CHAPTER 6

SOCIAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS

OF ŚAKTI IN KASHMIR ŚAIVISM
The great change undergone by the principle of Śakti in the non-dual Śaivism of Kashmir was basically initiated by Somānanda. This evolution made notable impacts on the later teachers and different streams of thoughts. Although the changes in the system were created with a view to subordinate the Śakti principle they could not be absolutely effective in nullifying its relevance in the system. In other words, in spite of this de-Śāktisation process Śakti remained as an indispensable principle within Śaivism. It was because of this Śakti provided a socially and philosophically popular image to the later phase of Kashmir Śaivism. Thus an inquiry with respect to the social and philosophical aspects that sustained Śakti in this position is highly relevant in this context.

History is rich with plenty of examples for the circumstances in which any social conditions act as grounds of the emergence of new philosophical systems. The same thing happens in the case of the religion vice versa. The scene is common in the world conditions that both of these- like a cycle- start influencing the whole society through their sophisticated ideas as well. Being more captive and inclusive than the rigid and complex elements of philosophy, religion shows better capacity to make some effects on the society. Kashmir Śaivism, in its pinnacle of enhancement displayed an enormous religious philosophic nature. There are some fundamental concepts which support the system to exhibit an esoteric as well as a highly philosophic nature simultaneously and they do appear either as manifestations of the
concept of Śakti or as new formulations based upon it. The present chapter aims at analyzing how this Śakti-orientation helped the religious and philosophical prominence of the non-dual Śaivism.

The concept of Śakti (with the help of its earliest Tantric undercurrents) within the Śaivite absolute monism has overcome all its stagnating tendencies in a particular period and has found out a unique role in the then social and philosophical strata. Notably it has come down to the present age too. There is a common belief that it is the acceptance of the social and ritualistic orders of mainstream Brähmanic tradition that made Tantric Śaivism admirable in the society (especially from 9th to 13th centuries CE). As observed by Alexis Sanderson, the Śaiva passages which went public, were the direct narrations of Brähmanic ritualistic as well as social orders.\(^1\)

As it is well known, the non-dual Śaivism also had made attempt to enter into the mainstream philosophical domain by subscribing the central concerns of the latter. Liberation is one of the key concepts that replaced Siddhi- the traditional Tantric adept. In fact, being an idealistic non-dual philosophy, the theory of liberation in a common manner can hardly be an idea to be explored in the monistic Śaivism.

---

\(^1\) Alexis Sanderson who mainly explains the Mantramārgic passages which acquired Brähmanic regulations rather does not give any hint about the post-scriptural philosophical schools, something to be viewed as the socially influencing traditions. See Alexis Sanderson, “How Public was Śaivism”, Hand out, International Symposium on Tantric Communities in Context: Sacred Secrets and Public Rituals, pp.9-11.
The preceptors hence described the concept of liberation in diverse ways. The revelation of the theory of liberation in the entire system is postulated as Śaktyāviśkaraṇa (the disclosure of Śakti).\(^2\)

Abhinavagupta defines liberation as the free self and the awareness of the self as well.

\[
\text{स्वतन्त्रात्मातिरिक्तस्तु तुच्चोऽतुच्चोऽपि कश्चन ।}
\text{न मोक्षोऽन्तरायभृत्यन्नामापि गृह्यते ॥} \(^3\)
\]

**Philosophical Conceptions Directly Associated with the Society**

This theory of liberation has been introduced and explored through some specific new ideas corresponding to the Śakti principle. They used to coexist or overlap each other and can be categorized as Śaktipāṭa (the fall of Śakti), Śaktisparśa (the touch of Śakti) and Kuṇḍalinī (the awakening). They are assumed here to be identical with or closely related to\(^4\) the principle of Śakti. Śaktipāṭa is the fall of divine grace from the supreme Śiva on the aspirants. The entering of fallen power into the aspirants’ body is Śaktisparśa. The touch that leads to

\(^2\) The term śaktyāviśkaraṇa was firstly used by Utpaladeva in *IPK*, I. 1.2: ‘किन्तु मोक्षवादविन्न दृष्टेःध्यनुपलक्षिते ।
शाक्तवाणिकरणेयं प्रत्याभिज्ञापनायं गृह्यते ॥’, where it was the tool for the rendering of the Pratyabhijñā philosophy. It was David Peter Lawrence (“The Disclosure of Śakti in Aesthetics: Remarks on the Relation of Abhinavagupta’s Poetics and Non-dual Kashmir Śaivism”) who eventually elaborated the possibilities of the term. He connected Śakti with the patterns of structural replication in the whole Tantrism and interpreted Abhinavagupta’s aesthetic theories as the disclosure of Śakti. This inspired to view the concept as a highly significant one which is capable to indicate the nature of the monistic philosophy as a whole.

\(^3\) ताः, I. 31.

\(^4\) No difference of opinion is available on the identification of Kuṇḍalinī with Śakti; but Śaktisparśa and Śaktipāṭa as the notions themselves indicate the deeds performed by Śakti. Further in numerous contexts, Śaktipāṭa itself does subsist as turned to Śakti in nature.
the ultimate reality is through the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī in the body itself. All these three are the decisive conceptions that provide a notable social and philosophical status to the non-dual Śaivism.

**Śaktipāta: The Dissention of Power**

Śaktipāta is the fall of power or energy from its possessor— the supreme divine (in a higher grade) to the individual aspirant (in the lower grade). It is nothing else than the bliss proposed by the mainstream mythological traditions of India. This is also known as one among the five deeds of Śiva. The root thought behind this conception certainly should not only be credited to the philosophy of Śaivism. The practices of medieval Indian religious systems hold similar ideas to Śaktipāta. In the medieval period Śaivism was in competition with (in the hard strive indeed for the survival) the main stream religious as well as philosophical concepts. Indian orthodox thought systems also speak of such theories in detail.

It is an important point that the monistic Śaivism is completely depended upon the principle of Śakti and hence this idea of bliss is also presented in relation with Śakti. Śaktipāta is necessary for the internal realization experience of the Supreme Lord. Abhinavagupta explains the

---

5 *Kāthopāniṣad*, II. 23.
6 Monistic Saiva philosophy assigns five-fold functions to the Supreme, Śiva.
inevitability of Śaktipāta in monistic Śaivism and its divergences from the views of the dualistic Siddhānta tradition as,

(On the other hand, in [our] doctrine of the non-duality with the free Highest Lord, [grace] is possible. For just as the Highest Lord becomes the alienated individual, [i.e. what various religious schools call] the person or the individual, and [yet] he is not afflicted by any contradiction due to the differences between the [various] places, times and natures [in which he manifests himself], exactly in the same way, when he chooses to return – either instantly or gradually – to his [real] nature by putting an end to the concealment of his nature, he is said to be an individual who is a fit vessel for the descent of power [that characterizes grace]; and [yet] he is the Highest Lord, whose essence is nothing but freedom [and] who is the agent of this descent of power).\(^8\)

Christopher Wallis tries to find out the foremost reference of Śaktipāta in the usage “rudrapracoditaḥ” in Kaṇḍinyabhāṣya of Pāsupatasūtra\(^9\). He remarks,

The key phrase here – rudrapracodita (impelled by, or inspired by Rudra)- is implying the notion that it was through God’s grace that


\(^9\) Refer to Pāśupatasūtrasūtrabhāṣya (PSBh), I. 1. 42.
he felt the desire to seek a guru and was successful in finding one.\textsuperscript{10}

But the contextual evidences vividly notify the intentional attempts made to elevate the whole system to a socially popular one—by the synthesizers. Here it seems appropriate to assign the re-discovery of transcendental reality through devotion to the Śaktipāṭa.\textsuperscript{11} Devotion is the key idea that is homologized with the descent of power and it is the highest state of liberation too.

It should be asserted that the origin of the conception of Śaktipāṭa might have been accommodated after the intermixing process of bhoga and mokṣa in the monistic Śaiva system as a necessary change made in order to cooperate with the Brāhmaṇic pantheon of devotion. It is the same context in which Abhinavagupta portrayed the difference between bhukti (enjoyment) and mukti (liberation) as the former is generated from aparā bhakti and the later from the parā bhakti. He expressed this as,

\begin{center}
अनपेक्ष्य शिवे भक्तिः शक्तिपातोऽफलार्थिनाम्
या फलार्थिनया भक्तिः सा कर्माद्यमपेक्षते
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{10} Deliberation of the very phrase as the most primitive form of the concept of Śaktipāṭa seems to be partially valid for two reasons. One is that as observed by Peter Bishop, the later rewriting by transmitters definitely made notable changes in the Sūtrapāṭha and obviously in the Kaundinyabhāṣya. See, Peter Bischop, “Sūtrapāṭha of the Pāṣupatasūtra”, in Indo-Iranian Journal, Vol. 49, 2006, pp.1-21. The other reason is, there is no trace of Śakti in the whole discussion of rudrapracodana. In the whole history, the replacement of Śakti with the Śiva is common; but not inversely. If happened so, then it would be helpful to determine the inevitability of Śakti.

\textsuperscript{11} Jayaratha makes the same opinion in this context thus: “शिवे भक्तिरेव शक्तिपात इति
लिङ्गलिङ्गिनोर्मेदोपचारात्
भक्तिर्हि नाम
अस्य प्राथमिक चिङ्ग यदुक्तं
तत्रेततं प्रथम चिङ्ग रुद्रे भक्तिः
सुनिश्चलाः”
Bhakti has also been classified into four types according to the nature. As Navjivan Rastogi points out,

The primary devotion is totally absolute of any trace of bhoga but the secondary does carry such traces and accordingly suffers grades. In the third place most of relish that lends uniqueness to it.\(^\text{13}\)

In fact, many scholars equate Śaktipāta with the Dīkṣā. Sometimes Śaktipāta is defined as the cause of Dīkṣā, but in some other places it is explained that it is easy for some people to attain Śaktipāta without the help of a guru and vice versa. Hierarchical levels of Śaktipāta are also postulated as lower is accredited to the gods like Viṣṇu and higher to Śiva. Somewhere Śaktipāta is equal to the state after it known as Śaktisamāveśa. There are three types of Śaktipāta viz., intense, swift and moderate (tīvra, madhya, manda):

1. Tīvraśaktipāta is the highest chance to get the way to the Supreme. It will be available to the experienced practitioner.
2. Madhyaśaktipāta is for middle people, who can use another means after attaining the Śaktipata.
3. Mandaśaktipāta is for lower stream practitioners who has no other choice to attain the divine way.

\(^{12}\) See Tā, XIII. 119 for Abhinavagupta’s opinions and various definitions on liberation.

Each of these is classified into three again and as a result, Śaktipāta became nine-fold in nature, says *MVV*:

शक्तिपातस्य तेनोक्ता नवधार व्यवस्थितः
अन्यथा नेश्वरस्यासिति रागो द्वेषोऽथवा क्वचित्॥¹⁴

The actual quality or appropriateness in character and time for the attainment of Śaktipata is not vividly discussed even in the direct contexts. For eg., *TĀ*, XIII. 204-7 says;

The particular time which is referred to is that of a particular activity (kalana) consisting of awareness, directed towards one’s own nature. The fitness or appropriateness (yogata in *MVT* I. 42) is in our philosophy said to be the quality of worthy for the spiritual process (yoga) of identification with Siva. Thus the question (why did it happen) only then, why not before is not appropriate.¹⁵

Christopher Wallis describes this as this is the only place in Abhinavagupta, where Śaktipāta becomes a religious aspect, where the recipient draws in him, as opposed to something that happens to him. Thus he deftly disposes of the logical problems of the earlier theories. By analyzing the concept of Śaktipāta within the framework of Śaivite non-dualism, it is assumed that there it tries to accomplish the requirements related to the social structure more than a philosophical one. In true sense, it should be perceived as the hardship of philosophy

---

¹⁴ *Mālinīvijayavārtika (MVV)*, I. 687. Tīvratīvra (intensely intense), madhyatīvra (moderately intense), mandatīvra (weakly intense), tīvramadhyā (intensely moderate), madhyamadhyā (moderately moderate), mandamadhyā (weakly moderate), tīvramanda (intensely weak), madhyamanda (moderately weak) and mandamanda (weakly weak) are the nine types of Śaktipāta.

that it has to rephrase itself or its concepts into the popular level of religiosity.

The concept of the fall of power of the Supreme, which situates in the heights, is totally similar to the beliefs on the Supreme god- the one who situates in the transcendental form. It seems that this must be a contradictorily created aspect in the general ideology of Tantrism, especially of its anti-Brāhmaṇic visions. Even though Abhinavagupta himself has succeeded in the usage of the logical concepts like upāyas, it was necessitated by the time that needed such popular indefinable, transcendental, mainstream religious aspects for the sustenance of the philosophical systems. Abhinavagupta himself may have noticed this, because there is no reference of descent of power in Somānanda and Utpaladeva. It would be right if this concept has been connoted as anugraha. It is only because of the social acceptance to the feminine principle made its nomenclature as Śaktipāta.

In a vivid sense, Śaktipāta is not comprehensive in itself. The complete process of the attainment of the supreme goal i.e., the recognition of the ultimate reality does not get completed with the process of Śaktipāta. There are subsequent developments as the touching, entering and encompassing of the fallen Śakti to the individual. Both these processes, known as two important aspects of Śakti viz., Śaktisparśa and Kuṇḍalinī, directly related with the body of the individual aspirant. Just as the religious practices of Tantra, the
conceptual schemes are also very much related to the aspect of body. The structure of the body reflects the structure of the universe and provides a framework for the Śaivite doctrine of consciousness. Douglas Renfrew Brooks puts forward an observation about the significance of body in the representation of social alliance of philosophical contexts;

In its role as an image of society, the body's main scope is to express the relation of individual to the group. This is done along the dimension of strong, weak, acceptable or not. From total relaxation to the self-control, the body has its wide gamut for expressing the social variable.¹⁶

Thus this body-centeredness is the feature that tempted to include Śakti in the context of the social implications.

Śaktisparśa: The Touch of Śakti

The term sparśa is derived from the root sprś which means to touch, and used to intent diverse meanings in distinct knowledge systems of Indian tradition.¹⁷ Both sparśa and Śaktisparśa in Kashmir Śaivism are used to indicate the divine touch. The sparśa- a bodily

---

¹⁶ Gavin Flood, *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*, pp. XII- XIV also discusses about the important position of body in the monistic Śaivism of Kashmir. But it actually focuses on the cosmological features of the body rather its role in the recognition process.

¹⁷ The earliest references of Śaktisparśa also indicate its relation with bhakti. *Śivastotrāvali (Ś.St)* written by Utpaladeva, focuses on the term sparśa primarily, and its premises also may be traced back to the *ĪPK* also. Utpaladeva again and again prays for the bliss arising from the touch of the lotus feet of the Divine, an image based on the widespread tradition of touching the feet of the guru or the god. However, this devotional meaning is interpreted in a non-dualistic way, where the effete are understood as the divine energies or Śakti-s. According to Earnst Fuerlinger, the earliest reference to Śaktisparśa is found to be in *JY* since Abhinavagupta quotes it as an authority. But the very portion chosen as the instance seems to be indicative of the later Śaivite theology. See *Touch of Śakti in Kashmir Śaivism*, pp.20-28. Utpaladeva, in his *ĪPK*, uses the term as the sensation of softness, warmth etc. which a blind person can feel by touch; and also as one among the subtle elements i.e., tanmātra-s of thirty six categories.
experience for the common world- is also similar to Śakti in the Śaivite monism. Śaktisparśa is rarely found identified with Śaktipāta in the monistic Śaivite texts like MVUT:

रुद्रशक्तिसमाविष्टम् स वियासुः शिववेच्छया।
भुक्तसुक्तिप्रसिद्धयथ नीयते सदगुरुः प्रति॥
तमाराष्य ततस्तुष्टादृश्यामासाद्य शाक्तकरीम॥
तक्षणाद्वोपभोगाद्य देहपाताचिंचिं व्रजेत्॥

As regards to Ernst Fuerlinger,

In this context, we meet an important level of meaning of the sparśa of Śakti: contact with Śakti or the pervasion by Śakti is seen as Śaktipāta … which can happen at any place, in any situation of everyday life. Śaktipāta, the falling of Śakti, understood as the

18 Śakti is commonly equated with the sparśa by viewing the latter as the principle of utterance. It is also treated the touch as the highest type of perception. Sparśa is also highlighted as the highest level of Śakti. See TĀ, XI 30-32:

“इति रङ्क्ते नवो भक्ततत्त्वान्त्त्वाप्रसिद्धं सिन्ह्यमभाक्।
स्पर्शः कोपि सदा यथे योगिनः सपूवयातः॥
तत्स्पर्शात् तु संविद्धः शुद्धचिदुद्धयोगारिणी॥
यथा रूढः समस्येत्त्व स्त्रकाशालिनिकां परमां॥
अतो विन्दुत्तो नादो रुपस्मादतो रसः॥
इत्युक्तं क्षोभक्षेण स्पर्शस्त्रस्तो नो तथा॥”

Besides this, Sparśa is also identified with the significant concept named Vimarśa, which is nothing but the reflective awareness of the supreme in the form of Śakti: “… तत्र च जानामि
इत्यतः सर्वभौतिकोस्पर्शं भाग्येन शुक्लस्य गुणाः अत्यत्तक्रायत जानामि वदुः वित्तसाश्वायमभौतिस्य स च
संस्कृतों विवेशः क्रियाशक्तिप्रभक्तिले जानामि।” IPV, I. 1. 4. Pratyavamarśa which is synonymous to Vimarśa has also been explained as having the indifferent meaning: “वस्तुतः एकेव ईश्वरस्य
भावप्रत्ययस्मिन्य स्त्रक्षेत्त्वं स श्रवणस्यतुल्यत्तं ज्ञानाद्वेशनिभाय ततवान्त्त्वार्तमात्रारूपात्तं क्रियाशक्तिसतः
वोद्धातन्तयं स श्रवणात्त्वं स स्त्रक्षेषु स्त्रक्षेत्त्वात ज्ञानाद्वेशनिभायात्त्र स्त्रक्षेषु स्त्रक्षेत्त्वात्।” Sp.Vi, p.42. The similarity is proved by the meaning of the root mṛṣ- from which vimarśa is derived to mean ‘to touch’.

19 MVUT, I. 43, 44. However the word used here is not sparśa, but is samāveśa which holds similar meaning i.e., the close connection, relation, uniting or binding.
immersion into the rudraśakti, into the core, the essence of all: the shining, pulsating ocean of joy.  

However Śaktisparśa is the experience just like the ordinary touch that happens directly as the continuity- in the next moment- of the occurrence of Śaktipāta. And hence this experience of the touch acts as an evidence for the receipt of Śaktipāta.

The attainment intended through the touch of Śakti is the utmost pleasure. TĀ indicates the direct perception of the Supreme as the touch of ubiquitous consciousness;

सुखसीत्कारसत्मयक्षाम्यप्रथमसांविद: ।
संवेदनं हि प्रथमं स्पर्शोऽनुतत्रसांविद: ॥  

The highest awareness is a process of continually turning back toward Śiva or the Supreme being which may be referred to as the fourth state of consciousness. Śaktisparśa has a capacity to create this level in the aspirant, that’s why it is defined as touch is nothing but the state in which one remains in touch with the supreme as well as with the surrounding objective world simultaneously. In this very sense it is known as the enjoyment and expansion of consciousness:

इत्थं स्वोऽत्वस्त्वंशैरनुचक्रे षु तियणम् ।
कुवीयातात्मान्योन्यं मुख्यचक्रायं कताकृते ॥  

---

20 Earnst Fuerlinger, *Op.cit.*, p.89. But the phrase 'entering into the Rudraśakti', does not match with the real doctrine where Rudraśakti is in subject level, instead of individual level.  
21 *TĀ*, V. 142; The touch mentioned here is nothing but the supreme power of the lord which is identified with the cosmic dimension of Śakti. Śakti, in every moment, is flashing within the highest lord and which leads to the emergence of the whole world.
Kashmir Śaivism, in terms of polished or sanitized perspectives, relates Śaktisparśa only with the spiritual notion of touch. Then a question is posed as to how this mental process of awareness can be united with the Śaktisparśa, which in its essence represents the pure bodily experience? Kerry Martin Skora gives a firm answer to this that Abhinavagupta never views the awareness of consciousness as a pure mental activity. She continues,

Abhinavagupta refers to touching and related tactile sensations in describing vimarśa as a process of body recollecting and recovering with Śiva; Vimarśa then is a process of becoming aware of, transacting in; and transforming the divine sense energies of the heart, a practice of embodied ecstaticy.23

The bodily felt awareness of Śiva is nothing but the pulsating energies of the body. Thus it would gradually lead to the idea of sensual enjoyment.

22 TĀ, XXIX. 109. Jayaratha clarifies ‘svocitam vastu’ as ‘āliṅganaparicumbanādi’. This again tempts to correlate sparśa with the vimarśa aspect. Kerry Martin Skora, in “The Pulsating Heart and its Divine Sense Energies: Body and Touch in Abhinavagupta’s Trika Śaivism”, Numen, 54, 2007, pp.424-425, observes that in the early studies of scholars like Alexis Sanderson etc. the term Vimarśa has been translated as ‘disembodied consciousness’. Then it is translated simply as the ‘self- cognition’. Further in the later context of over coding it became ‘representation’. She herself translates the term in two ways viz., ‘the body’s recollection of Śiva’ and ‘reflective/guardian awareness. The present history shows the perspectival shift that gradually turns towards the Śakti and obviously to the touch with a sense of cognition.

The resurrectional energy of Śambhu dwells everywhere. Out of it (arises) the ensemble of motions of the liquid bliss of joy. So indeed, when a sweet (song) is sung, when (there is) touching, or when (there is the smelling of) sandalwood and so on, when (the state of apathy) ceases, (there arises) the state of vibrating in the heart, which is called precisely “the energy of bliss” because of which a human being is with-heart (is sensitive)\(^24\)

Consequently, by the establishment of movement within the body, the identity of Śaktisparśa gradually transforms to a wider conception called Śaktisamāveśa. A detailed analysis is required to comprehend the claim of indifference between Samāveśa and Sparśa.

**Samāveśa- the Immersion of Śakti**

Upāya-s are considered to be the providers of liberation from the bondage produced due to the limited knowledge. Different upāya-s are accepted in accordance with the grade of Śaktipāta. Through this, the Yogin himself associates with the consciousness. This process is called Samāveśa. This is a decisive idea in the doctrine of Śaivite absolute monism.\(^25\) Samāveśa is the goal of three upāya-s according to

\(^{24}\) Tā, III. 208- 210. See also III. 328- 329 for the examples of sensual touch.

\(^{25}\) Actually Samāveśa could be a product of later scholars starting from Utpala or Abhinavagupta. There is no chance for existence before them in the same sense. Boris Marjanovik in "Means and Practices of Non dual Kashmir Śaivism", ABORI, Vol. 87, 2006, p.176, postulates three types of Samāveśa-s as; “In this process he manifests his own self by a dint of his own power of freedom either with or without upāya-s. If he manifests himself with upāya-s then Īcchā, Jñāna and Kriyāsaktis are used as the means. In this way the means appears as three fold and absorption (Samāveśa) is then divided into Śambhava, Śākta and Āṇava”. But this seems to be an opinion that agrees with the earliest approach towards the concept of Samāveśa as in MVUT. For Somānanda, Samāveśa is the tool for establishment of monism and for Utpala it is the mutual merging or possession as part of the play of Śiva. Modern scholars follow the path of Abhinavagupta and Kṣemarāja in defining Samāveśa as the supreme immersion. For further details, see Lorilliai Biernaki, Possession, Power and Mysticism, p.11.
Kṣemarāja. It is the entering of Śakti into the heart- the essence of everything.26

Utpaladeva affirms that there is no difference between Śaktisparśa and Samāveśa:

स (शिव:) संसारार्थ मायाशक्तिकृतेक्याख्यात्या भवाननात्मस्थानाभासयति
ईश्वरप्रत्यभिज्ञाप्रपञ्चन्वयायेन । ततस्तान् प्राणादीन् पुनः
काँचिल्लोकात्रात्रसु अस्मदूपप्रमात्रमेदेन पश्यन् समाविशति इत्युच्यते।
यात्या च मात्रया समावेशस्तावन्मात्रसिद्धिसंबंधः।

He makes appear to be located outside of himself for the sake of the world of transmigration, in the way explained in greater detail in my Īśvarapratyabhijñā, by not perceiving his unity with those entities as a result of the power of Māyā.27

Saṅghaṭṭa or Yāmala28 is the concept which gives much space to connect Samāveśa with the Śaktisparśa. VNS says that Saṅghaṭṭa is the pulsating touch. It is a subtle tactile sensation according to Bhāskara. Sparśa leads to the supreme experience which happens through the spreading. Since it is closely related with bodily touch, the after effect should be a spreading experience. Body is the primary locus for the salvational acts and the touch there provides the fullness to the awareness of being. The help of the concept of heart to this is observed as;

26 This directly is related to the Śaktipāta and upcoming Kuṇḍalinī. Earnst Fuerlinger, Op.cit., p.89.
27 ŚDV, I. 1; John Nemec, The Ubiquitous Śiva, p. 100. Also refer to Sp.K, I. 8;
"न हीच्छानोदनस्यायं प्रेरकत्वेन वतयते
अपि त्वात्मिलस्िशात् िुरुषस्तत्समो िवेत् II”
28 Union of Śiva and Śakti.
Abhinavagupta’s purpose was to recover the body and senses for consciousness in a sensuous and erotic phenomenology. Thus the central act of salvation for Abhinavagupta was understood precisely or body’s recollection of being, the touching or bodily felt awareness of the pulsating heart.\(^{29}\)

The process of manifestation is complete only with the opposite as well as mutually attractive principles Śiva and Śakti who are regarded as the male and female polarities. The entire cosmos is manifested by the union of these conscious male and dynamic female;

\begin{quote}
तयोययद्यामलं रूपं स संघट्ट इति स्मृतः।
आनन्दशक्ति: सैयोक्ता यतो विस्तं विसुज्यते॥\(^{30}\)
\end{quote}

Even though the entire nature of this concept is of bipolar nature, the subjectivity is embedded in the female dynamic principle, and hence the sparśa is the act of Śakti. Abhinavagupta conceives this as,

\begin{quote}
इति स्थिते नये शक्तितत्त्वान्तोप्यस्ति सौक्ष्ममाक्।
स्पर्शः कोपिष सदा यस्मे योगिनः सप्तहालवः॥
तत्स्पर्शान्ते तु संविव्यासिते शुद्भविद्वयोमसः॥
ययाः रूढः समयग्नि स्वविकाशास्तिकं पराम्॥
अतो बिद्युरुतो नादो रूपमस्मादतो रसः॥
इत्युक्तं क्षोभक्कचेवन स्पन्दे स्पर्शस्तु नो तथा॥\(^{31}\)
\end{quote}

\(^{29}\) Kerry Martin Skora, *Op. cit.*, pp.421-22. The concept here gently represents the role of erotic in the philosophy of Abhinavagupta. The penetration or immersion is the sexual union itself is happening between the practitioner and Yogini in the context of Kulayāga. K. C. Pandey says that dūtīyāga has everything in common with Śrīgāra. The reflective awareness in the philosophy is also the outflowing of bliss as happening at the time of orgasm. Abhinavagupta uses the term ‘praveśasamspāraśa’

\(^{30}\) TĀ, III. 68.

\(^{31}\) *Paramārthasāra (PS)*, vv.30-32. cf. “परापरात्तरं तत्त्वं सैषा देवी निगद्यते ...संघट्टेस्मिनितिविद्योमसत्त्वं तत्त्वमश्चयम्।”, TĀ, III. 69 ab; 71 ab.
Touch has also some negative meanings in the domain of Śaivism. Swami Lakshman Joo views it as the resistance in Yoga system. The being of the supreme in touch with the transcendental as well as the immanent forms at the same time indicates the touch between self and the other. Gavin. D. Flood relating these conceptions with Kula practice and states,

A prerequisite for performing the Kulayāga was, of course, initiation into the Kulaprakriyā, during which the initiator became possessed (āviṣṭa) by Śakti. This possession due to the descent of Śakti (Śaktipāta) manifested in the bodily symptoms of shaking, convulsions (ghūrṇī, kampa) and loss of consciousness (nidrā)- the outer signs (cihna) of the yogi- and the degree of possession was indicated by its intensity or violence (tīvra). After this initial empowerment the aim of practice was immersion (samāveśa) into the body of consciousness; to make possession or the eradication individuality, a permanent condition.32

Śaktisparśa indeed is the experience which would be completed only after the awakening of the serpent power called Kuṇḍalinī. Lilian Silburn describes the same as Kuṇḍalinī and Saccidānanda.33 Pūrnatāsparśa happens only when the Kuṇḍalinī is awakened. The overflowing bliss- orgasmic experience- is related to the serpent power-Kuṇḍalinī. Touch of the divine energy as observed by Bettina Baumer, can be used as a key to the understanding of the spiritual aspects of the

---

33 Lilian Silburn, Kuṇḍalinī, p.151.
school of Kashmir Śaivism. Śaktisparśa also viewed as related with the bhakti in its earlier forms.

**Kuṇḍalinī**

In the present-day world, Kuṇḍalinī is known widely as a concept of the Hindu meditational act, mainly in western countries. Śaktipāta leads to the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī. In fact the yogic identity of Kuṇḍalinī has been replaced with the Tantric identity. Shaman Hatley having shown evidences from earliest Śaivite treatises like Sārdhatriśatikālottara argues that first reference to Kuṇḍalinī occurs not in the Yogasūtra of Patañjali, but in the Śaivite Tantric texts of 6th to 8th century CE. This bodily Kuṇḍalinī is aroused through yoga, and leads to occult, mystic and finally liberating experience. With the help of Śaktipāta, the prāṇaśakti within the suṣumnā transforms into Kuṇḍalinī, as the Śakti itself.

It is believed that the process of Śaktisamāveśa which is not different from Śaktisparśa happens only when the Kuṇḍalinī starts awakening. For the practitioner who perceives it as the experience of

---

34 Kuṇḍalinī is both the cosmogenic energy of the ultimate divine and the spiritual force of the human body, which in the form of a coiled female serpent lies dormant in the body of the individuals. It rises through the body, constituted of vital energies, channals and focal points along with the vertical axis (prāṇa-s, nāḍī-s and cakra-s). Shaman Hatley, "Kuṇḍalinī", in Arvind Sharma (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Indian religions*, Springer, 2015, p.2: “The vital air associated with respiration ordinarily flows through a pair of channels to the left and right of the spine- idā and pīngalā repectively associated with the moon and sun. A Yogin however seeks to open the subtle medial channel termed suṣumnā, associated with fire. When the vital air is drawn into the central channel, the Kuṇḍalinī rises, hissing and straightening like a cobra struck by a stick. Ascending from its resting point at the base of torso to the head. It releases the nectar of immortality, engendering experience of supernal bliss.”

supreme relish, Kuṇḍalinī is the way towards sparśa. Whereas it is the continuity of sparśa according to the believers of Śaktisparśa to whom it is the cause of the awakening of Śakti.

Kuṇḍalinī is compared to a snake, an object of dread because of its poison. It represents the obscure or unconscious poisonous energies within the bodies. Śaktī’s extension also happens in the way through which poison gets spread in the body right at the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī. As mentioned earlier, this act of Kuṇḍalinī seems to have associated with the sexual union through which originally the power is awakened. This very awakening is known as Mahāvyāpti- the ultimate level of repose reached by the various Prāṇas through distinct levels. Abhinavagupta says,

![Sanskrit text]

Some traditional metaphors used by Abhinavagupta for the indication of the awakening of Kuṇḍalinī are also viewed to be abiding in the erotic.

---

36 Lilian Silburn describes that at the time of her arousing, the poison with a destructive character already held in her, transforms itself into an all-pervading power which provides access to the universality. But Jayaratha while explaining the contradictory natures of the erotic and poisonous paths, says, "नूतः भगवता श्रीकुलुहुतेः कामतत्त्विवशंत्सियः प्राणान्त्रूपोऽर्णादिविद्युत्सज्जालाभायुः प्राणकलामिधित्सकवृत्तिः स्वतःपितः प्राणमात्रेः तस्य रूपासंभवात् तस्मि देवाकादिद्वादशे परेयचार्यनिष्ठावित्वार्थयमां ग्रन्थप्रतिभन्नात्मानात्मात्मां न सम्बोधतः, विशिष्टतः पुनः कामतत्त्व प्राणपल्लविश्वतत्त्वस्य च अप्राणपल्लविश्वत्त्वस्य च अट एवायोहिपकारसकारात्मान्।" TĀV, Vol.2, p.168.

37 TĀ, V. 46, 49.
levels. The symbols such as Śrṅgāṭapīṭha, Kanda, Koṇatraya, Fire etc. directly indicate the sexual organs. 38 Swami Lakshman Joo explains;

So it is why sexuality is put just to divert your attention from Citkuṇḍalinī in this world, you can maintain to live. While losing that sexuality, Citkuṇḍalinī rises at the same time. This sensation takes place only for a few seconds, not more. Then it rises, one gets absolutely blissful existence. It can’t be described. The happiness is like sexual happiness, but when you compare the sexual happiness with that happiness, it will be one million parts less. So he gets intensity of that bliss, Ānanda, ecstasy, more than ecstasy, more than bliss. And at the same time he realizes the reality of self, his nature: ‘I am, really I am, I am only bliss, Ānanda, Cit. 39

Lilian Silburn also affirms that the master of Kuṇḍalinī alone is able to experience the ultimate bliss (paramānanda). According to her,

It may burst unexpectedly without any contact whatsoever out of the death of Samādhi. This is not a joy pertaining to the limited body; it is dimensionless, through the body and included in the body. All the sense energies are as it were caught by the ascending Kuṇḍalinī, then in a flash, steeped into such intense bliss that the body is unable to bear it more than a few seconds. 40

The second facet of Kuṇḍalinī is procreational and has been originated as a result of the series of actions started from Śaktipāta and ended with the merging with the supreme. In reality, Kuṇḍalinī acts as the culminating point of a cycle of power in an ascending way; and as the cause of origin of the next cycle of manifestation through her own

38 Mother goddesses are portrayed through the symbols like naturalistic serpent, zigzags, sinusoidal lines and triangles in a broader cultural context of ancient world. See, The Cult of the Serpent: An Interdisciplinary Survey of its Manifestations, pp.182 ff.
40 Lilian Silburn, Kuṇḍalinī, p.167.
descending. Cosmologically Kuṇḍalinī is the starting point of emanation - the creative power. The Vāc as in Abhinavagupta, Kuṇḍalinī is connected with the theory of language, cosmology and yoga. It is effective and confers a true power. Kula’s expansion through the power (Kaulikī) of the Akula- this Kaulikī energy is called Kuṇḍalinī- joins with Śiva in a unifying friction of mutual delight. This unifying friction is a surging forth- vibration that initiates a universal flow. In sum, Kuṇḍalinī has here been brought as a threefold scheme- Śaktikuṇḍalinī (the creative power), Prāṇakuṇḍalinī (vital power of the sentient) and Parākuṇḍalinī (the supreme power of the ultimate). If she does not emit, Kuṇḍalinī assumes the form of pure Śaktikuṇḍalinī (Śaktikuṇḍalinikā). Subsequently becomes Prāṇakuṇḍalinī- the vital energy. When it reaches the extreme point of emission it is Parākuṇḍalinī.

As the cosmological conception of Kuṇḍalinī is highly close to the linguistic theory, the creative activity is used to be viewed as the cause of emanation of the Sanskrit alphabets. Śaktikuṇḍalinī is the seed about to germinate having a tendency to the emission of the universe called visarjanīya. Gopinath Kaviraj observes,

> When it is free from visarga, it is not outwardly inclined and rests in itself. In this condition it is called Śaktikuṇḍalinī or Parāsaṃvit and is likened to a sleeping serpent resting on itself. But when it is ruffled it becomes visarga which is of two kinds, accordingly it

---

41 Lilian Silburn, *Op.cit*, p.38, states that the Śaktikuṇḍalinī, being the supreme ānanda, emits the other two forms, Parā and Prāṇakuṇḍalinī-s.
represents the procreative flutter called ānanda and symbolized as 'a' and the last creative effort bringing out life or prāṇa symbolized as if. Prāṇa or 'A' is sometimes describes as harṣa or śūnya. The two visarga-s are therefore known as higher and lower parā and aparā graphically represented in nāgarī script as the two points of visarjanīya. The amā-kalā reveals the two points and flows out inorder to manifest forms. Every form in the universe, whether a subject or an object or an instrument of knowledge, is identical with amā-kalā. Though it may be made to appear as different from it. Hence Śaktikuṇḍalinī expressed in Visarga is still resting on itself as samvit and is free from movement.42

Prāṇakuṇḍalinī is the state in which the emergence of the levels of reality takes place. Conscious transforms into the vital energy here. It is also considered that the supreme consciousness conceals its true essence and unfolds himself as Prāṇakuṇḍalinī. Abhinavagupta compares this energy with the central vein of Palāśa leaf.43 Whereas the dynamism of the Śakti predominates in the Pūrṇakuṇḍalinī, in which nothing but the dynamism exists.

Mark. S. G. Dyczkowski reveals the relation of Kuṇḍalinī with spanda thus;

As Kundalini, the spiritual power latent in man, rises through the vital centers (cakras) of the body, the yogi is said to experience a number of signs on his path. These are generally said to be five, namely, delight (ananda), a leap (udbhava), a tremor (kampa), sleep (nidra) and, finally pulsation (ghurni).44

42 Gopinath Kaviraj, Aspects of Indian Thought, University of Burdwan, 1966, pp.199-200.
43 TĀ, VI.8
44 Mark. S. G. Dyczkowski, Stanzas on Vibration, p.15.
Śaktisparśa and Kuṇḍalinī, both have a notable social importance as both these concepts help the Śaivite agreement of body as a framework for the explanation of theology of consciousness. The body becomes a key image in monistic metaphysics for it being the reflector of the cosmological structure proposed by the Śaivite theorists. Gavin. D. Flood observes that the place found out by body in the scheme of monistic Śaivism is nothing but the representation of the hierarchy and the society as a whole;

In its role as an image of society, the body’s main scope is to express the relation of individual to the group. This is done along the dimension of strong, weak, acceptable or not. From total relaxation to the self-control, the body has its wide gamut for expressing this social variable.\(^45\)

The main stream tradition never intended to the protection of the body-related ritualistic aspects, which had been held uniquely by Tantrism, but tried to acquire an unequivocal position in the society. Scholars believe that the popularity held by the monistic Śaivism in the modern times is because of the esoteric and pragmatic factors (such as Kuṇḍalinī). Christopher Wallis argues that the Kashmir Śaivite system

---


David Peter Lawrence in his, *Teachings of the Odd-eyed One*, Sate University of New York Press, Albany, 2008, p.17 says, "A variety of tantric practices are conceived to awaken Śakti as Kuṇḍalinī often symbolized in the form of a serpent, dormant in the energy center (cakra) at the base of the spine. As she ascends through higher energy centers she divinizes the subtle physiology of the human body. In the sexual ritual, the male and female partners physically become Śiva and Śakti, and realize their primordial unity in their very genitalia and sexual fluids. I also mention that the transformation of embodiment in tantric traditions is often understood greatly to improve the health or strength of the practitioner’s human body, or even to make it immortal."
was preserved even after the Muslim invasion only due to the Kuṇḍalinī. He remarks,

The concepts such as Śaktipāta, Kuṇḍalinī and so on are very much popular in the streams of modern practice-centered Śaivite Tantra which reveals themselves as the mixture of the popular ‘ingredients’

The reason for considering these conceptions is their potential to improve the social condition from the restricted dichotomies like pure and impure.

**Philosophical Implications**

The need of development of a ‘pure philosophy’ instead of religions with philosophical undercurrents was the first turn in the history of conceptual changes within the Tantrism. The thought systems as well as their proposed theories are always generating the space for the proposed discourses. Kashmir Śaivism, as is familiar, did not ever appear as a mere philosophical system even after the philosophizing process that underwent in the age of its great flourish during the 9th to 11th centuries CE. The cause for this uniqueness of Kashmir Śaivism, is

---

46 Sarah Caldwell while reviewing the ‘strange’ hermeneutic of the recent Kashmiri Śaivite Siddhayoga practices taught by Swami Muktananda with the help of her personal experiences says, “It occurred to me that Baba’s carefully constructed persona, teachings, organization, programs, his account of Bhagawan’s life, and even his own autobiography, might be largely fictions—useful fictions at that, dramas that achieved his purpose: to draw thousands of people into meditation, to encourage them to practice his teachings, to instigate the “meditation revolution” that was his aim. Perhaps the ends were more important than the means, and as long as he could keep on meeting thousands of people, giving shaktipat (initiation into spontaneous kundalini yoga through direct transmission of energy) week after week, he would use any means at his disposal to empower himself and keep going.” *The Heart of the Secret: A Personal and Scholarly Encounter with Shakta Tantrism in Siddha Yoga*, p.22. For more recent encounters of Kuṇḍalinī with the society, see Shaman Hatley, “Kuṇḍalinī”, pp.7-10.
nothing but the conceptual or doctrinal framework essentially based on the concept of Śakti. Likewise the very concept was the vitality of the entire metaphysics of this system.

Some of the Śakti-based conceptions proposed by the authors seem to have been termed as ‘philosophical implications’ which too may be viewed as the disclosure of Śakti (Śaktyāviśkāraṇa) in the non-dualist Śaiva philosophy. The main predisposition of philosophical allegations is related to the cosmological, ontological and soteriological theories based upon the categorization of the objective universe.

**The Categorization of the Universal Creation**

Śaivite theory about creation is centered on the categorization of all the objects into 36 principles.\(^{47}\) It is not a novel idea for many earlier systems like Sāṅkhya have already induced these principles which are conceived for the making of the universe. The whole thing done by Śaivism is the addition of 11 principles to the Sāṅkhya categories.\(^{48}\) These levels of manifestation has a hierarchy in itself; as the manifestation becomes more and more grosser, so the separation between the seed and the point of being or the object becomes greater.

---

\(^{47}\) Abhinavagupta deviates from this thought by conceptualising 37\(^{th}\) category called Anuttara or Paramaśiva.

\(^{48}\) The thirty six categories are broadly classified into two sections viz., Śuddhādhvam (Pure order) and Aśuddhādhvam (Impure order); Former constitutes the first five tattvas and the later includes the remaining principles controlled by the power of Māyā.
Śiva and Śakti are the first two categories in which the voluntary movement starts. The power of being, ‘Cit’, is free from all the impurities and predominates in the level of Śiva. The experience in this state is pure ‘I’ and in the second category, which follows Śiva, experience is ‘I am’. Ānandaśakti predominates in this category. Sadāśiva- the third category, is predominated by the power of Icchā, is a faintly affected state of the supreme self. The experience of beings in this category is ‘I am this’, where the ‘this’ represents the universe, the cause of affection. Power of jñāna predominates in the next level known as Sadāśiva. The experience is ‘this am I’. These two levels each other are having a close relationship as pointed out by K. C. Pandey,

Just as in the case of balancing beam, held straight, from the scientific point of view, one end is lower than the other, so the difference between the experiences between the Sadāśiva and Īśvara levels, is due to the predominance of the subjectivity in the former and that of the objectivity in the latter.

Idam (thisness) in the Īśvara level takes the form of idamevāham (‘this am I’). Since the existence of the idam (object) and aham (subject) related each other it indicates the predominance of Jñānaśakti in this level. Sadvidyā or Šuddhavidyā is the next category with a predominance of power of Kriyā and the experience is ‘I am this’. Šuddhādhvan (the pure order) of manifestation ends with this category

49 Refer to Bhās, Vol. 2, p.211.
50 The power of will is conjoined with the Sadāśiva category; Similarly Jñāna with Īśvara and so on.
the predominance of the aforementioned five Śaktis in the five categories in their respect is the view held by Abhinavagupta.

**Māyā and its Five Products**

The sphere after the pure creation is known as Mahāmāyā, and Śakti’s operation here is in her pure form. In other words, the first manifestation of impure creation is Māyā. It breaks the unity of universal self in its creative aspect. Māyā is the primary cause of all insentient manifestation (one among the two impure creations).

Māyā has five sub-varieties called Kañcuka-s viz., Kalā, Kāla, Rāga, Niyati, and Śaṭtrimśattattvasandoha. These five categories are explained as;

तत्सवयक्तृता सा संकुचिता कतिपयार्थायमात्रपरा।
किञ्चिक्तर्नांमुं कलयन्ति कीर्त्यते कला नाम।॥

(when the omnipotence, getting contracted, becomes capable of achieving only a few things and thus it reduces him (the Supreme Lord) to the state of doing limited things, it is designated as Kalā.)

सर्वज्ञातस्य शक्ति: परिमिततनुरत्पवेद्यमात्रपरा।
ज्ञानमुत्िादयन्ति विद्यति निग्राते बुधैरायेः।॥

(His power of omniscience, becoming limited, and assuming the capacity of knowing only a few things and producing knowledge (of a limited character) is called Vidyā by the wisemen of the olden times.)

नित्यपरिपूर्णतृप्ति: शक्तित्सत्स्थेव परिभिता तु सती।

---

53 D. B. Sen Sharma (Tr.), Śaṭtrimśattattvasandoha, B.N. Chakravarty University, Kurukshetra, 1977, p.21.
54 Ibid. p.23.
(There is his another Śakti which consists in eternal complete satisfaction; the same becoming limited and attaching him to ever-enjoyment, this Śakti is reduced to the form of Rāgatattva.)

Remaining 20 tattvas viz., jñānendriya-s, karmendriya-s, tanmatra-s, bhūta-s and indriya-s are powers of individual self- simply the different forms of kalā- the limited power of action. All the categories could be equated with the Icchā and Jñāna forms of Śakti:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Śakti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Śiva</td>
<td>Cid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śakti</td>
<td>Ānanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadāśiva</td>
<td>Icchā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Īśvara</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Śuddhavidyā</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only the categorization, but its interpretations are also viewed as the disclosure of Śakti. The various modifications of metaphysical theories based on the categorization are available in the Kashmir Śaivism. The following discussion is hence about how the disclosure of Śakti occurs through the theories related with cosmology, ontology, soteriology, aesthetics and linguistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Māyā</th>
<th>Jñāna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kalā</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidyā</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rāga</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kāla</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niyati</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prakṛti</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhi</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahaṅkāra</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manas</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jñānendriya-s</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karmendriya-s</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanmātra-s</td>
<td>Jñāna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhūta-s</td>
<td>Kriyā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cosmology, Ontology and Soteriology in terms of Śakti: The Hermeneutics of Categorization

Ābhāsa (manifestation), Pratibimba (reflection) and Svātantrya (freedom) are the conceptions that represent the key metaphysical doctrines of Śaivite monism. Each of these is added with the term vāda with it to explain the attributed theories and it is popularly indicated as synonym of the philosophical system of the Śaivite monism. Monistic Śaivism is termed as Ābhāsavāda, when it is perceived through the view of ultimate about the entire universe as its manifestation. That is because it is tried to posit this very theory as the Śaivite cosmological hermeneutics. The next one is the Pratibimbavāda (more idealistic in nature) is addressing the ontological state of the universe including itself, from the point of view of every sentient individual. It suggests that all the manifestations are the reflections of the supreme consciousness. Svātantryavāda exposes the key theory named recognition- the process through which the perfect goal is to be attained. Three of these theories altogether are firmly attributed to the principle of Śakti.

The term ābhāsa generally indicates the agency of Śiva in the creation of the whole universe on account of his power of freedom. The entire multiplicity of the universe is categorized as ābhāsa-s within which the reality of essence is situated. So the thirty six categories are
called as ābhāsa-s they being the elements of representation of the cosmology, as says the famous introductory verse of ṚPK;


(I bow to that absolute, which is unity of Paramāśiva and Śakti; the unity, which from its ultimate state, first of all manifests the pure ego ‘I’ and then, through its will, divides its power into two; the ultimate state which being without any manifestation, is self-contained and is responsible for creation and dissolution through the play and suspension respectively of its power.)

The whole entities in the manifested universe are indifferent from the supreme principle and therefore the former is termed as ābhāsita and the latter as ābhāsaka. Both the process of ābhāsana and the manifested objects are regarded as Śakti and it reflects the inevitable inclusion of such a feminine principle even in this intellectually developed phase.

According to Abhinavagupta, ābhāsa is relatively ultimate within the sphere of the cognitive world, but they are sublatable by the consciousness as such, which in some sense transcends it. Everything

---

57 Bhās, Vol. 3, p. 1. The editors, K. A. S. Iyer and K. C. Pandey mention that the first five verses are not found in the manuscript used and had been copied from a fragment of work, consisting of introductory portion in the possession of Maheshwar Razdan of Srinagar. But the first verse under discussion has been quoted by Jayaratha with a different pāṭha as ‘nirāśamsāt’ which commits a distinct meaning. Thus the non-manifested primordial state of Śiva is seems to be an ambiguous postulation, but however Abhinavagupta manages it. There is also an accepted conception that ābhāsa-s are divided into sāmānyābhāsa and svalakṣaṇābhāsa (universal and particular manifestations). Buddhists accept particular as the reality while universal is fundamentally more real according to Śaivism. For details, see. Isabelle Ratie, "Remarks on Compassion and Altruism in the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy", Journal of Indian Philosophy, Vol.37, 2009, pp.349-366.
which existing- i.e., subject, object and means- is ābhāsa-s. K. C. Pandey comments;

The world of experience according to him, is not a creation of the god, who is simply an active agent and brings the ‘experienceables’ into being, with the help of some such material cause as atoms; nor is it an evolute of the prakṛti as the sāṅkhya conceives; nor a purely subjective experience, as the vijñānavādin-s represents; nor even a mere illusion as the vedāntin believes it to be.¹⁵⁸

The all-inclusive universal consciousness is ideal; hence the theory of Pratyabhijñā is known as the theory of realistic idealism i.e., Ābhāsavāda. Ābhāsavāda simultaneously is an ontological and an epistemological theory. Each ābhasa is a collection of ābhāsa-s which exist independent each other. The world constituted of ābhāsa-s is not illusory, and not a mere product of perceiver’s imagination. Here it is real and eternal unlike that of the philosophy of Vedānta. Utpaladeva explains how the different constituent ābhāsa-s formulate the impression of unity;

पृथ्वीप्रकाशानां चौतसां सागरे यथा ।
अविरुद्धावभासानां एककार्यं तत्थीणयधै: ॥

¹⁵⁸ K. C. Pandey, Abhinavagupta: An Historical and Philosophical Study, p.320. cf. Gavin. D. Flood’s assumption that the Śaivite Ābhāsavāda comes under the broader category of Satkāryavāda. Further he concludes the discussion with a remarkable juxtaposition as, “One could suspect that Śaivites manage to make this leap between the epistemic and the metaphysical aspects of the problem simply by inferring the non existence of the external object from the fact that it is not perceptible. As a matter of fact, they repeatedly equate existence with manifestation and they call their own system (as well as Vijñānavāda) a "theory of manifestation" (ābhāsavāda) i.e., a theory according to which reality belongs (only) to manifestations (ābhāsavastutvavāda).” Gavin. D. Flood, Op.cit., p.67. The very statement- whether the author intended or not, conveys the inevitability of Śakti in the theory of Ābhāsa.
(As in the case of distinct rays of light in a torch and of the currents in the sea, so in manifestations that are not in contrast with each other the notion of unity is produced by their appearing as unitary entities.)

The monistic philosophy of Śaivism has many technical terminologies that represent its doctrine. The universe and everything within it have their own real existence according to their theory and all those individuals are termed as ābhāsa-s (manifestations) of the one and only supreme reality. Eventually the question would arise that how this one reality becomes many. In order to answer this, Śaiva theorists brought a new impression that all these manifestations are Pratibimba-s (reflections) of the supreme.

The analogy of reflection, indicating the relation between supreme reality and the manifested world is found in almost all the Indian philosophical traditions. Even though there are previous attempts made by Somānanda and Utpaladeva, as David Lawrence says,

It is Abhinavagupta who may be credited with making the metaphor of reflection into a favored trope of monistic Śaiva theological discourse.

He also stresses that this conception is a code mainly used for the mythical and ritual process of engrossment of Śakti directly connected with the body and egoity. PS clearly distinguishes its two modes of

---

59 ĪPK II. 3. 7; Raffaele Torella, The Īśvapratyabhijñākārikā, pp.166-167.
60 The history of such a thought may be traced back to Chāndogyopaniṣad and succeeds through the traditions like Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Vedānta.
representation i.e., reflection ‘of the Śiva’ and the reflection ‘in the Śiva’ with the help of proper examples. The foremost multi-layered metaphor used is that of the images of a mirror to point out the relationship between universe and the absolute. This process has been explained in *PS* as,

\[\text{दर्पणविभ्रोऽद्वन्नगरग्रामादि चित्रविभागि ि्रा्िे यद्वन्नगरग्रामादि चित्रविभागि} \]
\[\text{परस्पर दर्पणादपि च ि्रा्िे यद्वन्नगरग्रामादि चित्रविभागि ि्रा्िे यद्वन्नगरग्रामादि चित्रविभागि} \]
\[\text{विमलतमपरमैरवोधात् तावदिभागशून्यमपि ि्रा्िे यद्वन्नगरग्रामादि चित्रविभागि ि्रा्िे यद्वन्नगरग्रामादि चित्रविभागि} \]
\[\text{अन्योन्यं च ततोषपि च विभक्तमाभाति जगदेतत्} \]

(Just as the images of a town, a village, and other objects reflected in a mirror appear inseparable from the mirror yet appear distinct both from one another and from the mirror, in the same way, arising from the absolute consciousness of para bhairava, this universe, though inherently void of divisions, nevertheless appears internally apportioned and distinct [from Para Bhairava]).

The objects, reflections and the mirror are the three important elements in this metaphor. In a primary view, the reflected images appear as different from the mirror and from one another. For is reason Abhinavagupta himself states that this sense is invalid in the level of absolute, Jeffrey Lidke coming to the conclusion remarks that,

---


63 Swami Lakshman Joo addresses this conventional mode of understanding as the “grammar of reflection”, [www.youtube.com/swamilakshmanjoopratimimbavada](http://www.youtube.com/swamilakshmanjoopratimimbavada).

64 “शिनयनः तथाप्राणिवराड् देहजातियिण्डान्तः”
The true relation of the three is stated to be one of *avibhāgin* (inseparability). Developing this theme of inseparability, Abhinavagupta goes on to equate the mirror with *vimalatama-parama-bhairava-bodham* (the absolute consciousness of highest Bhairava) who, both in terms of the metaphor and Trika cosmology, is the *pramātṛ* (supreme knower).65

David Lawrence in this regard argues that,

Śiva/the self is both the source and the locus of reflections. All reflections are of the self in the self ... His basic point is that there is no bimba if that is conceived as something external to consciousness. However, he always makes it clear that there is a cause (hetu) for the Pratibimba, that is, an efficient cause (nimitta) rather than a material cause (upādāna). That cause is none other than Śakti variously identified as Kaulikī Śakti, Supreme speech (parāvāk), semantic intuition (pratibhā), the unsurpassed (anuttarā) agential self-determination (svātantrya) and the various modes of self-recognition (vimarśa, parāmarśa and so on).66

In fact, the key point that should be noticed is that through this theory of reflection the preordained disclosure of Śakti takes place.

The concept of freedom in the philosophy of non-dual Śaivism holds an important role in the representation of the all-encompassing,


and all-powerful character of the supreme consciousness. Scholars observe that the very concept has been emerged in the non-dualistic Śaivite circumstances to demonstrate the existence of supreme consciousness with an essential dynamic character as opposed to the Buddhist theory of ‘not self’. Isabelle Ratie put forward an appropriate definition thus,

This infinite plasticity of consciousness, or this capacity to manifest itself in innumerable forms while remaining itself (even though it shows itself in the form of objects, i.e., as what it is not) is precisely what the Śaivas call “freedom,” and according to them, this freedom transcends the pure momentariness upheld by the Buddhists: contrary to insentient objects, consciousness is capable of changing without perishing.67

Eric Bartel makes reference of two aspects of Svātantrya viz., ‘freedom from’ and ‘freedom to’. She describes the former as;

... svātantrya refers ultimately to the fact that Śiva is not limited by any other thing. There are no obstacles to impede the svātantrya of the Lord; He is not dependent on any other thing. Before getting into that, however, it needs to be pointed out that in discussing this aspect of svātantrya, the language can be interpreted in a misleading fashion.

This Svātantrya is not limited by anything whereas the other beings are dependent on it. It is completely autonomous and the source of all other powers. Because of freedom Śiva- ultimately who is everything- is independent from all others. The process of manifestation is found to be

---

frequently discussed as the freedom from the absolute. Abhinavagupta indicates,

न केवलं स्वातन्त्र्यादात्मानं बधनाल्येव यावन्मोचयत्वपीत्याह,
स्वातन्त्र्यमहिमैवायं देवस्य यदसौ पुनः।
स्वं रूपं परिशुद्धं सत्संस्पृशत्वपुरुषतामयः॥

But the exploration of this aspect creates a dichotomy between sentient (those who have freedom) and insentient (those who do not have freedom). This dichotomy is erroneous in the context of Śaivite monism.

The second aspect is ‘freedom to’, without which, the ‘freedom from’ cannot be completed. Here the conception of Svātantrya is emphasized as the process of unrevealing and recognition of the supreme Śiva by the individuals who are none other than Śiva. Abhinavagupta believes that the freedom is the essence of any kind of action. All the sentient beings have a certain level of agency and hence a certain level of freedom. This freedom gradually develops and finally realizes the self, then become competent to reach the highest level of agency that is of Śiva. By equating action and freedom, Abhinavagupta states,

प्रकाशस्यात्मिवरृाित्तरह्िावो हि कीििति:।
उक्ता च सैव विश्रान्त्ति: सर्वपेश्यानिरोध्यतः॥
स्वातन्त्र्यमथ कर्तृत्वं मुख्यमीश्वरतापि वा।

---

68 TĀ, XIII.105.
(Ahambhāva is indeed said to be the Viśrānti of the self of Prakāśa. And indeed this Viśrānti is said to be the confinement in regard to everything. Now the chief attribute of Svātantrya is doership, and moreover it is the state of lordship.)

By considering Svātantrya as ‘freedom to’ Śiva, the entire manifestations in this universe can realize themselves as Śiva and all their deeds as same as of the Supreme. This leads to the completion of a cycle that is Śiva who manifests, manifestations which reflect and reflections again realize the Śiva. The concept of Svātantrya would be the exact answer to the question that what is the limit of the supreme self’s power. It is identified with various forms of Śakti such as the consciousness, the unrestricted will, the sum total of illuminative and reflective awareness, internal Pratibhā, play and vibration of the supreme self.

It is not because of any peculiar rule that the Supreme makes such and such reflections as part of the process of the creation of the universe, but is because of the all-encompassing Svātantrya (freedom) of the lord. So in the angle of variegated universal objects, the Śaiva theory of cosmology is known as Ābhāsavāda. If the individual object is taken, then the theory of ontology may be termed as Pratibimbavāda.

---

70 “...स्वातन्त्र्यं धितथलं इति ∥ IVVV, Vol. 1, p.51; “स्वातन्त्र्यं च नाम यथेच्छं तत्र इच्छाप्रसरस्य अविधातः तेन स्वयं प्रकाशते ∥ परालम्ब माकाशत इति अनवच्छेदतया प्रकाशमानता तदेव स्वातन्त्र्यं परालम्ब माकाशात इति इति।” Ibid., p.37; “स्वातन्त्र्यमिच्छालक्षणमेव” ∥ Ibid., Vol. 2, p.13. “अन्यतिरिपक्षातिव परस्मार्थंत: आनन्दं, ऐशवयं, स्वातन्त्र्यं, चैत्यमम् ||” IVVV, Vol. 1, p.255.
The same could be evaluated as a soteriology and then the theory would turn to be as Svātantryavāda.

**Aesthetic and Linguistic Modes of Śaktyāviśkaraṇa**

Aesthetic and linguistic speculations in Kashmir Śaivism are described in the same terms referring to Śakti. It is observed that Abhinavagupta during the representation of Śakti, tries to synthesize his non-dualistic Śaiva tradition with some distinct and significant thought traditions. The linguistic philosophy of grammarians and the Sanskrit aesthetics are the two important systems among them. Gerald James Larson in this regard remarks,

> Abhinavagupta in his mystical theosophy draws extensively from these traditions gives one the impression that Abhinavagupta (at least with respect to his use of the term Śakti) is relying heavily on what might be called a 'linguistic-aesthetic model' in his religious thought.\(^1\)

Sanskrit aesthetics had explicitly made use of the traditional Indian philosophical theories and concepts. Although originated in a comparatively later period, the non-dual philosophy of Śaivism is the most significant system of Indian philosophy which influenced the Sanskrit aesthetics in a larger perspective. This is evidently derived from the style of interpretations of Abhinavagupta. Scholars profoundly have discussed about the influence of Śaivite doctrine in the commentaries on aesthetics in Sanskrit viz., Dhvanyālokalocana, and

---
\(^1\) Gerald James Larson, “The Sources for Śakti in Abhinavagupta’s Kāśmir Śaivism: A Linguistic and Aesthetic Category” p.45. In the same, the three fold foundation proposed by him is not carried out here for discussion.
David Peter Lawrence believes that the assimilation of aesthetics is nothing but the “expression of a historical domestication of Tantric transgressiveness by Brāhmanical culture”.72

The scholars like Loriliai Biernaki and David Gordon White consider the process of assimilation of Tantra in aesthetics as a domestication technique. But it seems not only as a rationalization process but an attempt to habituate the aesthetic theories or concepts to the frame work of Śaivism for the purpose of the establishment of its panentheistic philosophy with the help of interpreting the ‘experience’. In fact, Abhinavagupta makes the theories and treatises of aesthetics as the tool for the disclosure of Śakti by which he can establish his monistic philosophy.73

Loriliai Biernaki, while pointing out the limitation of the monistic thoughts, proposes a divergent view that through his works on aesthetics, Abhinavagupta paves a way to know about the mode through which monistic philosophy addresses the complexity of ethics in the human relations.74 She remarks,
For Abhinavagupta, aesthetic appreciation of a poem or a play entails a non-linear and non-rational encounter with delight in the appreciation of Rasa or flavor of the art that lends itself ultimately to moral refinement through a process of universalization.\textsuperscript{75}

\begin{verbatim}
िचितः प्रत्यवमशात्मा िरा वाक् स्वसोिदता ।  
स्वातन्त््यमेतन्त्मुख्यं तदेश्वर्यः परमेश्ठिनः \|  
\end{verbatim}

Consciousness has as its essential nature reflective awareness (pratyavamarśa); it is the supreme Word (parāvāk) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty (aiśvaryam) of the supreme Self. \textsuperscript{76}

Śakti has been presented in manifold names and forms in a series of contexts in Śaivaite philosophy. But it has never rejected or hidden its fundamental characters i.e., femininity, creativity etc., even in the linguistic and aesthetical domains. In the present situation where it is presented as an aesthetic category, Śakti appears to have its basic nature in a vague form in its unconscious.\textsuperscript{77} K. C. Pandey in this regard says,

There can be no self without at least potential consciousness, the capacity of the self, technically called Śakti is therefore admitted to be the second category. Abhinavagupta puts the aesthetic experience to this level (the category of Śakti consciousness) as camatkāra.\textsuperscript{78}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{75} Idem.
\textsuperscript{77} The only exemption is the direct identification of Śakti with the Vāc- which is feminine in nature.
\end{flushright}
The philosophy of Abhinavagupta reflected in the aesthetic theories is the only thing noted by the scholarly world. They neither problematized the necessity of the use of aesthetic or poetic theories in the philosophical streams; nor addressed the questions like why the Tantrika-s like Abhinavagupta considered poetics as an important śāstra and made discussions on it. The traditional scholars do not consider the poetics even as a discipline that deserves serious attention. As per the traditional view, aesthetic experience has a limitation that the experience lasts for a short time and hence is sidelined and thus a new approach needs to be formulated in its stead. An examination of Abhinavagupta’s references of the aesthetics in the Tantric texts leads to the assumption that he uses the aesthetics as a tool for the revelation of Sakti – the second category and the gate to Śiva.79

One reason for accepting aesthetics as a topic of concern may be the inclusion of the popular discourses such as entertainment and arts which dwell perfectly within the real worldly philosophy of Śaivites. The scholarly ancestors of Abhinavagupta started seeing the poetic or artistic works seriously. To be precise, although this tendency had started from Vasugupta himself, it was Abhinavagupta who made its appropriate and effective application.

It is popularly believed that the experience of aesthetic relish (rasāsvāda) doesn’t reach the level of experience of the ultimate

79 The aesthetic relish is of the form of Śaktyāviṣkaraṇa.
The capacity to create such an aesthetic experience and the capacity of the artist to enjoy such an experience i.e., the appreciative or responsive reader, is discussed usually with the notion of Pratibhā. It is also termed Śakti. Here it is proposed to argue that the representation of Pratibhā as Śakti is its philosophical implication. Śakti rather is the capacity to evoke or receive a resonating suggestiveness achieved by means of the word, yet transcending the word leads to an experience of universal joy or wonder.

Though it is familiar as an aesthetic concept, origin of Pratibhā moves back to earliest thoughts about knowledge. Pratibhā is a flash of light that provides an extra ordinary perception to the writer. Kaviśakti is nothing else than this creative imagination,

Pratyabhijñā identifies Śāmbhavopāya with pratibhā. According to the system, as the water inherently possesses the capability of flowing every individual inherently holds the power of Pratibhā. TĀV declares this as,

यन्त्यूलं शासनं तेन न रिक्तः कोडपि जन्तुकः ॥

Pratibhā is of two types- lower and higher. First is worldly like telepathy etc. second one is the supreme consciousness in Āgamic

---

80 TĀV, Vo.1, p.100.
81 TĀ, XIII. 89. TĀV on this verse says: “व्युत्तितेिहय प्राितिात्मा किश्चज्जन्तुः स्वोिचतव्यािारनैिुण्यो रिक्तः ॥”
literature. According to Abhinavagupta, Parāvāc is another name of Pratibhā, seated on poet’s own heart. It is alaukika (non-worldly) according to Bhaṭṭatauta. For early Śaiva Tantric thinkers, meaning of the word ‘pāta’ is Pratibhā.

Pratibhā is equated with Śakti as it is the saṃvid of the prāmatr. Saṃvid is constituted of various orders and disorders. Sarvāvabhāsanasāmarthya (the all-illuminating potential) of Pramāṭr (the knower) is identical with the Pratibhā. It holds the entire possibilities for all that are going to happen and what is happening. It is beyond the sense organs and buddhi, where svāvabhāsana and svāvabodhana take place. Parāvāc has sarvasarvātmatā and it is the first Pratibhā. The concept of Śakti acts as the predominant content of all these formulations of aesthetic and linguistic theories.

Indian contexts generally relate the principle of word with the creative power. This view can be supported with the earliest written references containing in the Vedic literature which associates the word principle with female deity. Then the major scholars of the theory of word are grammarians including Patañjali and Bhartṛhari whom Abhinavagupta and other Śaivite scholars followed closely. Sthaneswar Timalsina precisely explains how Śaivites related it to Bhartṛhari as;

Linguistic expression in Bhartṛhari’s philosophy does not merely describes the phenomenal reality: his Śabda is identical to Brahman and is also means to reveal the highest truth. This self- revealing
aspect of language is what particularly links Bhartṛhari with subsequent Trika philosophers.

In Tantra Many followers are there to Bhartṛhari for the identification of sound with Pratyavamarśa. Here the Pratyavamarśa completely shows the meaning of touch of Śakti. Śabda is pratyavamarśapratyaya. The important meanings of the words are twofold: 1) understanding, and 2) determinate or definitive comprehension. This influenced the Śaiva non-dualistic theory of word. Three phases in the process of cognition are smṛtinirūpaṇa (remembering an object in the form made out of the word after perceiving it), abhijalpanirūpaṇa, and ākāranirūpaṇa.

In Kashmir Śaivism, a shift from śabda (subsuming artha) to reality as constituted by Prakāśa and Vimarśa can be found. Although this shift is a direct outcome of Bhartṛhari’s impact on Śaivism, it also marks the subtle line of departure from Bhartrhari’s notion of philosophy itself. Somānanda had considered Bhartṛhari just as a Vaiyākaraṇa, whereas Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta gave prominent place to him as a philosopher.

They accepted Pratyavamarśa as recognition cum identification to refute Buddhist thoughts. The Pratyavamarśa is Śiva’s agential freedom which is also Vāc. It has two dimensions as sacred (mantra) and linguistic (śabdana). Šabdana appears both in its culminated and in a
separated form while it is supporting each other in the latter. Harvey P. Alper while explaining this aspect states that,

Each human being is fundamentally deluded because he is a linguistic creature and the mantric utterance is one form of speaking that [allows] a human being to overcome the evils of linguisticality, because in its very utterance and [discloses] the roots of language itself.\(^82\)

The mantra is considered empowered entity as it possesses Vāc which is nothing but Śakti. This was understood by Abhinavagupta as Vimarśa- the creative, pulsating, and self-aware consciousness of Śiva. So both the self-realization and its merging with the supreme consciousness are possible through the understanding of mantra.\(^83\)

To conclude, the socially and philosophically popular doctrines of monistic Śaivism are intensely associated with the modified forms of principle of Śakti. The complex nature and obscurantist structures of Tantric tradition are elevated here into the terrain capable to compete even with the main stream sophisticated philosophy and religion. In brief, the distinct ways of the disclosure of Śakti fortified the demonstration of unique theory of liberation in the monistic Śaivism.

\(^{82}\) Harvey. P. Alper, *Mantra*, p.279.