthetic dimension of maṇḍalas in Part III will be mainly based on the exposition of gross forms of madhyamā and paśyantī.

5.4. Transformation of forms explicated in the doctrine of vāk

The four levels of vāk concern essentially with the relationship between the

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subject and the object, and they provide an insight into the process how the dualism of
the subject and the object is transcended in favour of the non-dualistic undivided state.
Unequivocally, the doctrine of vāk explicates the transformation from distinct and
divided forms of the subject and the object to the indistinct and undivided form of the
subject and the object. The transformation of the relationship between the vācyā and the
vācaka is apparently reminiscent of the transformation that visuals of maṇḍalas
undergo in the process of identification. It can be, in other words, defined to be 'the
transformation of our awareness from the vaikhari level to the parā level'. The process
of identification delved into on the basis of levels of vāk, may explain the spiritual and
the aesthetic dynamics of maṇḍalas, and also help us in dealing with crucial questions
involved in the discussion of Buddhist maṇḍalas: ‘why is it necessary to visualize the
forms of the deities and their maṇḍalas in spiritual practices?’ or ‘why do the tantras
lay such an emphasis on the visualization (of maṇḍalas) in pursuit of the realization of
the Paramārtha?’

5.4.1. Stage of Vaikhari Vāk

Let us look at the stage of vaikhari first. In the vaikhari stage, a particular object is
seen in terms of its distinct characteristics and those characteristics define the object. It
is the viewer who relates the object with those distinct characteristics. In this stage, the
viewer and the viewed remain separate. The cognition at the vaikhari level is vikalpa
(thought construct), and the viewer identifies the object with apparent characteristics,
‘not seeing its true nature (svabhāva)’. It is the specific power of the vaikhari vāk that
produces distinctive forms. Thus, in the vaikhari stage, the viewer is the subject of the
act and the viewed is the object of the act. Here the act governed by the vaikhari vāk
brings forth the division of the subject and the object.

5.4.2. Stage of Madhyamā Vāk

The madhyamā is also characterized by the state of vikalpa, and the relationship
between the vācaka and the vācyā is still based in the dualistic frame. However,
madhyamā vāk demarcates the point where the border between the subject and the

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object starts loosening. Madhyamā vāk is the power whose act – especially in the form of seeing and knowing - bridges the subject and the object. It is distinguished from the vaikhārī vāk owing to the predominance of the subjectivity over the objectivity and its being indistinct as well as distinct. It seems contradictory that the madhyamā is characterized as ‘the dualistic thought construct’ and at the same time there is the ‘predominance of the subjectivity over the objectivity’. In such a way, we encounter several references that appear inconsistent if we envision the madhyamā, or other levels of vāk, to a static point. In my opinion, the four levels of vāk are the broad classifications that are applied to a continuous dynamic flow. Therefore the term ‘four levels’ in this non-dualistic view are rather ‘dimensions’ or ‘forms’ of the same, One Undivided Reality of ‘Vāk’. As we have observed in the section on the pāśyantī vāk with the quotation from the vṛtti of the Vākyapāda and the Parāṭṛiśika-Vivarana, a level of vāk contains various sub-stages within its category. Therefore, madhyamā should be understood as starting from the point where the distinctive thought process gives way to the indistinct internalization, reaching up to the point where the objectivity is completely dissolved. As we have seen in the quotation of Abhinavagupta, madhyamā vāk explains about the initial stage of identification. It represents the state of initial identification where ‘a clearly manifested object is completely covered’ by the subjectivity and ‘reciprocal mixing of the subject and the object’ takes place.

5.4.3. Identification: transformation from the vaikhārī vāk to the madhyamā vāk

Then, what causes the identification? The identification does not happen always, even though we are always in contact with internal and external objects. If we are bound to the vaikhārī vāk, the identification would not occur, because vaikhārī vāk is the power to bind us to the state of duality.

A passage from the Parāṭṛiśika-Vivarana could explain what causes the vaikhārī to transform into the madhyamā and to the further stages. The text illustrates, in the context of the expansion of the creative power of Śiva, the contact of the external objects with an experient. First, Abhinavagupta narrates the quality of Śiva, which could be seen as a name for ‘the Absolute’ or ‘the Reality’:

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“Siva who consists of parāvāk and creativity in the form of expansion of the energy of the great mantra.”

According to the passage, all the object of sense experience, once they enter the experient through the inner or outer sense organs abides in the ‘central channel’ of the body (madhyānādibhuvi, viz. suṣumṇā) in the form of sentient breath or life principle (prāṇātmanā cetanarūpaṇa), which is called ‘ojas’. This ojas, that is the energy resulted from the contact between sense object and sense organ, is diffused into and enlivens all parts of the body in the form of ‘undivided power’ (avibhaktavīryarūpa). The ojas inheres in all parts of the body. Then, when an exciting form or sound (bṛṇhakarūpaṃ rūpaśabdādī) enters through a sense organ (indrīya), it awakens the fire of passion in the form the stir of vīrya (vīryakṣobharūpākāmānalaprabodhakāṃ bhavati), due to the nature of expansion (bṛṇhakatvā).

In this exposition, the ‘exciting’ sense experience is discerned from the ordinary ones. A particular form or sound stirs the undivided power in the body, that is, vīrya, due to its nature of expansion (bṛṇhakatvā). We may infer from the context that the bṛṇhakatvā, which causes the stir of the undivided power in the body, represents Śiva’s expansion of creative power. The text upto here explains how the creative power of Śiva reaches the body of an individual. Further, the text explicates the topic of sense experience in relation to aesthetic delight, which proves that the above process explains the moment when the significant contact between the viewer and the viewed entail the process of ‘reciprocal mixing’. The sensual pleasure is caused by the contact between the bṛṇhakatvā of a form or sound etc. and the undivided power, ‘vīrya’ of the experient, both of which represent the creative power of Śiva. Or, as is mentioned specifically in the context of the aesthetic experience, it is the union between the cosmic creative energy (mahāvisarga) of the object and the vīrya of the body – dimensions or forms of the same Universal Power - that brings the delight:

356 Ibid.

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"Even a (beautiful) figure brought into prominence by the meeting of two eyes affords delight (sukha) only by the device of its union with the mighty seminal energy (mahāvisarga-visleśaṇa-yuktyā) which stirs up the energy of the eyes (tadvīryakṣobhātmaka); such is also the case when the ears hear a sweet song."358

According to the earlier exposition, even if an object does not stir the vīrya, once it enters through the sense organ, it abides in the body in the form of prāṇa. On the contrary, by the touch of the creative power of Śiva in the form of brṛṇhakatvā of an object, the sense perception is led to the aesthetic delight. A verse that follows the above exposition explicitly expresses that the pleasure of stir of vīrya is produced by the creative power of Śiva, that is, the vimarśa.359 We have observed in the earlier section that vimarśa is the essential nature of Parāvāk. Here we should be also reminded that the prāṇa is the support of vaikhāri vāk,360 and the madhyamā is defined as ‘the energy of self-awareness (vimarśaṇa) which activates the internal organ (antaḥkaraṇa)’.361 The impressions of external objects remain in the prāṇa of our body, which means the vaikhāri level. The great change that occurs in the madhyamā stage is demarcated by the role of vimarśaṇa. The contact between the brṛṇhakatvā of an object with vīrya signifies the transcendence of the distinct and divided conception of the object. Once the object is unveiled from the dualistic frame by vimarśaṇa, that is, madhyāṁañī vāk, the act of viewing or hearing takes its path towards the unobstructed vision of pure awareness, as the Spandakārikā says,

“This Śiva’s power of action, residing in the fettered soul, binds it, (but) when (its true nature) is understood and it is set on its own path, (this power) bestows the fruits of yoga (siddhi).” 362

358 Ibid.
359 Vimarśa is described as full of creative pulsation (spanda) of perfect Bhairava-consciousness (paripūrṇabhairavasamvīd-ātmaka), the absolute freedom (svātantryam), full of power of bliss (ānandaśaktimaya) (Ibid.).
361 Cf. IPVV I. 5. 13.
5.4.4. Stage of Paśyantī vāk

The next level of vāk, the paśyantī, is described as distinct and indistinct as like the madhyamā. It is characterized by both vikalpa and nirvikalpa. However, unlike the madhyamā, the objectivity exists only in a germinal form. While paśyantī is described as the state of parāparā - distinct and indistinct -, it is at the same time said to be close to the undivided state of Parāvāk. It has been earlier introduced that paśyantī is reached by means of due conditions, and one of them is the memory. When Abhinavagupta explains the memory in the Tantrāloka, we notice that the synthetic awareness of the multiplicity, or in other words, the unity of the multiplicity - or the multiplicity in unity - is an important state of paśyantī. The multiplicity certainly exists in paśyantī, yet unlike vaikharī or madhyamā, within the unity.

“Memory (smṛtiḥ), a recalling to mind (smaraṇam), is at the root (vastutaḥ) of all the modalitites of existence (sarvabhaṅgeṣu); verily its innermost nature is the mantra (mantrasvarūpā). It is that which allows the apprehension of the deeper nature of these modalities (bhāvyasvarūpā) when they arise. Memory (smṛtiḥ), [indeed], induces this nature (svarūpa). Coloring (rājīkā) [or taking hold of] in all objective modalities, as it is present (sarvatrāvasthitena) in the multiplicity of forms (anekākārārūpena), it partakes of the innate nature of all things (svasvabhāvasya samprāptiḥ), it is consciousness (samvittiḥ) and the ultimate truth (paramārthaḥ), abiding in what has been manifested (vyaktiniśṭā). Know that as such it is called supreme reality [or essence] (parā).”

We come across a critical exposition about the paśyantī vāk in the context of memory, which is related to the process of identification. In the above, we have learnt that it is the contact between brūhakatvā (the nature of expansion) in the object and the vīrya in the body that brings the initial stir in the aesthetic experience. Now, we can further discuss the sequence of the aesthetic experience with the description of paśyantī, especially expressed in such words: ‘coloring all the existence with multiple forms in the way they are manifested’. Multiple forms are taken hold of, as they are present. In doing so, constituting forms of paśyantī partake of and become one with ‘the inner

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nature of all beings'. It is the synthetic vision (paramarśa) of paśyanti that make one able to take hold of multiple forms and at the same time to become one with their inner nature, which is ultimately 'saṃvitti'. And this inner nature that the forms become identified with is the Parā, as it is shown in the last part of the quotation. And as ‘mantrasvarūpa’ indicates in the beginning of the above quotation, the paśyanti level is based on Parāvāk, which is essentially vimarśa.

Paśyanti is not a name for a static state, neither are other levels of vāk, vaikharī, madhyamā and even Parāvāk. The paśyanti level is not only described to have multiple forms in synthetic unity, but its forms undergo a transformation, since they are correlated with the process of cognition. Rājānaka Rāma’s description of nāda, which represents the gross form of paśyanti, well suggests that transformations take place even within paśyanti vāk:

“It (nāda) is a peculiar resonance (dhvani), similar to that of the buzzing of a bee, greedy for honey. It begins with (a sound like that of) the loud roar of the current of a fast flowing river and (then) becomes progressively manifest in increasingly subtler forms.”

We have observed in the description from the vṛtti of the Vākyapadya that the paśyanti is also described to be close to no-form. Clearly in the paśyanti vāk, distinct forms disappear, and the forms of the object of cognition undergo the transformation from the discursiveness to non-discursiveness. From the cosmogonical standpoint, it is said to be the transitional stage between the undivided Ultimate and the commencement of the differentiation and the manifestation. In the reverse order, it demarcates the transitional stage from the fusion of distinct and indistinct forms to the oneness of the undivided formlessness. The pure subjectivity shines in the stage of paśyanti. Therefore, paśyanti can be compared to bindu that implies the transition between the realm of

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366 Vṛtti on the VP 1.142 quoted in IPV V 1. 5. 19 (vol. 2, p.226): “The forms of the objects of knowledge appear in paśyanti as immersed in consciousness (saṃvinniṣṭhāṇeyākārā), their form being resorbed (pratilīnākārā), and absent (nirākārā)” (trans. see Padoux 1992: p. 191).
forms and that of no-form, that is, the undivided pure consciousness. Paśyantī before its complete dissolution into the Parāvāk is reflected in the speculation of bindu as ‘the pure light’ and ‘the knowing subject’.

5.4.5. Stage of Parāvāk

Parāvāk is essentially ‘citi’, ‘vimāraśa’ or ‘pratyavamarśa’, the pure awareness of the undivided Ultimate, and formless (nirākāra).\textsuperscript{367} Yet, the descriptions of Parāvāk are also accompanied by terms with visual input, such as prakāśa or sphurattā at the subtle and non-physical level. Even various dimensions of Parāvāk can be discerned, to some extent in hierarchical order with the help of the parallel system found in the twelve stages of the uccaśra. The stages of uccaśra from śakti to unmanā can be compared to specific attributes of Parāvāk. For example, śakti is described as the stage where all the energy rests, and characterized by the term ānanda, which is associated with camatkāra. The samanā stage is associated with the sphurattā (‘radiant vibration’ or ‘flashing forth’) in the commentary of the Netratantra.

"It (samanā) radiates (sphuratti) in the form of the energy which brings forth the transcendental emanation (mahāśrṣṭiśaktirūpatayā) that is the expansion of the countless cosmic emanations and withdrawals it holds within itself (garbhikṛṣṭāsaviśvasṛṣṭisamānāhāraprapaṇca)."\textsuperscript{368}

However, it will be inappropriate to allocate each attribute of Parāvāk to each stage from śakti to unmanā with analytical words, because both the systems of vāk and the uccaśra are extremely subtle. Moreover the descriptive terms referred to in these systems are meant to express the Undivided Whole. The purpose of comparing the attributes of Parāvāk with the higher stages of uccaśra is to see the continuity that flows through the journey of forms from vaikhari to Parāvāk, and to understand the connection among the attributes, for example camatkāra - which has such a strong import of dynamics - juxtaposed together with the formless cit and the absolute freedom, svatantrya. The higher stages of the uccaśra from the śakti level onwards

\textsuperscript{367} Cf. TĀ IV. 196.
apparently introduce the dissolution of forms step by step. Therefore, they endow us with the vision in that the extremely subtle forms in the *paśyantī* (compared to the *nāda* and *nādanta* in the *uccāra* system) gradually disperse further and further and become one with the Absolute in *Parāvāk*. Even in the stage, which we designate as ‘*Parāvāk*’, the journey of forms does not stop. There is a dynamism that continues. Only at the final stage of the *Parāvāk*, which may be compared to *unmanā* in the *uccāra* system or even further, the concept of form ends. ‘Seeing the various levels within *Parāvāk*’ is important because they bridge and establish the continuity in between subtle forms of *paśyantī*, and no-forms of *Parāvāk*. It may explain a great deal about the subtle ascension that takes place in the higher stages of the aesthetic experience, which is also related to the question, ‘in what way could śūnya be attained by means of the aesthetic experience of *maṇḍalas*?’ *Parāvāk* in the nature of *paramārthaśūnya* explains, in an appealing way, how a subtle germ of form comes into being from śūnya, and how the multiplicity of forms is restored to śūnya.

6. Conclusion

In the first chapter of the Part II, I have explored the place and the role of the concept of *vāk* in the *mantrayāna* practice as given in the Buddhist *Yoga Tantras*. I have looked into the *vāk* aspect of the Ultimate implied in the divinity of Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-Maṇjuśrī. The unequivocal association of the *Sarvatathāgata* with mantras also exemplifies the conception of the Ultimate in the nature of sound. I have proposed that the *Sarvatathāgata* in the *Yoga Tantras* signify the Essence (*tattva*), which is the hidden, yet pervading source of the Perfect Enlightenment. The goddess image of Prajñāpāramitā has been re-examined in its association with the *mantrayāna* practice. The References to Vidya Queen in the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra* provides us a key to consider the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā in relation to the concept of *vāk*, and the iconographic resemblance between the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā represented in Alchi and the Goddess Parā strengthens the possible association of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā with the notion of *Parāvāk*.

Through the study of Buddhist *tantras*, we discovered that *vāk* is speculated as the
agent that mediates kāya and citta, having the nature of both. But for the vāk aspect, the citta aspect of Mahāvairocana can neither be explained to reveal in the kāya of ordinary beings, nor the kāya of ordinary beings can be said to be non-different from the citta of Ultimate Dharma. We should keep in mind that the vāk is not confined to verbal expressions, which are often understood as discursive teachings or didactic instructions in a limited way. It is rather a principle of all the manifestations, or all the expressions. Vāk is the principle that binds the physical realm and the transcendental realm in the non-dualistic embrace. If the vāk is justified as the connecting agent between the kāya of ordinary beings and the citta of Mahāvairocana, the relationship between bodily forms of maṇḍalas and śūnya (=citta) nature of the Ultimate Dharma can be explained by means of vāk. Therefore the concept of vāk may be justifiably emphasized on in explaining how significant maṇḍalas are in the context of the spiritual search for the Ultimate Dharma.

However, does the concept of vāk explained in the context of the spiritual practice give the answer to the main question of the thesis, 'why do certain maṇḍalas touch the heart of people even without having any knowledge about maṇḍalas?' Is the aesthetic process of ‘seeing maṇḍalas’ identical with the process of the spiritual practice? Earlier in the Part I, the three points have been extracted for investigating the question: i) perceptual forms of maṇḍalas; ii) nature of the Ultimate Dharma; and iii) how the former is transformed to the latter. As the methodical frame of the investigation on these three points, the four levels of vāk explicated in the Trika Śaiva philosophy have been studied in Part II. The theory of vāk in Trika Śaivism elucidates the non-dualism of forms and the formless through the classification of four levels of vāk. It provides us with the elaborate exegesis on how the manifested forms can be redeemed to the state of Parāvāk. In such a scope and framework, we find a theoretical basis for discussing the aesthetics of maṇḍalas. And the study on the mantra practice of OM in relevance to the doctrine of vāk has thrown light on the subtle transformation that takes place in each level of vāk. It confirms that the four levels of vāk are four loose categories that explain the continuous flow of form-transformation. The higher levels of OM practice, being described in the tantras in the terminology of śūnya, lead us to see the link between the
Parāvāk and the Buddhist ideal of śūnyā and other concepts representing the Ultimate in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

In the last chapter of Part II, the aesthetic scope of the doctrine of vāk has been explored. In the doctrine of vāk, everything is integrated within Parāvāk, and everything results from the sphurattā (flashing forth) of Parāvāk. While Parāvāk manifests herself, although her nature of vimarśa and prakāśa does not get impeded, the recognition of her real characteristics is hindered due to her transformation into paśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī vāk. On the contrary, the reality of Parāvāk is realized through the reverse transformation from vaikharī to paśyantī. The four levels of vāk deal not only with the transformation in between the physical and the metaphysical, but also with the perceptible objects at the levels of madhyamā and paśyantī. The exposition of the gross form (sthūla) of paśyantī and madhyamā displays another dimension of the doctrine of vāk, which is significant from the perspective of aesthetics. The affirmation of the gross forms of paśyantī and madhyamā opens the room for discussing the spirituality of physical forms, thus, lays the crucial basis to explain the sanctification of maṇḍalas. The studies and speculations in Part II render the conclusion that the transformations observed in the four levels of vāk unveil the inner journey that accompanies ‘the aesthetic seeing’.