

Tantric Sound: The Nondual Śaivism of Kashmir's Manifestation and Liberation
In Sanskrit Words, Deities, Tattvas, and Ćakras

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by

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“Kashmir Śaivism is the culmination of Indian thought and spirituality”

-Jaideva Singh, Śaiva philosopher, on the day before hospital admittance where he later passed, age 93¹

Introduction

The Hindu Tantric sect the nondual Śaivism of Kashmir, originating in the Kashmir region of South Asia around the late 8th century, perceives *sound* as all-pervasive throughout manifested reality, as a symbol of the universe’s cosmic structure, and as a means to a soul’s liberation. Sound, created in the process of speech, and formed through reciting Sanskrit words, is vital in all religious aspects within Kashmir Śaivism- in prayer, ritual and meditation. Even more specifically, the characters that make up the religious texts themselves are derived from sacred representations of deities and also represent different vibrational energies in the body, and therefore when correctly recited, are vehicles to instantaneous liberation. According to Kashmir Śaivite philosophy, the “Divine Consciousness is identical with the Supreme Word (*para vak*), and hence every letter or word is derived from and ultimately inseparable from this Consciousness”.² The “divine consciousness” within Kashmir Śaivism’s cosmological framework is the absolute form of god, which is immanently monistic. Therefore, “the analysis of language is inseparable from that of [the analysis of] consciousness”.³

In addition to the view of sound *as* consciousness, sound is also a symbol and tool of universal liberation. Liberation is recognizing the true nature of one’s own self, which is identical with the true nature of all reality and god. Within Kashmir Śaivism this liberation through sound occurs on every level of manifestation; that is, in the realms of gods, human bodies, and written texts: therefore connecting all reality through a universal experience of divine freedom. I will explore how sacred sound pervades the universe on each of these levels and how it is used for the awakening of the soul.

Sound is the link between the three main levels of reality in Kashmir Śaivism; the causal (absolute God), subtle (energetic) and gross (physical) realms of the universe. Each layer of the manifest world is ordered based on the consciousness or quality of energy characterized by it.

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1. As said to Bettina Baumer, p.xi. Singh, Jaideva. *Parātrīśika-Vivarāṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1988
 2. Singh, Jaideva. *Abhinavagupta Parātrīśika-Vivarāṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1988 p. xv
 3. *Ibid.* p. xv

The creation of these layers, or *tattvas*, begins with the most absolute form of god, *ParamaŚiva*, and successively de-volutes step-by-step, all the way down to the most gross or concrete layer, the earth. The interplay between these layers, as I will explore, is through the process of sound and speech.

Before I explain the detailed structure of Kashmir Śaivism's universal layers of existence, or *tattvas*, I would first like to highlight that within this Tantric sect⁴ *every process* is a representation of the larger cosmic structure, called *Trika*. Due to its monistic beliefs, Kashmir Śaivism identifies *everything* as god; thus everything as interconnected, and every system is either a microcosm or macrocosm of the largest most comprehensive Trika structure. One of these particular *everythings* I will explore is the process of sound as representation of the universal Trika structure. To explain the monistic interconnectedness of Kashmir Śaivism's world, Andre Padoux explains,

the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, to the correlations- which are actually identifications- that Tantrism establishes between man and the cosmos, gods and rites...all is interconnected, where there is an interplay between the different levels in each field, where energy is both cosmic and human, and therefore where microcosm, reenacting macrocosm... is able to influence it.⁵

Logic follows that if *all* is interconnected, and if the macrocosm can influence the microcosm through replication, then there must be a universal weaving in and out of the multi-leveled interconnected web of the universe. Regardless of which level (or *tattva*) an event takes place, this weave must be ever present- since the whole universe is monistic it must be able to operate beyond time and space-at any *tattva* at any moment, stitching together our cosmic reality.

This universal weave is sound, or *Śabda*. *Śabda* as speech, mantras, vibration, and Sanskrit words themselves traverse all *tattvas* of existence. I will structure my thesis based on the Trika process of sound as represented in the basic *tattvas* and how sound relates to a soul's liberation. I will first begin with a historical referenc of Kashmir Śaivism, and then explain the Trika structure containing *ParamaŚiva*, *Śiva* and *Śakti*.

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4. Defining Kashmir Śaivism as a Tantric sect needs to be defined: Tantra is a messy term, David Gordon White's definition helps clarify, "Tantra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emanipatory ways" (*Tantra in Practice*. NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. p. 9)
 5. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p. 37

With this structure in place I will then explore sound as the Trika in 1) deities, 2) speech, 3) male and female bodies, 4) within the individual body's čakras, and 5) in the written script of Devanagari, or the Sanskrit letters, themselves. The sections of this paper begin from the most abstract large-scale macrocosm of reality to the most specific, minute microcosm of the physical earth. I include a section on speech spliced after the section on Deities but before the section on the body because in the relative world speech is the connection between the Divine realm and the gross realm of the human body.

Finally, we will see the ultimate importance of sound interweaving between all these manifestations of reality: sound is a necessary and imperative tool towards liberation. I will explore how sound and speech can awaken one of the larger cosmos and help the practitioner embody the universal structure. Lastly, I will explore what this ancient Eastern view of sound means to a modern Western audience and today's relevance of embodied speech in the journey to liberation.

Methodology

I will explore sound and speech within Kashmir Śaivism's in a dialectical manner: I recognize I cannot study Kashmir Śaivism completely devoid of cultural or historical influences, therefore, while embracing my background I will engage in a mutually enriching dialogue with the Kashmir Śaivite texts. I will not allow this study to be one sided either way- instead I will see how the Kashmir Śaivite texts themselves speak to me, absent of critical discourse from either party. Although I cannot (yet) research and translate primary sources of Kashmir Śaivite texts in their original Sanskrit language, I cite many scholars who have read, translated and commented on these texts. Andre Padoux, Sir John Woodroffe, Paul Muller-Ortega, Gavin Flood and Jaideva Singh are a few prominent scholars that I frequently cite. Drawing from sources that examine Kashmir Śaivite texts as whole discourses in themselves, I cite scholars that explore sound in Kashmir Śaivism as actual practitioners would- avoiding outside comparisons or applicable theoretical framework (to the best of their, and my, ability). This will allow me to view and discuss Kashmir Śaivism's own beliefs on sound according to its own discourse in a creative dialogue. It will also allow me to stitch together the weave of Tantric sound throughout its reality.

In order to tease out the nature of the relative dual world of sound, body and liberation as separate entities, although in Kashmir Śaivism reality is fundamentally nondual, I have to categorize, label and make generalizations. Recognizing I am subject to these claims, I myself am trying to not make any revolutionary or controversial arguments on the nature of sound within Kashmir Śaivism. I propose in this paper to explore sound as the medium pervading all layers of existence within Kashmir Śaivism's structure of the cosmos, and that we can recognize a Trika system within each layer, and upon that recognition liberation occurs.

Kashmir Śaivism Historical Background:

Kashmir Śaivism arose during 8th and 9th centuries in South Asia as a social and historical response to, and expansion of, the existing forms of Hinduism⁶. Transcending and including previous Brahmanical traditions and “rather than denying the import of the Veda, Tantrism contrasted itself from it, rejecting some of its elements while preserving, developing, and above all reinterpreting others” while “preserving and reviving that which was most alive in Vedism”.⁷ Kashmir Śaivism flourished for a brief period of time until end of 11th century when the Mughal Muslim invasion eventually forced its revolutionary theology to diminish: “with the subjugation of Kashmir by the Muslims in the eleventh century, Kashmir Śaivism all but died out, leaving only an echo of tradition in the modern times”.⁸ Before this demise, however, Kashmir Śaivism developed and flourished under the philosopher and poet Abhinavagupta. Abhinavagupta was a 10th century sage who wrote the *Tantrāloka* and *Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa* texts. He was a Brahmanic elite who “began to transform extreme tantric ideology into a more respectable religion of the higher castes”.⁹ Abhinavagupta was also aware of non-Indian traditions, and valuing them as well, incorporated the ideas into his integrative discourse.

Briefly mentioned earlier, Kashmir Śaivism is a monistic sect that believes in a Trika structure of the universe- incorporating creation, manifestation and destruction into their cosmological story. Its nondual beliefs

6. Kashmir Śaivism is categorized as a Hindu religion, as messy as a term *Hinduism* may be. *Hinduism*, although applied centuries after the practices and beliefs were established, is a complex system of practices that share common ideologies originating in South Asia. It should be noted that this term is still widely and vaguely defined, and I use it in the most general sense.

7. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p. 36
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8. Flood, Gavin. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996. p. 168

9. *Ibid.* p.161

were challenged and reinforced as they were simultaneously held beside another Tantric sect that promoted dualism. This dualistic sect was called Śaiva Siddhanta, and was the dominant school of Śaiva liturgy. Kashmir Śaivism differed in that it was widely applicable to all castes. According to Flood, “Kashmir Śaivism refers to the development of the Eastern Kaula transmission known as the Trika (‘Threefold’) into a householder religion akin to the Śaiva Siddhanta”.¹⁰

Kashmir Śaivism is different from the Śaiva Siddhanta tradition because it is completely monistic, however the Śaivite Siddhanta theologians wrote commentaries on Tantric texts as well.¹¹ These two schools of Tantra lived side-by side, and eventually the dual Śaiva Siddhanta school spread faster and further than the non-dual Kashmir Śaivite sect after the pressure of Islam and other social factors.

However, before the nondual Śaivism of Kashmir’s downfall Vasugupta (of the same tradition) was first able to transmit the oral tradition of Advaita (nondual) Śaivism into written texts. This literature is generally divided into three parts: the Āgama Sastra, Spanda Sastra, and Pratyabhijna Sastra.¹²

Historically, the Śaiva theory of sound is derived from the linguistic monism of Bhartṛhari. Bhartṛhari’s philosophical development of ancient understandings of Indian language incorporates the Vedas throughout the Tantras. He “metaphysically interpreted the sacred language of revelation as the monistic word Absolute (Śabdabrahman)”.¹³

Bhartṛhari considers the *word* to be an individual-meaning-unit and “bases this concept on the Vedic theory that speech (vak) is a manifestation of the primordial reality. The word-sphota is thus contrasted from the word-sound. Meaning is obtained at a deep level based on the sequence of sounds”.¹⁴ Dating as far back as the ṚgVeda we see the importance and sacredness of sound. The sequence of sounds and the discovery of a “very large number of phonetic symmetries in the first hymn of the ṚgVeda” could not have been humanly conceived

10. Ibid. p.166

11. Flood, Gavin *An Introduction to Hinduism*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996. p.162

12. Singh, Jaideva. “Kśemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. p. 17

13. Lawrence, David Peter. *Rediscovering God . Within Transcendental Argument*. NY: SUNY press, 2001. p. 88.

14. Kak, Subhash and T.R.N. Rao. “On the Science of Consciousness In Ancient India”. 1998, http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_kak-s_sci_con_frameset.htm/.

or deliberately introduced, which then “gives support to the thesis that language captures only some of the symmetries that nature’s intelligence can express”.¹⁵ Language in ancient Hindu texts reveals itself as a work of the divine: it is elegantly and naturalistically simple yet yields deeper meaning.

First originating as one vibration, Bhartṛhari’s theory explains that this *one* thought or one vibration then became two- the masculine and feminine counterparts or origination and manifestation- as a dualistic universe, reality then became a multiplicity of gods and form.

Although Bhartrari’s theory of Vedic sound is legitimately sacred and historically important, Somānanda , a later Tantric philosopher, “encompasses” Bhartṛhari’s thought “by identifying Supreme Speech with Śiva’s creative Śakti”, adding Śakti to the Divine equation and making the theory on language more sexually complete, wholly monistic, and thus more Tantric.¹⁶

Trika structure: ParamaŚiva, Śiva, Śakti

The Trika structure of Kashmir Śaivism is possibly the most important ideology of the Tantric sect. This threefold structure appears in *all* manifestation in the gross, subtle and causal realms. The very first and purest essence of god is referred to as ParamaŚiva. ParamaŚiva, or “ultimate reality”, is sometimes referenced as an “idea” (such as the “idea” of ultimate reality), however, in *Kṣemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition* Jaideva Singh states that, “Ultimate Reality is not a mere ‘idea,’ whatever that may mean, but the Self underlying all reality; the Changeless Principle of all manifestation”.¹⁷ ParamaŚiva, by nature, does not have any applicable external characteristics because of its pure unmanifested nature. It is simply in-comprehensible to human cognition. When scholars do try, though, ParamaŚiva is explained as pure consciousness, completely pure and still, all-pervasive and the source of all being.

15. Kak, Subhash and T.R.N. Rao. “On the Science of Consciousness In Ancient India”. 1998, http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_kak-s_sci_con_frameset.htm/.

16. Lawrence, David Peter. *Rediscovering God . Within Transcendental Argument*. NY: SUNY press, 2001. p. 88-89

17. Singh, Jaideva. *Kṣemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. p.7

Kerry Martin Skora explains the cosmic beginning when ParamaŚiva, all alone as its pure self, made the decision to manifest into creation,

tired of being alone and wanting to transcend himself, or get out of himself, he becomes many, first becoming the male and female in embrace that he resembles and then procreating. The story crosses consciousness and sexuality; the narrative is at once about creation through copulation and about consciousness wanting to know itself and turning back on itself¹⁸

Skora continues exploring Abhinavagupta's description of the beginning of the universe, "when using Śiva-Śakti terminology, the primordial beginning of the cosmos becomes the masculine polar aspect Śiva in perpetual sexual union with the feminine polar aspect Śakti. In other words, the emission, ejaculation even, of the universe begins with a "big bang" or "banging together".¹⁹ Cosmic creation begins from ParamaŚiva through manifested Śiva and Śakti in union. The abstract nature of the Śiva, the first to manifest from ParamaŚiva, is defined;

the term *Śiva* is additionally used to name the absolute consciousness, a reality of superb unboundedness and of incomparable freedom...it is the foundation of being and of all becoming, the intrinsic and eternal truth behind the façade of the ever-changing display of life...it is finally Śiva who is the living and percipient consciousness concealed *in* and *as* all living beings.²⁰

Śiva is the nature or consciousness behind and contained within Śakti, the feminine energy of all manifestation. Śiva cannot be separated from Śakti because Śiva is the very "material" Śakti is made of. To clarify this relationship, Siddha Yoga, the contemporary religion of Kashmir Śaivism, explains, "but simultaneously, in the nondual Śiva and in the later Sakta traditions, the power, or Śakti, of the absolute consciousness is thought of as an intrinsic and inseparable power that is nondifferent from Śiva himself".²¹

In this respect, ParamaŚiva is beyond creation whereas Śiva and Śakti *are* creation in symbolic union of the universe. Śiva is the first to come into evolutionary existence and Śakti follows in an expansive growth of reality. Feuerstein explains in *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*, "from this perspective of evolution, the Shiva principle (shivatattva) is the first emergent within the ultimate Reality [ParamaŚiva]. It contains potentially

18. Skora, Kerry Martin. "Abhinavagupta's Erotic Mysticism: The Reconciliation of Spirit and Flesh". *International Journal of Hindu Studies*. Springer Publisher Netherlands, 2007. p.67

19. Ibid. p. 67

20. Ed. Brooks, Douglas. *Meditation Revolution: A History and Theology of the Siddha Yoga Lineage*. NY: Āgama Press, 1997. p.425

21. Ibid. p.426

all other subsequent principles or categories of existence, but manifests only the aspect of Consciousness without an object".²² Thus, although Śiva is the masculine energy, it is below ParamaŚiva and therefore is limited to the manifest world. Śakti, however, is not subsequently described as below or under Śiva but as in blissful union with Śiva, always nondual, and always in complete union. Śakti and Śiva in this sense are never seen as separate or not unified as one.²³ In this symbolic light, Śiva and Śakti are equal parts of the cosmic union of reality, of ParamaŚiva. ParamaŚiva, Śiva and Śakti, and their respective roles constitute the Trika structure of the universe according to Kashmir Śaivism.

Another Tantric interpretation of the Trika structure is the "Supreme Goddess who transcends and is identical with the Trinity (Trika)" as described by Abhinavagupta himself in the *Para-trisika-Vivarana*.²⁴ (The three Śaktis referred to in this triad are knowledge (*jñana*), action (*kriya*) and will (*iccha*) also referred to a *para*, *parapara*, and *apara*. Different interpretations of the Trika simply support the multidimensional and interconnectedness ideologies of Tantric monism-each represent the same although different manifestations.

I will specifically look at how sound represents the Trika structure of ParamaŚiva, Śiva and Śakti in the basic levels of the tattvas, or layers of manifestation. So, what is the essence of sound on the very first level of creation? Śiva, in his act of expansion by means of Śakti, "speaks" the universe into existence. According to Abhinavagupta's student Kśemaraja, in the Bhartṛhari grammarian school of philosophy, "when Śiva opens his eyes the cosmos is manifested as an appearance of him, and furthermore this manifestation is identified with levels of sound or speech (*vać*). The cosmos is divine speech and the entire circle of powers that comprises the cosmos can be understood to be Śiva's voice".²⁵

Kśemaraja then describes Śakti's role with respect to speech in the "graduated hierarchy" of pure to impure cosmos. He states the Goddess Supreme is speech itself as well as complete subjectivity and is represented in the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet; "the Goddess gives birth, as it were, to the cosmos as the

22. Feuerstrin Georg. *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1998. p. 77

23. Ibid. p.77

24. Singh, Jaideva. *Parātrīśika-Vivarāṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1988. p. xiii

25. Flood, Gavin. *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion*. NY: I.B. Tauris, 2006. p. 151

26. Ibid. p. 152

circle of powers, which is envisaged as the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet”.²⁶ He then goes on to describe her hierarchical nature; “she is pregnant with complete circle of powers (*Śaktiśakra*) arose form (comprises the letters) from a to ksa. She therefore manifests the levels of (limited) subjectivity through the gradual stages of (sound, namely)”.²⁷ Each sound in the order of the Sanskrit alphabet is a graduated level of existence of Śakti. The first letter “a” is the most pure and the last “ksa” is the least pure, however it is still represents Śakti. Sound is carried first from the Absolute through Śiva’s voice, remaining pure and causal, and then into manifestation as Śakti, represented by subtle sound and following by gross speech itself.

The process of sound moving through the natural cosmic forces (ParamaŚiva, Śiva and Śakti) is the universe’s expansion and retraction. We have explored the initial expansion of the universe, but how does sound work and complement the process by reflection or re-absorption back into the absolute? The opening of (or expansion) and closing (or contracting) of universal sound, with the right awareness, will aid in one’s liberation. First, attaining absolute awareness is identifying with Śiva as pure consciousness (called I-ness) in addition to secondly realizing the body and everything else in subjective awareness as Śakti, including sound. Reality therefore is an expansion of one’s own consciousness.²⁸ Because in Kashmir Śaivism language *is* a manifestation of the divine, one can *use* language to understand the divine. Realization is already contained within sound. This is different than other traditions who claim that any explanation or discourse on the divine cannot be sufficient or a means *to* the divine. Once the identifications take place and language is utilized, one can mold their reality to mimic the Trika structure, and return to a nondual awareness of ParamaŚiva, or in layman’s terms, become liberated.

At this point I would like to take a moment to lighten up my analysis of the Trika structure. The very absolute, mysterious and causal nature of ParamaŚiva can never be fully articulated, and thus one needs to recognize the “play” of creation when trying to produce discourse. Some aspects of the Trika structure are sometimes almost completely paradoxical. Certain concepts are opposites as well as exact reflections of

27. Flood, Gavin. *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion*. NY: I.B. Tauris, 2006.. p. 152

28. Ibid.

themselves at the same time (thanks to the non-dual nature of reality). For example, since the universe is monistic, *ignorance* itself and *becoming aware of ignorance* (or wisdom) are both illusory: “Lord Śiva enjoys the seeming limited aspect of ignorance because He knows that ignorance is not, in the real sense, ignorance at all. He enjoys that. So you cannot recognize Him in only one way. At the very moment you recognize Him in one way you will recognize Him in the other way as well”.²⁹ Therefore because of the reflective and seemingly polar nature of Śiva, true recognition is more difficult than perceived, but once mastered, “one is able to recognize everything at will”, an experience of nonduality.³⁰ According to Hughes in his introduction of *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo* the very essence of manifestation is just “for the fun of it”. He states, “it [the cosmic universe] is a world created by the Lord in play, for the fun of it. In creating this world God loses Himself in the world just for the joy and excitement of finding Himself. In actuality we are that Lord” and the path is, therefore “a journey of rediscovery filled with joy and excitement”.³¹ How does one tease apart the paradoxical nature of Śiva? In one sense Śiva, the Lord, has no desire or will due to its infinite and pure awareness. On the other hand, Śiva does have a “will” to generate into manifestation, and “wants” and “enjoys” his play. These two underlying metaphysical issues seem to both be found at the heart of Kashmir Śaivite philosophy. Possibly there is no resolution to the deeper generative origins of the universe- it is inevitable and necessary for one to start with the beginnings of illusion and manifestation to then be able to transcend. The Kashmir Śaivite belief of Śiva is intentionally paradoxical, maybe to ultimately invoke causal awareness after all.

In fact, to reiterate the playfulness of the Kashmir Śaivite attitude toward the Trika process- of recognizing the union of Śiva and Śakti within as ParamaŚiva- is an experience of bliss and love. Gavin Flood explains this union: “the essential cosmic body beyond manifestation is the union of Śiva and Śakti, of light and

29. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p. 27

30. Rastogi, Navjivan. “The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir” Vol. 1. Delhi: Motilal Nanarsidass Publishers. p. 126

31. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.20

awareness, from the bliss of whose union the manifest cosmic body is produced”.³² The essential “cosmic body” Flood refers to is a six-fold model of unoriginated sound (*anāhata*) of ParamaŚiva as a manifested body of the universe whose form is sound (*adhvanirupa*), Śiva and Śakti. This body is the culmination of the group of sounds (*Śabdabrama*) as- 1) the supreme (*para*), 2) the subtle (*sukhma*) and 3) the gross (*sthula*). By referring to the cosmic body “we are thereby speaking of the six-fold way; a homology between the microcosm of the human body, felt as bliss, and the macrocosm of the universe”.³³ I will later explore the blissful state of the body as a microcosm of this Trika structure.

Tattvas

The “cosmic body” of sound manifests on all levels of reality, and one interpretation or division of these levels are the Kashmir Śaivite tattvas. Each level, or tattva, corresponds to a sound expression called a mantra. Kashmir Śaivism’s cosmos “comprises mantra and tattva which are the signifier and signified, in so far as mantra is the sound expression of a level of the cosmos comprising tattvas... These tattvas, which are deities and levels of the cosmos, correspond to mantras... a rich equation can therefore be made between tattva, mantra and devata”.³⁴ Therefore each mantra represents the sound of each level of existence as well as a corresponding deity.

It is no secret that Hinduism has a pantheon of deities- sometimes referred to as monistic polytheism- of which Kashmir Śaivism is no exception: each of its deities is simultaneously divine, individual but however remains as just one of many manifested representations of the absolute. This interconnection of multiple aspects of every deity and tattva is held together by the sound of a mantra, or prayer- “the mantra is the body of the deity and also a level of the cosmos equated with tattva”.³⁵

These tattvas within Kashmir Śaivism are divided into thirty-six levels of existence originating with ParamaŚiva and ending with the earth element. The Śaiva school of Kashmir added 11 tattvas to the preexisting

32. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p. 87

33. Ibid. p.107

34. Ibid. p. 109

35. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.110

25 of the Samkhya tradition, making their version the self-proclaimed complete unfolding and collapsing of the universe.³⁶ Each tattva is a necessary part of the larger whole of creation, corresponding with a particular vibration, mantra, and purpose. The 36 tattvas (highlighted are those associated with sound):

Tattva/ Characteristic/ Sanskrit term	/Categories
36 Śiva	cit (36-35 beyond rest)
35 Śakti	ānanda (35-32 sphere of Śakti)
34 SadaŚiva	iccha (will) (34-32 rest)
33 Isvara	jñana
32 Suddhavidya	kriya (action)
31 Illusion	māyā: (31-25 illusion)
	supreme
	subtle
	gross
30 force	kala (30-25 kala, force)
29 knowledge	
28 attachment	raga
27 necessity	niyati
26 time	kala
25 individual	purusa
24 matter	Prakṛti (24-2 sphere of Prakṛti, foundation)
23 intelligence	buddhi (23-21 interior faculties, antah-karana)
22 ego	ahamkara
21 mind	manas
20 hearing	srotra (20-16 faculties of knowledge)
19 touching	tvaç
18 seeing	caksus
17 tasting	rasana
16 smelling	ghrana
15 speaking	vaç (15-11 faculties of action)
14 grasping	pani
13 excreting	payu
12 procreating	upastha
11 walking	pada
10 sound	Śabda (10-6 subtle elements)
9 touch	sparsa
8 form	rupa
7 taste	rasa
6 smell	gandha
5 space	akasa (5-1 gross elements)
4 air	vayu
3 fire	tejas
2 water	jala
1 earth	prthivi (kala of nivṛtti, inaction)

True recognition of the tattvas means seeing them as freedom and restriction: “by revealing all levels of existence, one can become *liberated*, however only by recognizing that the tattvas are *bondages* of action”, and only when this recognition occurs can the practitioner realize and embody the liberating structure of the unfolding universe. Thus, the tattvas are “the cause of both bondage and liberation in one sense, although the ultimate cause is Śiva’s grace” meaning that the core of the tattvas are Śiva, although they then become impure forms of contraction, and once realizing those impure levels are actually pure within, freedom from them is attained.³⁷ Moving from ParamaŚiva down to the gross earth is a process of concealment and bondage- Śiva has essentially bound himself to unpure forms of manifestation. On the ascent back up, traversing from the earth up to ParamaŚiva, is the process of evolution or liberation. Śakti revealing herself as Śiva (and ultimately ParamaŚiva) is the path to liberation of the Self. The all-pervasive nature of the tattvas, once recognized, inhibits self awareness of embodied reality. Somanada in the Krama Tantrism of Kashmir “was of the opinion that the entire stretch of the category kingdom encompassing the thirty-six categories is, in essence, an unfoldment of the Śakti suggesting that the godly freedom remains inevitably inherent even in the world of logical constructions”.³⁸

It is said that the recognition of the self through the tattvas with ParamaŚiva, also called I-consciousness, is aided by divine sound. Recognition of self with ParamaŚiva is the full experience of the thirty-six tattvas at once called nonduality, where “complete I-Consciousness (purnahanta) is filled with sounds, all words, all sentences. Everything exists in that complete I-Consciousness. Hence, ParamaŚiva is “expanded in the cycle of thirty-six tattvas, elements”. Kṣemaraja explains that sound as mantra in nonduality “digests these thirty-six elements in its body (sauh)”.³⁹ This is the supreme mantra, sometimes called the heart mantra, as opposed to the other creative or destructive mantras.

36. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.110

37. Ibid. p. 127, my italics

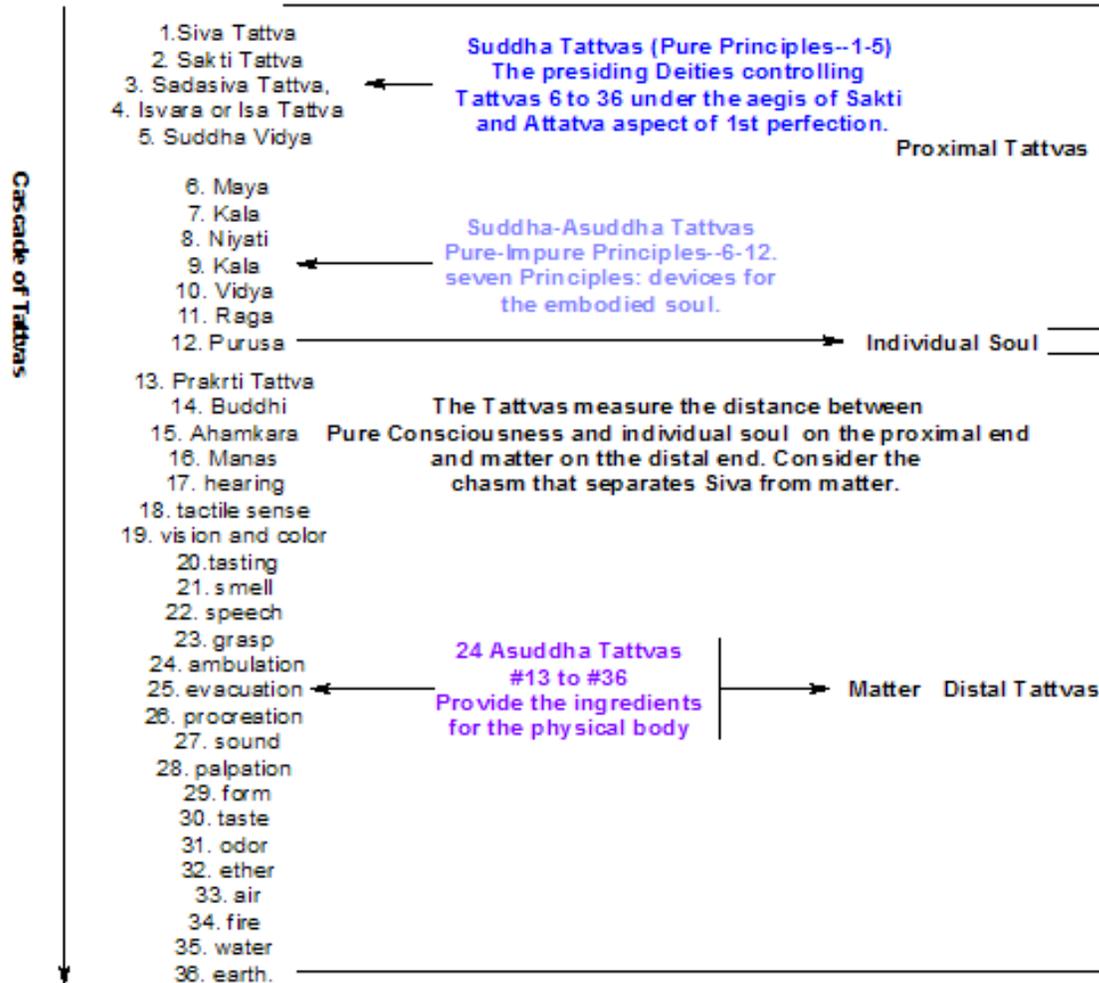
38. Rastogi, Navjivan. *The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir* Vol. 1. Delhi: Motilal Nanarsidass Publishers p. 126).

39. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p. 59

Another Diagram of the 36 Tattvas

Tattvas (building blocks) proceed from Sakti
 First category is Consciousness and Deities
 Second category offers the devices for the soul to function
 in its embodied form;
 Third category offers the ingredients for the physical nature of the body.

Attatva (Not THAT) 1st perfection
 acts through Sakti



The supreme mantra, or Śabda-Brahman, shows how to “wind up, [and] how to discard, these thirty-six elements and, in the end, rest in the element of Śiva”.⁴⁰ Using the supreme mantra, one can attain one-ness out of the multitude of layered existence. The unity of all the tattvas is ParamaŚiva, which is the foundation to all creation’s multiplicity. To understand the core of the tattvas one must experience ultimate sound, Śabda-Brahman.

40. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.67

This is done by reciting mantras: a common Kashmir Śaivism mantra that represents the Trika is “sauh”: “ in the realm of the supreme mantra sauh, if you go into the depth of the thirty-one elements from prithivi (earth) to māyā you will find that existence (sat) is the reality of these elements. All these elements are existing eternally”.⁴¹ Mantras such as “sauh” can embody all layers of God, and I will explore mantras such as “sauh” later in the section on speech.

I will now explore within the various levels of the tattvas in relation to sound, starting with the more subtle and working my way down to the most gross, exploring sound firstly as deities, then as speech, as the human body, and finally as textual script and Devanagari letters. From Śiva each level progresses as more impure forms build from the previous- sound remains as the interconnecting tool filtering through all.

Deities: Śakti, Kālī, Mātrikā Goddesses

The deities within Tantra as representations of sound are symbolic intermediaries between the causal absolute and manifest speech in the physical world. Each realm is both a sound and a reality, corresponding to the deities (devata), and illustrated by the tattvas. Mantras are said to be the body of the deities; Kṣemaraja states, “the consciousness of the devotee truly is the mantra which is not merely a combination of manifest letters” but is metaphysically a union with both the mantra and the deity.⁴² Mantra is considered where the subtle body of the deity resides: “the combination of Shiva, Shakti and the soul is the Mantra”.⁴³

In addition, “mantra is identical with its deity, and through concentrating on its form at the level of gross speech, one can merge with this deity at a higher level”.⁴² Mantras allow a practitioner to embody sound to unite with the worshipped deity. When this happens, the manifest body of the practitioner is said to merge with the essential cosmic body of the absolute. The action of the essential cosmic body emanating the manifest cosmic body is 1) “another expression of the function performed by the tattvas” and 2) “represented by

41. Ibid. p.67 Hughes reports thirty-one tattvas, whereas other Kashmir Śaivism scholars report thirty six, but in breaking up the layers slight fluctuation is common among different schools. As we will see later on, the exact number of characters in the Devanagari script fluctuates as well.

42. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.42

43. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātrikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980. p.9-10

the wheel of the eight mothers (Māṭṛikā śakra)”.⁴³ Within Tantra deities are almost always female, and the Matrācakra or Māṭṛikās are the female goddesses that represent divine sound. The term Māṭṛikā refers to one of the earliest forms of the supreme creator who was called the mother (Mātrī). The ‘ka’ denotes a pictorial version of her, a common grammarian rule in Sanskrit texts.⁴⁴

SaptaMāṭṛikā Goddesses “Shiva (leftmost) with the Māṭṛikās: (from left) Brahmani, Maheshvari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Indrani, Chamunda. British Museum, Room 33: Asia. From central India, 10th century AD.”



It is said that roughly 4000 B.C. both Āgamic (Tantric) and Nigamic (Vedic) thought flourished which promoted the SaptaMāṭṛikās (another name for the Māṭṛikās) as Goddesses to be worshipped from the evolution of the alphabet. Their number is determined by the structure of the alphabet: the seven groups are the phoetic sounds (vowels) applied to the (Ka), (Cha), (Ta-retroflex), (ta), (Pa), (Ya) and (Ksa) groups.⁴⁵ In the graphic below we can see the arranged letters, however the last two lines (of “Sa” and “Ha”) are combined into the “Ksa” when referring to the SaptaMāṭṛikās.

44. Flood, Gavin D. “Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism”. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.216

45. Ibid. p.171

Devanagari Letters In Arranged Order

Vowels

अ^a आ^ā इⁱ ई^ī उ^u ऊ^ū ऋ^{r̥} ॠ^{r̄}
 ऌ^{l̥} ए^e ऐ^{ai} ओ^o औ^{au}

ṁ (anusvāra) ḥ (visarga)

Consonants

Gutturals:	क ka	ख kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ ṅa
Palatals:	च ca	छ cha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ ña
Cerebrals:	ट ṭa	ठ ṭha	ड ḍa	ढ ḍha	ण ṇa
Dentals:	त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na
Labials:	प pa	फ pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma
Semivowels:	य ya	र ra	ल la	व va	
Sibilants:	श śa	ष ṣa	स sa		
Aspirate:	ह ha				

s = ' (avagraha) - the apostrophe

Another popular female deity in Hinduism is Kālī. Although Kālī has many different interpretations throughout India, in Kashmir Śaivism she, like Śakti, is inseparable from Śiva, and acts as the destroyer. Kālī is described as residing in the cremation ground because her worldly objects are reduced to ashes. She “is black in colour which means that all contradictions like black and white, cold and heat, possible and impossible, birth and death, merge at her feet, and all distinctions disappear” .⁴⁶ She exists in all inanimate objects, represented by her standing on a corpse. In addition, “she wears a necklace of letters which are no other than the Mātṛikā Śaktis, which constitute the universe and give it shape”.⁴⁷ Incorporating earlier goddesses of sound, this description of Kālī depicts her garland of “letters” around her neck as the Mātṛikā goddesses.

46. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātṛikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.

47. See Devanagari alphabet. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātṛikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.p 9

Goddess Kālī



Kālī’s action is to “destroy” sound, or re-absorb the gross realm of sound back into the subtle and causal absolute. The universal sound of Kālī’s destruction in the universe is Śabda-Brahman, or supreme sound. Sound on the tattva of the Deities manifests as Śabda-Brahman, which pervades all manifestation: Avalon (Woodroffe) describes Kālī’s action as the representation of the permanent connection between vac (speech) and Śakti:

The universe is said to be composed of letters...the fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet which are denoted by the garland of severed human heads which the naked Mother, Kālī, dark like a threatening rain cloud, wears as she stands amidst bones and carrion beasts and birds in the burning-ground on the white corpse-like body of Śiva. For it is She who ‘slaughters’-that is, withdraws all speech and its objects into Herself at the time of the dissolution of all things⁵⁰

48. Kumar, Pushperndra. *Śakti and Her Episodes*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1981. p.4

49. Ibid. p. 4

50. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). *The Serpent Power*. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 1919. p.100

Kālī is the secondary process of creation and re-absorption of cosmic sound. Firstly, in the Trika process of sound, the Mātṛikā , or the feminine Śakti which represents the deified version of sound, originates from the subtle realm of kuṇḍalinī energy. Then connecting to the gross realm of speech, sound is manifested in reality. According to Avalon (Woodroffe) a Mātṛikā is first manifested by Śakti through knowledge (jñana) and is called madhyama-vak. Śakti's first action produces subtle letters of Mātṛikā , and her second action then produces actual audible words. Thirdly, as Śakti, Kālī *returns* the sound from gross into subtle and causal forms again. Therefore, Kālī, the Mother, is the symbol of complete cycle of sound: “these letters are the Garland of the Mother issuing from Her in Her form as Kuṇḍalinī -Śakti (potential energy), and absorbed by Her in the Kuṇḍalinī -yoga”.⁵¹

Kālī completes the Trika cycle of absolute nonduality, creation, and re-absorption. Is it a coincidence that a feminine deity completes the cycle from 1) ParamaŚiva leaping into 2) Śiva consciousness then manifesting as 3) Śakti through the tattvas, then 4) back up to Śiva and finally 5) as ParamaŚiva again?⁵² The descent down is guided by and originates from a masculine Śiva force, and the re-absorption of reality is guided by the feminine counterpart, Kālī, or the Mātṛikās (as Śakti). Kashmir Śaivism always accounts for and values both the masculine and feminine principles in the universe- as we have seen both are given responsibility to embody and transform divine sound.

Speech, Vać, Mantras, Śabda, Pada

Speech, as the transcending link from non-duality down into the subtle and gross realities, is called Śabda-Brahman and takes four identities, as we will explore. The earliest historical Tantric roots of sound trace back to the Brahmanical ṚgVeda and speak of the divine nature of speech: *ṚgVeda* (1.164.45) describes that speech and its cognition is of four kinds.

51. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). *The Serpent Power*. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 1919. p.102

52. Kumar, Pushperndra. *Śakti and Her Episodes*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1981.

The names of these kinds of speech are described by Bhartṛhari to be,

vaikharī, madhyama, paśyanti, and para. Vaikharī represents gross sound; madhyama is the level of mental images; paśyanti represents that gestalt or undifferentiated whole that sounds emerge from in the process of speaking and into which they merge in the process of hearing; para is the unmanifest sound that resides in one's self or universal consciousness.⁵³

Later Tantra added a fifth nature of speech, making the fivefold nature of speech para, suksma, paśyanti, madhyama, vaikharī; each corresponding to the five basic levels of awareness to help reveal the nature of reality, and each “represent a gradual descent (or ascent) from the undifferentiated, transcendental level to the differentiated, gross level”.⁵⁴ The most causal sound is Para, the sound representing nonduality. Rastogi in his *Krama Tantrism of Kashmir* demonstrates that Para is the “fundamental fulcrum” of the other successions of speech by referencing Somānanda : “hence, while dealing with the various stages of speech he [Somānanda] proclaimed that there was no such form of speech as was not present in Śiva, a name of the Mother, marking the Para, or transcendental stage”.⁵⁵ Speech as Para pervades all existence, and is at the core Śiva. Para, or Śabda, by itself, as we have seen, is a causal state called Śabda-Brahman. Śabda-Brahman “(unmanifest sound) is the principle of sound as such (Nada-matra), that is undifferentiated sound, not specialized in the form of letters, but which is, through creative activity, the cause of manifested Śabda and Artha”.⁵⁶ Śabda Brahman is the “kinetic ideating aspect” of supreme consciousness. Avalon (Woodroffe) explains this aspect of sound as stated in the Hatha-yoga-pradīpikā, “whatever is heard in the form of sound is Śakti. The absorbed state (Laya) of the Tattvas (evolutes of Prakṛti) is that in which no form exists...the soundless is called Para-brahman”.⁵⁷

53. Kak, Subhash and T.R.N. Rao. *On the Science of Consciousness In Ancient India*. 1998.
http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_kak-s_sci_con_frameset.htm

Bhairarti, (c 450 AD) in his *Vākyapadiya*

54. Singh, Jaideva. *Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1988 p. xv

55. Rastogi, Navjivan. “The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir” Vol. 1. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Rastogi p.125, Somānanda's commentary of the *Tattvagarbha*

56. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). *The Serpent Power*. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 1919. p. 99

57. Ibid. p. 99-100

Now that we have defined sound as casual Śiva, what step would Śabda-Brahman then take through the path of manifestation? From the state of Śabda-Brahman the Trika structure of sound creation continues: we see this next step of manifestation as Śakti follow the descent of the tattvas, grounded by the ever-present Śabda-Brahman, and move forward with two forces: śabda (subject) and artha (object).

Śabda along with mental vibrations of cognition move through one's vocal cords and produce sound. artha, then, is the objective world, including the mental processes of the mind. Sound moves from subject to object in its formation of speech- mimicking the process of the whole of creation. Avalon (Woodroffe) reiterates that both of these processes work as "conscious activity" and thus both are identical to vać (word or speech) in the gross realm.⁵⁸ They are the last two layers of creation of speech, which have to filter through individual consciousness to form. This brings the processes of the macrocosmic universe right to the individual's body and consciousness, allowing for some aspect of control and responsibility.

On an individual scale recognition of this divine transcendence of Śabda-Brahama, as we have previously explored, invokes liberation. Widely pervasive sound flows freely through form as God. But how does one "recognize" sound as this powerful force? The importance of mantras in Kashmir Śaivism (and Hinduism in general) is the "fundamental component of any spiritual or textual adventure as it stands for the indeterminate Mātrī of the world known as para vak. The same is also identified with the principle of supreme agency consisting in the I-consciousness or self-experience that enlivens the mantra".⁵⁹ Consciousness infused in a spoken mantra is but one essential aspect of Tantra as explained by Mahesvarānanda . The first of these essentials is the idea of worldly multiplicity (the tattvas) in addition to sensuous objects, such as speech. All of these notions were once thought to be "binding, [however it] turns out to be the unfailing means of self-realization".⁶⁰ Yes, tattvas, senses and speech become binding forces as ParamaŚiva de-volutes, however it is these very binds that force one to recognize the true nature of creation, and therefore once identified they can be

58. Ibid. He references Yogainihridaya-Tantra, Samketa I. and Svarupa-vyakhya of the "Hymn to Kālī" (Karpuradi-Stotra).

59. Rastogi, Navjivan. *The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir* Vol. 1. Delhi: Motilal Nanarsidass Publishers. p. 40

60. Ibid. p.39. In Gathas 2, 69.He specifically writes about Mahartha-manjari (Mahartha Tantra).

transcended to liberation.

Male Female Body

The next unfolding of manifestation into the gross realm I will explore is the duality of male and female bodies. The body in general plays a vital role in creating sound and liberation, which I will explore later by focusing on the individual body (of both sexes) as a vessel of kuṇḍalinī energy and divine vibration. Although both sexes can experience kuṇḍalinī rising and the vibrational power of sound, Kashmir Śaivism does distinguish between male and female roles with respect to speech. Women are the gross realm representations of Śakti, and men are symbols of Śiva.⁶¹ For example, a common belief, according to Flood, is that “the [male] guru, a vertical symbolic form of the essential cosmic body, transmits power to the [female] yogini or duti, and through copulation with her this power is transmitted to men. Women are therefore regarded as the channels of esoteric power and knowledge”.⁶² Women’s wombs, or *yonis*, are Śakti “in the form of yoni (female organ)...[which] indicates the wholeness (purnata) of the nara-bhava or phenomenal reality which includes within itself...(divinities like) Mantra, mantramahesvara down to immobile beings”.⁶³ Within Tantra the female body as female Śakti energy is seen as all created manifestations, Mantras not excluded.

Channeling this power of Śakti and identifying with the Transcendent has a characteristic of sexual polarity: “the female pole being that of energy-and acting through the expansion of energy, man and the universe being equally pervaded by this energy which gives them life and sustenance” is what creates the sexual opposite, yet inseparable, universal energies.⁶⁴ The purpose of combining these two forces is that “the union of

61. The debate within Tantra regarding women as tools to be used for Śakti by men or as equal counterparts in the journey to liberation remains debated. Most, if not all, of the discourse recorded and transcribed was written by men, for literate men. Therefore, my whole paper is weighted toward male texts and the patriarchal tradition of Kashmir Śaivism. Women’s discourse would possibly be art, poetry, etc, in which I knowingly do not give enough attention to in this paper, but may explore and address in future KS studies.

62. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.291

63. Singh, Jaideva. *Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Unlimited, 1988.p. 205

64. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p. 41

the male principle and the female principle is the very core which has been thought as the object of worship” in Tantra, and the union, when embodied, one feels “inherent and who is full of the mass of bliss”.⁶⁵

Female bodies are seen as representations of Śakti, or of the same energy that which forms sound, and the male bodies are representations of Śiva, that which is the core of all sound and manifestation. Although these ideas are present in other Indian philosophies, enacting them in physical ritual is unique to the left hand path of Tantrism, and its symbolic union is characteristic of the right hand path.

Individual Body, Ākṛas, Kuṇḁalīnī

Manifestation of sacred sound in Kashmir Śaivism interestingly and inevitably works through the human body. In *The Tantric Body: The Secret Tradition of Hindu Religion* Flood states, “the body is the meeting point or mediation between the universal and the particular, in that it enacts the particularity of revelation, of text, and at the same time enacts the proclaimed universality of the cosmic structure revealed in the texts”.⁶⁶ Flood touches on several key points: the body is 1) the *meeting place* of the universal and particular, and 2) is the vehicle that *enacts* the *universal* structure as well as 3) *enacts* the *particular* revelation. Universal beliefs are those like the Trika structure mentioned earlier, and particular beliefs are the subjective textual revelation within Kashmir Śaivism. The body as an enactor of the Trika structure, says Kṣemaraja, “contains all the tattvas and so is maximally differentiated, yet is also inclusive of the original reality of ParamaŚiva. The body therefore contains the potential for transformation because of this diffusion and inclusion”.⁶⁷ Transformation is possible and is necessary in the body because the body contains and resembles the structure of the cosmos; “the body is therefore made to correspond to the cosmic bodies...the structure of the body recapitulates the structure of the manifest cosmic body”.⁶⁸ The cosmic body allows for transformation (of the particular body) due to polarity of the structural “hierarchy”, thus, “these contexts [ontological, cosmological and personal] are united in the idea

65. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p. 205

66. Flood, Gavin D. “Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism”. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993.p. 131

67. Ibid. p.82

68. Ibid. p.189

of the body, for the polarity exists within and between bodies, within the body of supreme consciousness". He then adds that polarity of differentiation is within the human body as well as universal bodies, thus reiterating the macro/microcosmic nature of Kashmir Śaivism: "the universe and within the worlds of the cosmological hierarchy are also bodies".⁶⁹

Creation and identification of the divine body as this "hierarchical cosmos" within a body is best performed through the process of speaking mantras. In speaking mantras in ritual, such as the liturgy of the Tabtraprakriya, "the adept infuses his body with the mantras of the deities who are expressions of himself as ParamaŚiva, and whom he will worship in the transcendent mandala which is internalized through visualization and identified with the thirty six tattvas".⁷⁰ This visualization projects the Trika structure of the thirty six tattvas, which run along the axis of the body, corresponding to the čakras and representing three goddesses of the para (supreme), parapara (supreme-non-supreme), and apara (non-supreme) and the fourth power of the supreme consciousness. This division and identification of the goddesses within is just another way the Trika structure is visualized in the body.

The powerful force of energy that drives transformation and represents tattvas in the body is kuṇḍalinī energy. Kuṇḍalinī energy within the body resides as "Śiva at crown of head and Śakti at the feet, [which is the] the coiled power of the Kuṇḍalinī "; integrating both the masculine and the feminine along the spine. Kuṇḍalinī energy manifests in the body beginning with the first čakra, or energy center, located at the base of the spine, and moves upward. It is said that the first time this energy (as feminine "She") "sees", she is Parama-Kala, the mother-form, through supreme speech (paravak) .⁷¹ Kuṇḍalinī energy, as the bodily manifestation of paravak, or para, represented in each čakra as a seed, is feminine in nature, and corresponds with a sound, or letter in the

69. Ibid. p.82-83

70. Flood, Gavin D. "Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism". CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p. 275-6

71. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). "The Serpent Power". NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 1919 p.81

Sanskrit language. Avalon (Woodroffe) describes this cross-representation of Śabda-Brahman, or sound:

in the sexual symbolism of the Sakta-Tantras... which seed, ripening in the womb of Prakṛti [feminine energy], issued as Kuṇḍalinī in the form of the letters (Aksara). Kuṇḍalinī as MahaMātrikā -sundari has fifty-one coils, which are the Mātrikās or subtle forms of the gross letters or Varna which is the Vaikharī form of the Śabda at the centers.⁷²

The Mātrikās, as we have explored as goddesses of letters, in this sense are the subtle and causal forms of the letters contained within the śakras. Also in this form, the letters are first Śabda-Brahman, and then once passed through the throat śakra as speech they become their gross form. Therefore, Consciousness itself is soundless and is an undifferentiated movement, and then conversely becomes differentiated movement through speech.⁷³

The seven śakras, starting at the base, are mūlādhāra, svādhishthāna, manipuraka, anantam (or anāhata), viśuddhī, ajña and sahasrāra. Each śakra is represented by a lotus leaf, but the number of petals varies between each śakra. The numbers are 4, 6, 10, 12, 16 and 2, respectively, which equal 50 when added, and each lotus leaf is assigned a Devanagari character. It is said that the letters exist only in the śakras as subtle entities, not gross agents that are physically present.⁷⁴

The particular order of the letters is due to the viśuddha śakra being the first in the order of creation, and correspondingly it is the first vowels of the alphabet. Following is the sequence of the alphabet with respect to the order the elements manifested: Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth. Ether was first, and is assigned to the viśuddha, the throat śakra. “Ha” and “Ksa” are saved for the Ajña, the very first of manifestation (Brahmabijas), which is the crown śakra.⁷⁵ When the letters of each group are articulated the right way, each śakra is emphasized and vibrates through the process of speech. Aryan explains the sonar awakening of kuṇḍalinī, “just as the melody issues from the flute when the appropriate chords are struck, similarly the Supreme Mother symbolized by the Kuṇḍalinī awakens with a burst of harmony when the cords of the letters (Varnas) are stuck in order. This way, once the Kuṇḍalinī Shakti is roused, it is easy to attain Siddhi

72. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). “The Serpent Power”. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. p.100-101

73. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). “The Serpent Power”. NY: Dover Publications, Inc p. 95

74. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātrikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.

75. Ibid. p.24

(spiritual achievement)”.⁷⁶ Kuṇḍalinī as Śabda-Brahman in the human body is composed of the fifty letters of Devanagari (which we will explore later) “or sound-powers” of evolving consciousness, like that of the seven states of cosmic development: Śakti, dhvani, nada, nirodhika, ardhenu, and bindu.⁷⁴ Each of these stages of transformation or development in the body corresponds with a particular sound and śakra.

The viśuddha throat śakra is the main center in the body that corresponds with sound, the fifth of seven śakras in the body, and lies where the neck meets the breast bone. The organ associated with the throat śakra is the tongue, which is one of five sense organs in Kashmir Śaivism. The throat śakra in the body produces two phenomena- one of perception (taste) and one of action (speech).⁷⁵ In the action of speech there are two “piercing” sounds associated with Śabda-Brahman within the human body. The first piercing is mantra-vedha, which is done for the benefit of oneself, and is

that piercing where the yogi hears the sound of a mantra...in this case, when prāṇa-kuṇḍalinī rises, it takes the form of mantra, and the yogi hears a mantra such as om, Śiva, aham, or so’ham...his breath becomes full of bliss, ecstasy, and joy. By the power of complete I-Consciousness, this blissful breath penetrates all the śakras from mūlādhāra [the first] to bhru-madhya or sahasrardha [the last].⁷⁶

The second kind of piercing nada-vedha. This is when the yogi is doing something solely for the benefit of mankind: “here, when the blissful force of breath touches mūlādhāra śakra, this breath is transformed into nada [sound]” and then moves outward into the world.⁷⁷

Simply *speaking* a mantra is not enough to inhibit the awakening of one’s kuṇḍalinī energy. Just like the practice of Tantra is meditation (imagination) and action, a mantra only really takes effect when the mere sound from the lips is accompanied by an idea through knowledge. This gives the mantra meaning. Embodiment and knowledge are not fruitless on their own, but are much less effective. Knowledge and concentration on the varnas (letters) as Śiva and Śakti unites the varna “with the Devata, which is one with the Mantra”.⁷⁸ After this

76. Ibid. p. 24

77. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). “The Serpent Power”. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. p. 168

78. Hughes, John. “Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.65

knowledge is infused into mantra Aryan explains, “through the power of the rising Shakti, identified with each of the Centres, Tattvas, and Māṭṛikā Shaktis, they cease to bind, until passing through all he attains Samādhi”.⁷⁹

Once the attainment of siddhi though rousing the kuṇḍalinī (in the order of the varnas and éakras), and knowledge and mantra inhibit Samādhi, a yogi must go forth into action in the world. The connection of these experiences with the world is still through the body, and after attainment the body then becomes a pure vessel constantly enacting the Trika structure. The practitioner goes forth, sometimes with little effort, reenacting ParamaŚiva, Śiva and Śakti, or absolute awareness, creation and destruction: “the yogi who...has realized his identity with Śiva, constantly worships him by that very awareness...[he] performs his religious observance (vrata) through just acting in the body. This itself is the supreme worship (parapuja) which is identical with the eternal awareness (vimarśa)”.⁸⁰ Therefore the yogi who has realized his true essence acts in supreme worship, and represents purification and destruction demonstrates “the purification of the body which is to say the realization that it is co-extensive with the essential and manifest cosmic bodies...this is also the destruction the body in so far as all limitation and individuality has been eradicated”.⁸¹

As we have seen, kuṇḍalinī energy is the means of awakening each éakra in the body; each éakra is identified as a tattva in the Trika structure, as a deity, as a unique sound and as a set of lotus leafs of varnas, or letters of the Devanagari alphabet- of which this whole process is driven and guided by divine sound.

Devanagari alphabet

We will now see how kuṇḍalinī, manifested in the body as Śabda-Brahman, is the life-force of mantras- making them and the characters that compose them divine in themselves. Mantras are ancient spoken words or phrases in Sanskrit that invoke the gods due to their divine nature. We will explore how the individual characters that make up the words of the mantras are divine, how a practitioner can embody them, and how they provoke liberation.

79. Ibid. p. 111

80. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.111

81. Ibid. p. 24

Kuṇḍalinī as Śabda-Brahman pervades mantras: mantras therefore are “supposed to be the manifestations of kula kuṇḍalinī , which is a name for the Śabda Brahman or Saguna Brahman in individual bodies... the substance of all Mantras, being manifestation of Kuṇḍalinī , is consciousness (cit), manifesting as letters and words”.⁸² However, for consciousness to manifest all the way down as gross letters, it first needs to move through the subtle energy centers in the body; the śakras being the intermediary link.⁸³ Through the śakras the ascending movement of kuṇḍalinī energy then, “uttered by the mouth appears as Vaikharī in the form of spoken letters which are the gross aspect of the sound in the Śakras themselves”.⁸⁴ Therefore mantras are gross *representations* of the śakras.

The mantra’s letters (as subtle energies) are within the śakras, and when one manifests those letters as gross speech, the corresponding subtle energies are thus awakened. Because the letters are originally Śiva, this then can promote action and manifestation as gods are invoked.⁸⁵ The letters that make up the Devanagari alphabet which combine to make mantras are fundamentally *cit*, or Śiva meaning “the essence of all mantras consists of letters or sounds, (and) the essence of all letters or sound is Śiva”.⁸⁶ Śiva is constrained as he manifests down and the identification with the Self becomes less and less clear as “the deluded man helplessly considers the limited body, prāṇas, etc. as the Self”. These delusions or restraining manifestations are represented by the consonants of Devanagari and are “presided over by Brahma and other deities”- the other deities include Vaś, the “goddess of speech”.⁸⁷ In her, the “ goddess of speech, it is word that has significance...every one of its vowels and consonants has a particular and inalienable force which exists by the nature of things...these are the fundamental sounds which lay the basis of the Tantric bijamantras [seed mantras] and constitute the efficacy of the mantra itself”.⁸⁸

82. Kumar, Pushperndra. *Śakti and Her Episodes*. Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1981.p.11-12

83. Singh, Jaideva. “Kśemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990.

84. Avalon, Arthur. *The Serpent Power*. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 1919. p.165

85. Ibid. p. 96

86. Singh, Jaideva. *Kśemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. p. 69

87. Ibid. p.70

88. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātrikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.p. 17

These “seed mantras” are the core of all sound, which can be seen as Śiva, the masculine principle. The necessary feminine counterpart is the Śakti, or yoni aspect. The “vowels are called *bija* (seed) and are identified with Śiva, while the consonants are yoni (womb) and are identified with Śakti. Therefore this “implies the inseparability of Śiva and Śakti, of vowels and consonants in language”.⁸⁹ In the Devanagari script the sexual union of sound expressed as the “vowels and consonants of the physical alphabet polarity, is reflected in the idea that the vowels are seeds (*bija*) and the consonants wombs (*yoni*), while manifestation arises from their union”.⁹⁰ According to a “Tantric interpretation, the 16 vowels denote Śiva” and since sound as a whole is consciousness constrained within time, the vowels of Devanagari are actually “manifesting in pure time”.⁹¹

Of the Śiva vowels, there “are two kinds: the ‘masculine’ unagitated (*aksubdha*) and the ‘feminine’ agitated (*ksubda*). The short vowels ‘a’, ‘i’ and ‘u’ comprise the former, while the long vowels ‘ā’, ‘ī,’ and ‘ū’ comprise the latter”.⁹² In Sanskrit there are short vowels and long vowels, such as the “u” in the English words “mute” and “food”, respectively. Since Śakti descends from Śiva, the agitated vowels (long) are generated from the unagitated (short). Each letter is a “level of the cosmos and therefore a level of consciousness”. ‘A’, the first sound of the alphabet, represents Śiva, and this sound is, on one hand, “immanent in all manifestation which pervades the whole alphabet, yet, on the other [hand], it is regarded as transcendent”.⁹³ Corresponding to the Śiva tattva the first level of manifestation, the vowel ‘a’, is the only one that also contains the Śakti . Proceeding after ‘a’ in the sequence of the alphabet are the vowels alternating in agitation (female, *spanda*, vibration) and unagitation (masculine, etc.). The remaining vowels, representing levels of the cosmos, “are generated from various combinations of these initial vowels”, from which the rest of manifestation emanates.⁹⁴

89. Singh, Jaideva. *Abhinavagupta Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1988 p. xvi

90. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p. 76

91. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātṛikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.

92. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.78

93. *Ibid.* p.78

94. *Ibid.* p. 80

Now that we have explored the symbolic nature of Devanagari vowels, which correspondingly are the first to manifest as sound, we can explore the consonants of the script. The Devanagari alphabet, called “Varnamala” meaning “garland of letters”, as represented by Kālī’s necklace of severed human heads, also mimic the tattvas.⁹⁵

Pada meaning word, or place, part or division, or as a level of the cosmos, represents each category of existence and conversely each *pada* has a sense or sense organ associated. The “ka’ group is suggestive of the five elements (Panchabhuta), the ‘cha’ group of five senses, ‘Ta’ group of five limbs, ‘ta’ group of mental faculties, ‘Pa’ group of mind, ego, intellect, nature and Purusha, ‘Ya’ group of air, sciences, arts and illusion, ‘Sha’ group of Shakti, Shiva and Sadashiva”.⁹⁶ Since we know that the letters are represented in each corresponding *Ākra*,

the letters in the six *ākras* are fifty in number-namely, the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet less Ksa, according to the Kamakala-malini-Tantra...the letters there mentioned as being coloured. Each object of perception whether gross or subtle, has an aspect which corresponds to each of the senses. It is this reason that the Tantra correlates sound, form and color.⁹⁷

Devanagari Corresponding to the Basic Grouping of Tattvas

The five elements	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
	<i>Earth</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Fire</i>	<i>Air</i>	<i>Space</i>
The five impressions	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
	<i>Scent</i>	<i>Taste</i>	<i>Sight</i>	<i>Touch</i>	<i>Hearing</i>
The instruments of action	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
	<i>Excreting</i>	<i>Sexing</i>	<i>Grasping</i>	<i>Moving</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
The instruments of sensing	त	थ	द	ध	न
	<i>Smelling</i>	<i>Tasting</i>	<i>Seeing</i>	<i>Feeling</i>	<i>Hearing</i>
The empirical individual	प	फ	ब	भ	म
	<i>Prakṛti</i>	<i>Ahankara</i>	<i>Buddhi</i>	<i>Manas</i>	<i>Purusha</i>
Limitation of Maya	य	र	ल	व	ळ
	<i>Action</i>	<i>Knowing</i>	<i>Desire</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Fate</i>
The five verities	श	ष	स	ह	क्ष
	<i>Kriya</i>	<i>Jnana</i>	<i>Iccha</i>	<i>Shakti</i>	<i>Shiva</i>

95. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātṛikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.p.12

96. Avalon, Arthur (Sir John Woodroffe). “The Serpent Power”. NY: Dover Publications, Inc. 1919. p 165-165

97. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātṛikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.

The most powerful letter sequences of the divine are those that are systematically organized (versus unorganized) and unfold as; mantras forming letters (varna) then syllables (pada) then words (Śabda) then sentences (vākya), which form meaning (artha).⁹⁸ The sequence of Devanagari characters within the alphabet matters as well: from “a” to “ha” (the first and last letters of the alphabet) the order replicates the expansion of the universe (Śakti). Only after these two letters are combined forming “ksa” is the end of the expansion process. The combination of “a” (creation) and “ha” (manifestation) represents vibration being absorbed by “ksa” (re-absorption back to ParamaŚiva) and then finally rests in the highest reality. We can see that the letter sequence of the Devanagari alphabet is a complete cycle of the Trika structure and when a practitioner experiences these letters as speech, “this natural vimarśa or inward experience is of the nature of the congregation of words”.⁹⁹ This inward experience as the Trika of kuṇḍalinī is the absolute, will and expansion. According to Dyczkowski in *The Stanzas on Vibration*, all letters follow from this triad and the terms Mātrikā (Supreme Speech) is dynamic consciousness and malini is consciousness withdrawing into itself (Kālī’s action).¹⁰⁰

With the Trika structure represented in the Devanagari characters, and thus legitimizing the script as microcosmically and universally divine, let’s look at the historical development of the ancient script. It is claimed that the letters, or varna, originated in the city of the gods, which in Sanskrit is called Devanam Nagaram, the name of the script, which is Devanagari.¹⁰¹

Historically the “Devanagari alphabets it seems were elaborated out of the hieroglyphics representing the seeds (bija) which are the same as denote gods”.¹⁰² Eventually, Hindu worshippers assigned a sound to each of the hieroglyphics (which represented Brahma), and the fifty one names of Śakti developed; Arita, Akarsini, Indrani, Isani, Uma, Urdhvatnaka, etc. which noticeably the first letters of each of the goddesses’ names correspond to the sequence of the alphabet.

98. Singh, Jaideva. “Kśemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. p.92

99. Dyczkowski, Mark S.G. *The Stanzas on Vibration*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1992.

100. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātrikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980. p.18

101. Ibid. p. 20

102. Ibid. p. 2

In worship, the letters represent the body parts of the goddess, and the varnas (letters) are thus called Māṭṛikās. In Tantric worship the entire body as a sound vehicle is incorporated in the ritual. Tantric texts such as Tantraraja-Tantra discuss the worship of Māṭṛikās as Śaktis or letters of the alphabet. Nyasa meditation, translating as “installation of the Mothers”, is a Tantric worship practice that identifies one’s body parts with the varnas. The ritual involves installation of powers of Māṭṛikās as letters of the alphabet in one’s body, by visualizing and feeling the deity venerated in different parts of the body such as head, face, and legs all while reciting mantras. This ritual process represents the body as a microcosm of the macro “Lord of Speech” or Vāc Devata benefiting the practitioner in that one can touch different parts of the body to arouse inherent energies to use toward transformation.

Using speech as a tool for liberation in the Tantric context is “spiritually effective”, according to Abhinavagupta, because the fifty letters of the Devanagari alphabet “which in the Tantras is understood to exist as fifty energies or aspects of the universal potency of the supreme level of Speech” is then connected with “Mantras [which] are spiritually effective”.¹⁰³ It is only when the energies of the letters come out of the mouth as gross speech that the mantras begin to take effect. The effect of Māṭṛikā as subtle sound energies in the Tantric tradition is the “source of the higher liberating knowledge of non-duality” and therefore “makes inner and outer manifestation one with Her own nature in the all-embracing experience of liberated consciousness”.¹⁰⁴

In ritual acts of mantras, because the letters represent the cosmic unfolding of the universe, the first letter as ParamaŚiva and the last is earth, all letters in-between are useless without the first and the last. Therefore within the alphabet is the risk of one getting lost in the illusion of samsāra. Without knowledge of the circular process of manifestation down and re-absorption up of the Trika process, all other letters, or tattvas, seem permanent and “fruitless”.¹⁰⁵

103. Dyczkowski, Mark S.G. *The Stanzas on Vibration*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1992. p. 45

104. *Ibid.* p. 45

105. *Ibid.* Abhinavagupta explains in the third chapter of *Tantrāloka* the idea of Māṭṛikā cakra.

Seeing the world as an illusion, one then recognizes their own self (or consciousness, cit) as the only permanent existence. Self in relation to sound reflects itself *to* itself: “he [the Self] made the entire world- consisting of indicator or word (vaćaka) and indicated or object (vaćya)-his own by reflection (lit. seizing mentally) on the entire assembling of non-mayiya words from ‘a’ to ‘ksa’”.¹⁰⁶ Assigning sounds and terms to perceived reality allows the self to 1) project outward the senses and 2) return back inward the understanding of these objects perceived. All reality is a reflection of the self that created in the first place.

Furthermore, another linguistic symbol within Sanskrit is the junction of two words called sandhi. On many levels it represents the junction of waking/dreaming/deep sleep consciousness, of each day with night, and of the breath with no breath. Firstly, during Tantric practice it is advised: “do not worship the Lord during the day. Do not worship the Lord during the night. The Lord must be worshipped at the point of the meeting of the day and night (quoted in the Tantrāloka 6)” .¹⁰⁷ It is at these junctions that, to Tantric worshippers, the divine is most easily accessible and venerated.

Within Kashmir Śaivism sandhi also symbolically represents meditation. Sandhi translated in Sanskrit sometimes means “meditation, and therefore it is said that meditating on the junction between the inhale and exhale is when concentration is optimal and ideal. On a more macrocosmic level, Sandhi represents turiya- not waking, dreaming or deep sleep- but the consciousness in-between all. The junction between ending wakefulness and the beginning of sleep, and vice versa, is very important; “it is the entrance into the state of turiya, which has opened as a result of settling into your asana and undergoing prāṇayama” .¹⁰⁸

Sandhi most commonly means the junction between two words in Sanskrit. The combination of Sanskrit characters to make larger compound words, because specific letters symbolize certain sacred processes, can become powerful microcosmic forces through just the structural composition alone.

106. Singh, Jaideva. “Kśemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. p. 92

107. Hughes, John. “Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.30

108. Ibid. p.45

Mantras each have different vibrational frequencies, corresponding to levels of reality, and “their transformative power is constrained by the level from which they derive.”¹⁰⁹ We will look at the mantras AHAM, OM and SAUH and their deconstruction as miniature Trika structures. Abhinavagupta’s commentaries on Paratrisika speak in-depth about AHAM as the creative aspect of the ‘I’ consciousness. AHAM is the sequence of expansion where as the reverse order, MAHAA, is withdrawal, completing the Trika cycle of the absolute, creation and destruction. ‘A’ represents the ‘I’ or the Self and is the first letter of the alphabet. ‘Ha’, the last letter of the alphabet, which is expansion as kuṇḍalinī Śakti, and lastly ‘M’ is actually pictorially drawn above the word, meaning a nasal ‘m’ sound. It is objective phenomena, will, knowledge, and action- all processes to return one back to the self.¹¹⁰ Reciting AHAM and MAHAA is an important link in creating a physical entity of sound while embodying the complete Trika structure.

Another powerful mantra is SAUH. Its components are ‘SA’; the Sanskrit root ‘to be’ or ‘existence’, represented as the tattvas, ‘AU’; superior to ‘SA’, contains the elements suddhavudya, isvara, sadaŚiva (elements of knowledge and action, embodiment of Śakti) and is also acceptance of the oneness of God, and finally ‘H’ is the visarga (depicted as a colon “:”) which is symbolically greater than ‘SA’ and ‘AU’. The dots of the visarga (colon) represent a twofold creative energy: the higher and lower creative energies of Śakti. In addition, the meaning of the mantra SAUH is threefold: 1) ‘SA’, the cycle of nara (man) 2) ‘AU’, cycle of Śakti, and 3) ‘H’ or ‘:’, combines both creative energies and the cycle of Śiva. Thus, the Trika system of Kashmir Śaivism can also be the combination of nara, Śakti and Śiva.¹¹¹ The mantra culminates when one understands, embodies and realizes its meaning:

thus, whoever perceives sauh, the essence of all mantras, in the reality of Samādhi, gains entry in that sa. He is, in the real sense, initiated. It does not matter if he lives and breathes like an ordinary being, if he gets hungry and attends to his bodily functions, he is actually divine, and at the time of leaving his physical form he becomes one with Śiva.¹¹²

109. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.218

110. Dyczkowski, Mark S.G. *The Stanzas on Vibration*. NY: SUNY Press, 1992.

111. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.68-69

112. Hughes, John. *Self Realization in Kashmir Shaivism: The Oral Teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo*. NY: State University of New York Press, 1994. p.68

The force of Śabda-Brahman in the mantra SAUH has powerful and permanent transformational effects.

Lastly we will look at possibly the most famous mantra OM, or AUM. The characters of AUM are ‘A’= Brahma the creator, ‘U’= Vishnu the preserver and ‘M’= Śiva the destroyer. This threefold structure of the universe is also one of the most widespread and pervasive beliefs of Hinduism as a whole, not just in Tantrism.¹¹³ The triadic nature of the mantra AUM also contains a fourth state called turiya tita, which encompasses the previous three. Andre Padoux in *Vač* explores, “but why do we have such a fourfold division of om (which indeed is not an actual division into four, since in fact there are only three distinct elements, which the fourth one encapsulates and transcends)? Precisely because of the fourfold division of Brahman”.¹¹⁴ Padoux expands on the mainstream Hindu idea of the threefold nature of AUM to a fourth Tantric state, turiya-tita, which transcends and includes the other three, in a state of nonduality, or complete liberation. Internalization of turyia-tita, of liberation, occurs through the reciting of AUM. The character AUM and its use are ancient tools and have remained popular iconographic figures of Hinduism.

Overall, I have shown how speech is identical with Śiva, manifested as Śakti in the čakras, moves outward through mantras, and with recognition induces liberation. Speech, or vakŚakti, “is identical with the light of consciousness (Śiva), who is of the form of the great mantra that is eternally sounded, who consists of the consciousness of the perfect “I”, who contains within herself (who is pregnant with) the whole assemblage of Śaktis formed by the sound beginning with ‘a’ and ending with ‘ksa’”, is the complete process of creation through stages.¹¹⁵ The various alphabet and cosmological levels are regarded as levels or layers of sound, the lower layers being grosser or more impure expressions than the higher. The yogi’s ascent through the worlds of the cosmos is therefore also an ascent through layers of sound which correspond to worlds”.¹¹⁶

113. Aryan, K.C., *The Little Goddesses (Mātrikās)*, New Delhi: Rekha Prakashan, 1980.

114. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p.21

115. Singh, Jaideva. “Kṣemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. P.70

116. Flood, Gavin D. “Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism”. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.39-40

To reiterate, the process of sound creation is the Trika structure of the cosmos, of spoken mantras, which is “regarded as a manifestation of sound...these levels of sound being identified with *the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet* (varna) emerging out from VakŚakti”¹¹⁷ who is identified with supreme consciousness.

Liberation

We briefly mentioned earlier the experience of liberation when one recognizes mantras as divine. But what is this experience really like? And why is it the ultimate goal?

Nonduality is the experience as well as the reality of liberation. This experience is called nondual or *advaita* because there is no distinction between self and other, self and God, or self and Brahman. Thus during this process, “in the higher layers of the cosmos, the body of the perceiver tends to merge with the body of the perceived in a series of stages, until that the highest level of the cosmos subject (aham) and object (idam) are non-distinct”.¹¹⁸ The layers of the universe are withdrawn into the essential cosmic body into nonduality and “when the bodies of sound cease to exist, beings are then pure...liberation is going beyond, or a dissolving of, shared realities into the essential cosmic body”.¹¹⁹ Just as we have seen Kālī re-absorb sound into the absolute, nonduality occurs when reality, through sound, withdraws into Brahman.

The true nature of sound is represented in all levels of the cosmos and in order for one to embody and thus transcend, without the proper understanding of sound, a practitioner can become bound in an illusion of obstacles. First originating with Śiva, the process of concealment of the layers then manifests down and “out of the supreme Energy [of Śabda] flow forth countless subordinate hierarchized energies, which are aspects of this original Power”. Although they are all aspects of the original power, one can become attached or caught in the ‘real-ness’ of any one reality, and the layers therefore become “one of the means (or obstacles) to his spiritual progress and his mastery over the universe”.¹²⁰

One way to combat getting caught in illusion of māyā is to recite sacred mantras. Sound, specifically as a mantra, is the key to going beyond the levels of reality: “expressed in spoken language mantra is a symbolic

117 Ibid p.111

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid. p.139 Referencing Spanda Karikas of Vasugupta or Kallata

120. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p. 45

form of its higher reality, giving access to that reality and is a means of transcending the limited experience of bound person, body and world, to wider more inclusive levels of the cosmos".¹²¹ Mantras *allow* one to embody all levels of the cosmos. Once this initial recognition through sound is obtained, and because speech and the words are a direct reflection of the para (The Mother, as Śiva), "the force of rectitude of the reflective awareness [is] that one is able to realize everything at will".¹²²

Instantaneously one can become liberated and move forward to then live a nondual life of moment-to-moment manifestation as the Trika structure. Contrary to some widespread beliefs, the enlightened one does not just stop living or disappears, but rather "[the liberated Tantric] stays in the world and controls it. He becomes one with the Transcendental. But the Transcendental is the primary creative and destructive principle, holding within itself the paradigm of the cosmos and pervading it".¹²³

Contemporary Relevance

Although I only dove into a brief and narrow exploration of sound within Kashmir Śaivism, there are many paths one could take from this introductory stance. Below I propose a few venues one could further explore, but are not limited to; the monism of Kashmir Śaivism and quantum theory, Buddhist traditions' use of mantras such as Shingon Buddhism, modern practices of breath-work (prāṇayama) found in organizations like the Art of Living, and contemporary forms of Kashmir Śaivism such as Siddha Yoga as well as Western philosophical theories of pantheism such as Panpsychism. I will explore the many movements centered around sound, monism (or pantheism), and liberation in a Divine universe. These examples not only show the importance and relevance of the ancient beliefs of Kashmir Śaivism but they make us (as Western scholars and students) re-examine the way we think about language, our Self and consciousness, and the attitudes and purposes we place on the human body.

121. Flood, Gavin D. *Body and Cosmology in Kashmir Śaivism*. CA: Mellen Research University Press, 1993. p.216

122. Rastogi, Navjivan. *The Krama Tantricism of Kashmir*. Vol. 1. Delhi: Motilal Nanarsidass Publishers. p.126

123. Although only "He" is referened as to obtaining liberation, there is current debate on both sides that women too, can participate in this journey toward liberation. Padoux, Andre. *Vač: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantras*. NY: SUNY, 1990. p. 38

Quantum Theory

Some scholars today, such as Paul Muller Ortega, make a connection between the monistic view of the nondual Śaivism of Kashmir with contemporary Quantum Physics done by scientists like David Bohm.¹²⁴ Ortega shows a dialogical “interpretive Mātrīx” connecting the two schools of thought. In *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of Andre Padoux* Bohm’s theory supports and explains a “continuous cosmogony” that “makes some of the most abstruse and rarefied meditational ideas of the Tantra understandable”.¹²⁵ His work, although using scientific terminology, as Ortega argues, alludes to the concept of Śiva, which he calls Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement: “flow is, in some sense, prior to that of ‘things’ that can be seen to form and dissolve in this flow...in this flow, mind and matter are not separate substances. Rather they are different aspects of one whole and unbroken movement”.¹²⁶ Ortega claims that the connectedness of the mind and body as well as the self and God interestingly relate to this Quantum theory of an essentially nondual universe.

These connective claims today reinforce the idea of an undeniable relationship between language and reality. In addition to Ortega and Bohm, Bhartṛhari, the 6th-7th century Sanskrit grammarian, proposed a theory (which we have previously explored in the historical development of sound in Tantra) that “speaks of a reality richer than the expressive power of language. Like the observables of quantum theory, language picks only processes associated with its expressions”.¹²⁷ The interesting argument put forth by Ortega shows that Quantum Theory relates to the underlying connection between language, its processes (creations) and the interplay between the two. Language alone is not simply an expression of reality, it *is* reality.

124 It should be noted that David Bohm is not considered to be a part of mainstream Quantum Physics

125. Muller-Ortega, Paul. “Tantric Meditation: Vcalic Beginnings”. *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of Andre Padoux*. Ed. Teun Gourdriaan. NY: SUNY Series in Tantric Studies, 1992. p.230

126. Ibid. p.228

127. Kak, Subhash and T.R.N. Rao. *On the Science of Consciousness In Ancient India*. 1998.
http://www.infinityfoundation.com/mandala/i_es/i_es_kak-s_sci_con_frameset.htm/

Shingon Buddhism

Why is it that we see a full embodiment of the cosmos within the human body more generally in Eastern traditions? In the case of Kashmir Śaivism its influential philosopher Abhinavagupta expounds on its embodied monistic theology, narrated entirely in terms of consciousness and nonduality, is a cosmogony of “usual notions of the person, of time, of language, of sexuality- in fact all aspects of reality- are reversed”.¹²⁸ A reversal in normal duality or perceived reality “contributes directly to the transgressive posture taken by the realized individual toward the Embodied Cosmos (kula)”.¹²⁹

Other Eastern nondual sects that view the body as means to liberation include the Shingon Buddhism of Japan. In “Reality as Embodiment: An Analysis of Kukais Sokushinjobutsu and Hosshin Seppo”, we see a parallel with Japanese Shingon Buddhist emphasis of mantras and the connection of these mantras with the body and with the gross realm, including the elements (as seen in the tattvas). According to the founder Kukai (744-835), the Dainichi Sutra states:

Without abandoning this body,
One attains supernatural power over the objective world,
Wanders freely in the state of the great void.
If you want to enter Perfection (Siddhi) in this life...
After receiving your Mantra (of your Buddha) personally from your revered teacher,
Meditate on it until you have become united with it. Then you will attain perfection¹³⁰

Similarities in the philosophy of Shinto Buddhism and the Hindu Tantrism of Kashmir toward the perfect union of body and mantra may have broader Eastern roots. To the East, the body is a vessel to house the great connectedness of the mind, being identical with the mind; the Eastern “‘body’ (shin) is not equivalent to our Western sense of the body as separate or distinguished from the mind”.¹³¹ Kukai, the author of the passage above, conceptualizes the body as including the traditional Eastern belief of five elements, but he then adds consciousness as the sixth element making the list more complete. More specifically, this expansion of the “list

128. Muller-Ortega, Paul. “Tantric Meditation: Vocalic Beginnings”. *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism*. Ed. Teun Gourdriaan. NY: SUNY Series in Tantric Studies, 1992. p. 230

129. Kasulis, Thomas P. “Reality as Embodiment: An Analysis of Kukais Sokushinjobutsu and Hosshin Seppo”. *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*. Ed. Jane Marie Law. Indiana: Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1995.174

130. Ibid. p. 179

131. Ibid. p. 173-174

of elements also led him to extend the list of seed mantras, since each mantra is correlated with a single element. He added the mantra HUM".¹³²

We can also see parallels in Buddhism with the vibrations of the mantras in the body, "Of the mantras and darani (phrases), Shingon (mantra) ritual singles out six 'seed mantras': A, Va, Ra, Ha, Kha, and Hum" and "when reciting these mantras in the correct posture and mental framework, one becomes attuned to the basic vibrations or resonances (kyo) constituting the cosmos".¹³³ Only by combining the mantras with a "proper ritualistic context" can the practitioner realize the power of the sound. And thus, the devotee "becomes sensitive to the 'truth words' (shingon) inaudible to ordinary hearing".¹³⁴ These "inaudible" words mimic the nature of Śabda-Brahman, the undifferentiated pre-manifested cosmic sound. In addition to the parallel beliefs of causal sound, Shingon Buddhism and Kashmir Śaivism also share a belief of "reality as vibration or resonance", called Spanda in Kashmir Śaivism and promoted by Kukai in Japanese Buddhism.¹³⁵ Influenced from ancient Indian thought, Shingon Buddhism comprises aspects of Indian Tantric Buddhism as well as Chinese cultural aspects in its journey to Japan. Shingon Buddhism downplays and dismisses most of the sexual symbolism from Tantra distinguish between "esoteric" and "exoteric" teachings and practices.

Shingon Buddhism presents the body as a means to experience reality on a microcosmic level through sound. Eastern thought may make us (contemporary Westerners) reexamine the purpose of our bodies and sound, and the goals associated. Any exploration of the view of the body in religious rituals opens up questions of the limits and potential of the human body, and the implications of the limits on consciousness.

Siddha Yoga

Siddha Yoga is a modern religious movement that attributes its beliefs to Kashmir Śaivism. Brought to the West by Swami Muktānanda in the 1970s, Siddha Yoga is a living and thriving religious sect that puts the Kashmir Śaivism (right hand) ritual acts into practice. Siddha means perfected one, and most devotees, as

132. Kasulis, Thomas P. "Reality as Embodiment: An Analysis of Kukai's Sokushinjobutsu and Hosshin Seppo". *Religious Reflections on the Human Body*. Ed. Jane Marie Law. Indiana: Bloomington Indiana University Press, 1995. Ch. 17 p.232

133. Ibid. p.233

134. Ibid. p.233

135. Ibid. p.234

modern practitioners of their ancient predecessors, believe in Śaktipat transmissions of kuṇḍalinī Śakti from the guru to the disciple, and therefore “are content with the central experience of siddha yoga, which can be described in general terms as an experience of the divine power perceived to flow through the guru”.¹³⁶ After a Śaktipat blessing a Siddha Yogi can continue the practices and beliefs of Kashmir Śaivism through visualizing, during meditation, the fivefold nature of Śiva.

The Śaiva traditions, including Kashmir Śaivism and Siddha Yoga, categorize the movement of reality, of Śiva, into three models. Firstly the most simple model is 1) the dyadic pattern of the visarga (:), which is a twofold movement of manifestation and dissolution of male and female, stillness and vibration, secondly 2) a triadic pattern of “the three initial vowels, A, I, U, representing to the will, knowledge, and action powers of Śiva”, and which we have explored extensively in this paper the Trika structure, and the third model of reality is 3) a pentadic classification that stands for the five divine action of Śiva: “his capacity to manifest (srsti), maintain (sthiti), and reabsorb (samhara), linked to his capacity to conceal (vilaya) and gracefully reveal (anugraha)”.¹³⁷ This final classification reduplicates the previous two.

In the *Living Siddha Yoga Wisdom Learning Lesson #16* a guided meditation is given on the fivefold action of Śiva as ionized in the Śiva Nataraj: “this form of the Lord doing his ānanda tandava (ecstatic dance) vividly illustrates the pancha-kṛtya (five-fold-act) of Consciousness”.¹³⁸ According to Siddha Yoga, in the far right hand of Lord Śiva the double-headed drum (damaru) represents the “vibratory source of all creation, OM”, which is also the pulse of spanda and the emanation of Mātṛikā Śakti.

136. Muller-Ortega, Paul. “Tantric Meditation: Vocalic Beginnings *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of Andre Padoux*. Ed. Teun Gourdriaan. NY: SUNY Series in Tantric Studies, 1992 p. 238-239

137. *Living Siddha Yoga Wisdom Learning Lesson #16*. SYDA Foundation, 2004.

138. Ibid.



The near-right hand of Śiva is raised in abhaya mudra, meaning the fearlessness hand gesture. This says “fear not, I am sustaining you”. Śiva’s far-left hand is holding fire, which represent the destruction and re-absorption of phenomena back into consciousness. This hand also is touching the outer ring of fire because his acts of his hands, creation, sustenance and destruction, all create and occur within the realm of space and time, which is depicted by the outer ring. In addition, “time ultimately consumes all phenomena, hence the ring’s flames”.¹³⁹

The vertical axis of the Śiva Nataraj represents the sadhana process, or how we experience ourselves and life. The two actions of consciousness are *concealment* and *grace*—Śiva’s near-left arm crosses over his heart which conceals his heart from awareness, but “the hand of this arm points the way out of the state of living as the small self. The hand points to the raised, free foot, which represents grace”.¹⁴⁰

According to the Pratyabhijnakrika Spandasandoha, the act of concealment and appearance is in all manifestation and, like we have seen, with recognition provokes liberation; if the

139. *Living Siddha Yoga Wisdom Learning Lesson #16*. SYDA Foundation, 2004.

140. *Ibid.*

the fivefold act, which occurs within one's own personal experience, is pursued steadily with firm understanding, it reveals the Lord's greatness to the devotee. Those who always ponder over this (fivefold act of the Lord), knowing the universe as an enfoldment of the essential nature (of consciousness), become liberated in this very life.¹⁴¹

Conversely, those who see objects as different and not as a universal light of consciousness are essentially bound. The fivefold act of Śiva has helped the devotee recognize the liberating nature of the cosmos from ancient times and still remains today through new religious movements like Siddha Yoga. Siddha Yoga has ashrams and devotees worldwide that promote this philosophy.

Art of Living

Similarly, another modern movement called the Art of Living, although a non-profit secular organization, emphasizes meditation, mantras and embodied liberation. Founded by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar over 20 years ago the Art of Living's practices are influenced by Sri Sri's personal background in Transcendental Meditation from his Guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Reciting and embodying mantras within the Art of Living is also just as important for spiritual growth as it is within Kashmir Śaivism. The Sri Sarasvatī Mantra is a popular recited Hindu mantra and according to *Vedic Mantras for Peace and Healing*, Sri Sarasvatī mantra is not only the “the mother of each and every sound contained in the holy Vedas” but also vibration throughout the universe, supreme bliss from the heart and all-pervading in living beings. It is obvious that this description resonates with Kashmir Śaivism's description of sound, consciousness, Śiva and Śakti. Most similar to Śakti, Sri Sarasvatī Mantra is the “supreme energy that pervades, sustains and protects the entire cosmos” but like Śiva “she is beyond the cosmos”.¹⁴² Also like Kashmir Śaivism, the divine mother has “three primary Śaktis, or powers: jñana Śakti, kriya Śakti and iccha Śakti”.¹⁴³ According to the beliefs, after meditating on her mantra “for so long that its vibrations have permeated our entire cosmos, we will merge in the Supreme light”.¹⁴⁴ Meditation and embodying the mantra to the Art of Living practitioners also invokes liberation.

141.. Singh, Jaideva. “Kṣemaraja: The Doctrine of Recognition”. NY: State University of New York Press, 1990. p. 67

142. Sri Sri Sri Vijaeswari Devi. *Vedic Mantras for Peace and Healing*. UK: Karunamayi Viswashanthi Foundation, 2007 p. 8

143. Ibid. p.12

144. Ibid. p. 9-10

Sanskrit, as a powerful tool to transform and transmit the divine, is recognized in almost all Hindu traditions, not excluding the Art of Living. According to *Vedic Mantras for Peace and Healing*, *Akshara* means eternal or indestructible and is also the word for any letter in the Sanskrit alphabet. The meaning of the word therefore reveals that the letters cannot be destroyed. *Bijakshara* is the word for sounds formed from seed letters, or those sounds derived from OM. The metaphor of seed mantras to actual seeds helps the practitioner understand its powerful potential: seeds grow in fertile soil, so seed mantras, with sincerity, faith and devotion, will “take root in our consciousness and will grow into a beautiful stately tree of divine consciousness”.¹⁴⁵

The Art of Living is also known for its *prāṇayama* (breathing techniques) called *Sudarshan Kriya*. Both sound and the breath are recognized as essential embodied factors in one’s spiritual path to freedom.

Psychotheism

It is clear that Kashmir Śaivism’s nondual view of sound can be seen in other Eastern sects and new religious movements or organizations, but what about thought originating in the West? We find that there are many systems of philosophical beliefs that similarly contribute to discussions on alternatives to epistemologies of dualism, such as those in Christianity. A Western movement called *Spiritual Pantheism* or *Psychotheism* is one philosophy that attempts to overcome mainstream dualism. The philosophical concepts of *Psychotheism* allow an interesting exploration of reality: monism, pantheism, and panentheism could further explore the notion of Kashmir Śaivism’s consciousness *as* reality, “*Spiritual Pantheism* affirms the existence of Spirit, and sometimes, either expressly or by implication, denies the existence of Matter. This makes all Spirit God; always the same but every unfolding into new forms”.¹⁴⁶ One could argue that “Unfolding into new forms of God” seems to be Western language for the unfolding of Śiva as Śakti in the constant cycle of manifestation and re-absorption. A comparative analysis of *Psychothesim* would be an interesting study of Eastern and Western philosophy. To *Psychotheists*, recognizing God is through seeing it/he/she as “self-conscious in men” and is “*being and being seen*”. God can only be truly recognized by human thought once manifested, as opposed to its

145. Sri Sri Sri Vijaeswari Devi. *Vedic Mantras for Peace and Healing*. UK: Karunamayi Viswasthanthi Foundation, 2007. p. 10-11

136. Parker, Theodore and Frances Power Cobbe *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker*. Published by Trübner, 1876.p.57

pure unmanifested unimaginable form (such as the nature of ParamaŚiva).¹⁴⁷

One of the most prominent figures in the Psychotheism movement is Alfred Whitehead, a 19th-20th century British philosopher who was a “panpsychist who identifies reality with felt experience, and that all such expertise comes in momentary wholes which he calls actual occasions”.¹⁴⁸ These “wholes” are the complete experience as God in the first person. Each individual is God themselves; a mystical notion that, in Kashmir Śaivism is recognized through sound, action, knowledge and will, and in Western philosophy is achieved through “perception or feelings, albeit these rise to a conscious level only in such high-grade existents as human minds”.¹⁴⁹ So, in Panpsychism, through human sense-experiences, one can experience the interconnectedness of God.

This philosophical thinking appears “more or less in the writings of John the Evangelist, in Dionysius the Areopagite...[and] it tinges in some measure the spiritual philosophy of the present day”.¹⁵⁰ Spiritual Psychotheism and spiritual pantheism *does* in fact mirror many contemporary beliefs of not just these philosophers, scholars (Muller-Ortega and Quantum Physics) and modern organizations (such as the Art of Living or Siddha Yoga) but also of contemporary people and their personal thoughts on spirituality.

“Spiritual But Not Religious”

If Tantra fundamentally states that the universe is monistic (i.e. dualities such as self and other or good and evil are illusory), and everything is interconnected, then could this aspect of the Divinely monistic reality be related to what my generation in the West considers “spiritual but not religious”? To a Westerner, and specifically to young university students, this “connectedness” is often found outside of traditional religious settings and more surprisingly can be *experienced* through nature, deep conversations, and aesthetics. The Kashmir Śaivite nondual (right hand path) seems to address and expound on what contemporary students may be feeling. If there is an esoteric mystical meaning behind everything, that is, that this notion of the Trika

147. Parker, Theodore and Frances Power Cobbe *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker*. Published by Trübner, 1876. 1876 p. 57

148. Sprigge, Timothy L. *The God of Metaphysics*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2006. p.435

149. Alston, William P. *Perceiving God*. NY: Cornell University Press, 1993. p. 130

150. Parker, Theodore and Frances Power Cobbe *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker*. Published by Trübner, 1876 p. 58

structure really is at the core of all existence, then it would logically be at the center of all experiences, East or West. A USA Today/Gallup Poll in 2002 showed that almost “half of American adults appear to be alienated from organized religion”. The results conclude: “About 33% consider themselves “spiritual but not religious”, up from 30% the previous year.¹⁵¹ With a growing number of Americans searching for something more out there, these alternative belief systems, ancient or contemporary, seem to be able to capture the inquisitive Western mind. As I have shown the importance of sound and speech toward instantaneous universal liberation, maybe after all, what we as Westerns are searching for is right under our noses.

Conclusion

The macrocosm of Kashmir Śaivism’s Trika structure, as I have shown, manifests itself as microcosmic phenomena in the layers of existence (tattvas), deities (Mātrikā goddesses, Kālī, Śakti), in the union of male and female bodies, within each individual body as kuṇḍalinī energy in the śakras, in speech and mantras and finally in the words and letters of the Devanagari script. The permeability of sound as God (Śabda-Brahman) allows the practitioner, through reciting mantras, to recognize his/her true nature as God, and become liberated. The universality of Kashmir Savism’s speech extends far beyond its specific regional and time limits: “modern philosophy of language could learn a lot from Abhinavagupta’s subtle speculation on the Word, *vak* (logos), which extends from its mystical dimension to the intricacies of Sanskrit grammar and linguistic speculation, from psychological subtleties to philosophical reasoning” .¹⁵² Abhinavagupta integrated the existing Hindu Tantric traditions, as well as other religious traditions, in the 10th and 11th centuries to create a fully universal and comprehensive religion, existing within and beyond his proclaimed gross, subtle and causal realms.

In addition, language as a sacred entity is not unique to just Kashmir Śaivism- we see emphasis on language as divine in Jewish Kaballah Hebrew and Islamic Sufi Arabic among other traditions.

Kashmir Śaivism’s all pervading Śiva creates the world around us as a multitude of manifestations as Śakti. This multiplicity of Śakti-of sounds formed into mantras- much like the global multiplicity of religions and religious interpretations, represents the uniquely individualized nature of Śakti as well her indifference to value, that is, everything is Śiva at the core, no matter what form or representation. Sound is just another

microcosm of the macro of Divine multiplicity- “each mantra is the ‘sound-body’ of a particular form of God, all of whom merge into the Divine” .¹⁵³ Even though there are 36 tattvas, 51 characters in the Devanagari script, 33,000 gods in the Hindu pantheon, thousands of worldwide religious sects, millions of expressions of God, and even more words and sounds attempting to describe God, ultimately, everything will return, unite, and “merge with the Divine” as one with God.

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151. Religious Tolerance.org, http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_prac2.htm citing Cathy Grossman, "Charting the unchurched in America," USA Today, 2002-MAR-7, <http://www.usatoday.com/life/dcovthu.htm>
152. Singh, Jaideva. *Abhinavagupta Parātrīśika-Vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1988 p. xv
153. (Sri Sri Sri Vijaeswari Devi. *Vedic Mantras for Peace and Healing*. UK: Karunamayi Viswashanthi Foundation, 2007. p.11).

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