9.

**ŚAKTI, THE REALITY**

9.0.  **Śakti, the unobstructed freedom**

By logic, experience and testimony, as it has already been studied in chapter one of this thesis, the Vedantin establishes the non-dual, indeterminate, immutable, eternal and self-luminous Absolute. After establishing such unique nature of Brahman, the Vedantins were logically compelled to declare the non-doership and non-knowership of Brahman, and consequently unreality of the world. It is because, once the Absolute has been accepted as the immutable, it can never be regarded as anyone’s cause. For the sake of an effect the cause has to be modified or transformed. Without the transformation or modification of the cause, there will be no difference of level in the effect. By that there will be no real process from the cause to the effect. Similarly, it is logically impossible to draw a real creation from the immutable Brahman, i.e. no transformation of phenomena from noumena is possible. So they say that there is no real creation at all. When it is asked what would be the cause of this apparent world, then being forced by logic, the Vedantins had to create a novel principle called Māyā, nescience or avidyā, ignorance, which is regarded as the cause of this apparent world. By that the entire expanse of things, says Śrī Śankara, becomes mere illusion. If the Vedantins in order to protect their non-dualism, were compelled to accept the futility of the world and regarded Māyāvāda as a defence from the blame of illogicality, then the Śaivites rose one more step or above the Māyā to dissolve the charge of illogicality by putting another power or Śakti on the Absolute. This power or Śakti is called “Freedom” which swallows in all the compulsions of logic. If one māyā in the Vedanta
could bring about an apparent creation, then another more “māyā” upon the existed one, could again bring about a new creation for the Śaivite. When logically it was not possible to deduce a real world from the eternal Absolute, then they assumed another power or Šakti which could make the illogical logical. This power is named as the Freedom of the Absolute. It is called the svātantryaśakti by which the lord could again become a doer, knower and capable of rendering a real manifestation. It is because this power Šakti gives an unobstructing Freedom to the Lord for making everything possible what ever impossible it might be. This echoes in Ṣvarapratyabhijñāvimarṣini. “māyāpade ati durghatatvam pratibhāti, tat sampādane yat apratihataṃ svātantryam tadeva puanh svātantryasyabdena darśitam”.3

9.1. Šakti, the square of māyā

The unique power of the Lord described above is called Šakti which in a mathematical term, may be called Māyā of the māyā, Mahāmāyā or square of the māyā. In a mathematical language, She is −“power (šakti) to the power ’power’ (māyā)”. It is in this sense she is called Šakti. All Absolutists hold that the Absolute is indeterminate, but against it the Śaivite emphasises that if the Absolute would not have this power of absolute freedom, it would have no longer be called Absolute.

asthāsyadekarūpeṇa vapusā cen maheśvaraḥ/
maheśvarattvam samvittvam tadatyakṣad ghatādivat/4

It is in this sense, i.e. in the concept of Šakti, Kashmir Saivism stands as a further extension of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta. So, the more the Vedantic doctrine of māyā be established, the more a step it
will raise the Saivite’s advanced doctrine of Sakti, for māyā functions as a prop for Sakti. One doctrine, (māyā) gave unity in diversity, the other, (Sakti) extended it to bring diversity in unity also.

9.2. Sakti, the Reality

The advancement in, as well as the essence of, the Śaivites lies in explaining power both as the world and above the world (vīśvamayaṁ viśvottirṇaṁca tattvam). Though their explanation is forwarded from the sādhana point of view, yet they have not neglected or overlooked the siddha point. For this reason they proclaimed that it is in and beyond the universe.

Sakti for the Śaivite is not a substanceless principle, nistatvā māyā, but it is the real nature of Absolute. It is called parā-sakti or turiyāsamvit from which all pluralities emanate. It is the Pure-Consciousness where bliss predominates. This is the stage which is realised by a sādhaka when all the external qualities of the knower is relinquished. In this stage the venerable turiya Consciousness flashes forth ceaselessly. The concept of anuttara which has many meanings plays an important role here.

Sakti is not different from Śiva and therefore she says, “I am truth, consciousness and bliss; I am Brahman and illumine.” She is supremely Supreme (parā-parā) but is not static like Brahman but she endows power of action. According to the Vedanta, Brahman has no power or āisvarya; but the Śaivites state that the existential bliss manifests by the possession of āisvarya only. They argue that one gets a momentary pleasure by the possession of worldly objects. Upaniṣadas exemplify brahmānanda with the worldly pleasure and Śvaratā cannot be unreal. The main fea
ture of the parambrashman for Its bliss nature is paramesvaratā (a power) without which everything would be void. Here the consciousness is not gross, but consists in a subtle form, whose concrete and gross form is the world: "vigraho vigrahi caiva sarvavigrahavigrahi".10

She is anuttara, vimal śamayi, Sivabhāttarakā-abhinnā. She is pervasive, ever rising, embodiment of whole, unlimited form of light (vyāpakā, nitya-udita-paripurāṇārūpa-aparicchinnā svapraṅkāśamayi). She is beyond argument, but end in itself (mahāphalatvam) and cause of liberation. She is the essence of Maheśvara (Māheśvara-sāra), she is absolute freedom. Creation for her is in unity or in self-identity.12 No material cause like māyā can be required other than her own will for creation. So she moves independently (sveccha-caṁ)13. She is pūrṇa-aham-vimal śamayi, indifferent from conscious light (cit pakāśat avvyatirikta). She possesses innumerable powers beginning from “A” ending in “kṣa” (ādikṣāntarūpinī aśeṣasakticakragarbhiṇī). So she is samvit bhāttarikā, the Lord of Consciousness. The performance of five acts, viz. creation etc. is due to her alone. She is also parāvāk. She is avikalpa or nirvikalpa sakti, turiyātītā. Though she is always emanated, yet she is full and again not any one of them.14 In this way she is immanent and emanet. Vidyāranya also describes the absolute exactly in a similar manner, when he says “sarvasaktiparambrahma nityam pūrṇa madvayam”.

This tallies with the proclamation of the Vedanta, “pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam......” In the words of Kṣemarāja, it is pūrṇānanda-ghana citi māheśvari.15 Her nature is to hold together emanation, maintenance and reabsorption. She sends forth diversities of various emanations, flashes forth ceaselessly and withdraws them.
This absolute power in Kashmir Saivism is so important that in the absense of its knowledge, there will be no liberation at all. This Šakti is unique, unfailing, consists in the doership and flashing forth for divine light. The Absolute here is both determinate (vimarśa) and indeterminate (prakāśa). Determinancy is never separated from indeterminate. During the manifestation, the Absolute remains unchanged, like the sky in the presence of dust, fog, clouds; like an actor in his play or like the sea by the waves. Absolute power remains constant as the Sun, whose reflection varies depending upon the surface of water (abhede bhedanam, bhededa ca abhedanam).

The absolute is not a state of predominance of either Śiva or Šakti, but a state of perfect identity. In itself the absolute might be described as either Paramākṣiva or Parā-šakti, but both are one. From the point of multiplicity the absolute is described as Šakti, from the point of unity, it is Śiva. Šakti is real, because Šakti and Śiva are ekātmā, abhinna, like the power in light. It is pure, unlimited, and full. This is paramārthatā, vāmesvarī. Nothing exists besides Her. Kṣemarāja describes the reality of Šakti in a beautiful way:

"prakāsānandasāra-cidālāhadaikaghaṁa, pūrṇā
mahatī mantravīryātmikā-parabhattiårkārūpaṁ, jagadānandasvarūpā
āšeṣaśarīrā sadāśiveśvaratāsārāṁ".

The bliss of self-consciousness is of the essence of prakāśa and ānanda i.e. sheer compact of consciousness and bliss, which is perfect, i.e. the highest vimarśa having no difference of this and I, the bliss of the self appearing as the universe, the bliss of the divine visible in the manifold worlds.