"The first duty of man is to understand his own nature and the basic elements of his being, which he must fulfill to the best of his ability"

Alain Daniélou
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Letter from the President of FIND’s Board of Directors

Dear Friends and Collaborators of FIND,

It is an honour and privilege to be entrusted with the responsibility of serving as President of the Board of Directors of the India-Europe Foundation for New Dialogues (FIND) – a most prestigious and unique institution. I am indeed delighted to work with all well-wishers and collaborators of FIND.

Under the dynamic leadership of our Honorary President Jacques Cloarec, who is a true Karma-yogi, FIND has successfully undertaken the noble task of celebrating the life and works of Alain Daniélou. The Foundation has established an ongoing dialogue between Indian and European cultures transcending the usual stereotypes, prejudices and limitations of intercultural confrontation.

It will be my earnest endeavour to promote and support the existing programmes and policies of the Foundation in a spirit of cooperation and harmony so that the vision and mission of Alain Daniélou can be achieved for the betterment of humanity.

FIND proposes to open a branch office in India during the second half of 2016. This will provide further impetus to the activities of the Foundation and make the dialogue between Indian and European cultures more intense and fruitful. FIND India will have ample opportunities to establish sustainable linkages with institutions, relevant government bodies, universities/educational institutions, corporates, public sector enterprises and parallel organizations working for the promotion of Indian culture, art, heritage and literary traditions.

FIND India will organise lectures/seminars in collaboration with important universities and other educational institutions. Brand building and publicity are two very important aspects for the success of any organization. FIND India can be promoted by striking useful linkages with governments, renowned Yoga and meditation associations, etc. Establishing symbiotic linkages with well-known organizations will help FIND India to obtain better publicity in the initial years and also help in resource sharing by holding joint events.

Ambassador Basant K. Gupta
New Delhi
April 7, 2016
Alain Daniélou’s Understanding of Polytheism

Adrián Navigante, Director FIND Intellectual Dialogue

1. The framework of the “polytheism-monotheism” debate

There are endless discussions on relations between polytheism and monotheism, all controversial, most of them infected from the very outset by various prejudices lacking any great desire to clarify the motivations behind the historical antagonism between one and many gods. If we take a closer look at the modern version of this rivalry, it is impossible to overlook a certain disparity. Since the beginnings of colonialism, Western culture has tried to integrate the other into its own systems of thoughts and beliefs with all the arguments it could muster. Hegel’s exposition of the difference between the polytheistic “religion of nature” and the monotheistic “religion of freedom” in his Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion (1821-1831) is a clear example of how a renowned philosopher applies his own speculative scheme to a domain alien to his sphere of knowledge in order to justify the superiority of modern Western “rationality” over Eastern “imagination”. In Hegel’s view, the Hindu religion demonstrates the defective power of distinction affecting Eastern doctrines in general. It oscillates between imaginative dissipation (expressed in the vertiginous variety of divine personifications) and intuitive fixation (detectable in the conception of transcendent unity as symbiotic fusion) (1). This particular view – at that time considered “universal” and therefore indisputable – had an overwhelming influence on modern Western ideology, basically on two levels: it permeated different theories about the origins and history of religions formulated in the course of the XIX century – from Auguste Comte to Edward Burnett Taylor and James George Frazer –, and it contributed to the belief that monotheistic doctrines achieved a unity and coherence lacking in polytheistic or idolatric (2) religions, not only because of the moral elements inserted in the metaphysical foundations of the monotheistic world view (for example with regard to the idea of God as a moral entity guaranteeing justice), but also owing to the elimination of superstitious cults and blood sacrifices.

2. Alain Daniélou and Polytheism: some general aspects

Alain Daniélou’s understanding of Hinduism clearly goes in the opposite direction: a revival and defence of polytheism against the widespread dominance of monotheistic creeds. This position is not only expressed in his Mythes et dieux de l’Inde (1992, first edition Le polythéisme hindou, 1960), but also in many other pages of his works (Shivaïsme et tradition primordiale, Approche de l’hindouisme, Shiva et Dionysos, et al). After a very positive review of the first English edition of Hindu Polytheism in the Bollingen Series (1964) (3), Daniélou’s book became quite successful internationally. His perspective was...
not however incorporated in academic debate (probably because of his unorthodox exposition and orientation toward traditional oral sources), and in the last few years it has been the subject of a persistent critique based – at least to some extent – on a misunderstanding of the terms under discussion (the antagonism between monotheism and polytheism), as well as the all-encompassing value of the word “polytheism” in the corpus of Daniélou’s writings.

In order to understand this antagonism and its repercussions on Daniélou’s thought, we should note the dynamic aspect of interaction between ‘the one’ and ‘the many’ – which builds one of the key-aspects of Hindu tradition. Many Hindus have emphasized the oneness-polarity of this dynamic reciprocity, probably out of the need to establish legitimacy in the face of global monotheistic domination, but even such an emphasis often takes other forms than that of a very forceful and in some ways ‘imperialistic’ monotheism. The henotheistic tendency (4) is a clear example of how the oneness-pole can be rendered functional and at the same time protected from dogmatic isolation, as Daniélou succinctly explains in Mythes et Dieux de l’Inde with regard to the theory of guṇas as indicating a dynamically consistent multiplicity: “The unity and interdependence of the three fundamental tendencies [sattva, rajas, tamas], considered as one entity, is known as ṯsvara, the Lord” (5). Furthermore, Daniélou has no problem in employing the word “God” (of which the Latin word “deus” is related to the Indo-European root “dei- = to shine) in order to designate “the source of the subtle and supramental stages of the physical, mental and intellectual spheres” (6), or in the sense of a life-principle associated with “the boundless form of reality and infinite consciousness [satya-jñānānanta-svarūpa]” (7). A similar perspective can be found in the Brhadāranyakā upanisad III, 9.1-9, where a kind of layered articulation of the divine sphere from “three thousand and three and three hundred and three” [trayaśca tr ca šhâtô, trayaśca tr ca sahasrātri] to the “one” [eka] is propounded, ending with the unifying “vital force” [prāṇa, brahma, tyāt] as the source of all.

The problem arises when this ‘source’ is taken to be a divine person with the ontological constitution of a singular being. The very conjunction of “singular” and “supreme” demands, among other things, a radical distinction between “creator” and “creation” as well as the common denominator of being “individuated” (God as distinct, separated, other). According to Daniélou, the monotheistic creed has a dangerous component: the mechanism of egocentric projection onto a transcendent sphere determining all processes, interactions and values of world-immanence. This is the reason for his conviction that metaphysical speculation related to the religious sphere (for example the notion of para-brahman and its function of radical transcendence within Hindu soteriology) should be distinguished from the practical application of ideological concepts (such as a God who chooses a specific people and fights with them against others). Indubitably, the ideas expounded by Daniélou may well be discussed and part of their formulation may sometimes need further precision (especially in the context of systematic and comprehensively advanced versions of the monotheistic faith), but first of all it is necessary to know what he really said and the context in which he formulated such considerations.

Daniélou’s critique of monotheism was aimed particularly at the relentless (and sometimes even fundamentalist) (8) demand that one personal god should be praised and taken as the very foundation of all individuated existence, to the detriment of any other conception envisaging a plurality and diversity of cult and creed. Although this is only one aspect within the very complex sphere of monotheism, it is very difficult not to subject it to critique and acknowledge its structural importance, especially on the level of human relations. Today’s ecological crisis is not only due to the effects of modernity on social life, but also – and mainly – to how relations between human (as “created”) beings and the divine sphere (as that of the “creator”) are conceived. In this sense, one of the main consequences of monotheistic religion is that it severs human beings from the immediate power of the natural environment in order to insert another (unreachable) locus of the divine beyond the field of archaic religious experience, in which the sacred cannot be separated from the powers of nature. In the case of monotheism, the construction of a sphere of radical transcendence goes hand-in-hand with the doctrine of a divine will emanating from that locus. Asiatic religions have kept the (non)-locus of transcendent source utterly impersonal, mainly to avoid human appropriation and hence a shift from a metaphysical doctrine to an
3. Religion of nature: masculine and feminine

This last point may lead us to another very complex debate on the relationship between the religion of nature and the (archaic) feminine, which – if treated in all its complexity – would deserve a separate essay. The inattentive reader might think that Daniélou purposely left aside the subject of the great Goddess within the frame of Hindu religion owing to his one-sided emphasis on the cult of the phallus and his personal motivations for doing so. Regardless of how far he went into that problem and whether some of his formulations on Shivaism can be viewed from the perspective of Shaktism, an undeniable fact remains: Daniélou mentions the cult of the Goddess as one of the three pillars of what for him constitutes the pre-Aryan civilization, the other two being Shivaism and Tantrism (9). In Hindu Polytheism he takes the universal Mother or supreme Goddess as the symbol of the highest degree of reality, that which surpasses all (limited) knowledge – entirely in consonance with the Sanskrit terms ājñeyā and śūnya in the Devī Upaniṣad 26-27 (10). As stated above, many parallels can be drawn between certain aspects of Kūḍalinī manifestation in Shaktism – including its mythological background – and what Daniélou emphasized from the Shivaitic dimension of the cult of the phallus; this remains a very important task if a certain openness of mind is to be preserved. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the liṅga cult can be viewed as an Indian variant of aconism, insofar as references to the śivalīṅga are indexical and indicate a kind of sacred emptiness (that is, a sign of the deity as being devoid of all form: pararūpa) (11). Although Daniélou's hermeneutics of Shivaism and his reconstruction of its place within Hindu tradition is provocative and largely contradicts both the established opinion of many Western indologists and some aspects of Brahmanic orthodoxy, it certainly deserves to be discussed with a proper approach and not simply an a priori condemnation that fails to do justice to its valuable insights and implications.

4. Polytheism and Eros

Another point that may well lead to misunderstandings is the rather immediate and superficial association of any polytheistic religion – for example Hinduism, or more precisely Shivaism according to Daniélou – with some kind of erotic excess and the dangers of relating the spiritual dimension of human beings with a pseudo-deification of sexuality. Needless to say, although a detailed exposition of eroticism in the thought of Daniélou would far surpass the scope of this text, a very succinct exposition of one central aspect may help clear up this unfortunate misunderstanding. When Daniélou translates ānanda as "voluptuousness", he emphasizes a specific perspective in considering the mode in which the Absolute is manifest that is closely related to the Tantric tradition. In actual fact, the question of pleasure (in the semantic field of the very far-reaching and complex association of ānanda-bhoga-kāma [bliss, pleasure, desire]), since it is subject to the degrees of perception developed by the adept in the course of his ritual and spiritual practice, can hardly be understood unless related to will/desire [icchā/kāma] and passion [rāga]. The meaning of these two concepts and especially the use of the latter in the Tantric tradition do not refer to the pleasure of the individual as an isolated being, but rather to an ontologically structuring force surpassing the parameters of individual existence (12). From this point of view, no expansion of consciousness can occur unless the perceptual and cognitive faculties are involved in experiencing the whole process, and in this sense any suppression of sexuality would be rather detrimental to the scope of liberation (13). It should be clarified that this aspect is not only expounded in abstruse and marginal treatises of Indian tradition. Indeed, if we take a look at the cosmogonic function of sexuality and its ritual derivations, we find that it can be traced back to canonical texts like the Bhādarśinīya Upaniṣad 6.4.3 and, despite Brahmanic efforts at domestication, transgression plays a central role not only in the ritual but also in the scriptural tradition of Hindus. Daniélou's emphasis on the erotic aspect of Indian religion may help open doors that are sometimes meant to be kept closed as a result of a certain image-construction based on the primacy of moral standards – some of them even alien to Hinduism, or at least not entirely compatible with its richness and complexity. Such "moral standards" relate rather to a history of "manipulated perceptions", since many elements of what is today repeated and preached in mainstream Hindu religion are closely related to Western perceptions of Hinduism in the XVIII century. Such aspects survive nowadays not only passively: their permanence leads
to a drastic delimitation or rather a reduction of the general horizon of experience and thought. One of the most famous reformers of Indian religion, Ram Mohan Roy, insisted on the role of Vedic monotheism against the impurities of the bhakti movements, Puranic literature and various other expressions of a dangerous polytheism threatening the unity and coherence of the most ancient world religion (14). According to this picture, polytheism appears as a danger because it introduces an uncontrollable heterogeneity into the extensive religious domain of Hinduism. It is, however, perhaps this very heterogeneity that dynamizes institutionalized conceptions with its own body of doctrines (for example, what is now understood as the advaita vedānta according to Shankara) and also a very broad area of sacred practices from diverse origins, aiming at different results. Certain ritual practices like those appearing in the Todala Tantra (XIV century CE), or the attempt to surpass the classical antithetical view of puruṣa and prakṛti in the medieval compendium Śakti-samgama Tantra – where prakṛti is equated with the unique source and origin of all without resorting to puruṣa (15) –, or the role of female deities or mahāvidyā (all of them sexually powerful) ruling the energy centres in Swāmī Pūrnānanda’s treatise Šaṭ-Cakra-Nirāpata (XVI century CE), show us that emphasis on a plurality of deities (especially female ones) is by no means a sign of fragmentation or dispersion, but rather of an intensifying movement belonging to the very core of Hindu religion. Without the Puranic heritage, such a transformative movement within the Indian tradition is barely imaginable, although the power of these trends is the object of unending efforts to reintegrate it into the mainstream – that is, of clearly observable attempts either at domestication or at moral condemnation and repression.

The roots of Daniélou’s defence of polytheism are connected with this Tantric vision, in that each aspect of manifested reality can be lived intensively and consciously, in consonance with its divine aspect. He expresses this thought quite clearly in Shiva and the Primordial Tradition: “Tantric rites and practices, open to all without restriction of caste, gender or nature, are meant to permit anyone to draw closer to the divine through these three passages, on the level of existence, consciousness and sensual pleasure. Tantric practices are many, because there is no aspect of the created, no form of action that is not an image, a reflection, an expression of the nature of the divine being” (16). In this sense, polytheism means the possibility of conceiving each aspect of creation as divine and living accordingly. It shows that the substance of the created world and the substance of the creator are the same, and that each aspect of this manifold nature develops according to its transcendental inscription in the very source to which it belongs.

Notes:
(1) A clear example of this prejudiced approach is Hegel’s affirmation that in Indian religion “the overflowing interiority impregnates the outer existence without any bearing, and the interpretation of the Absolute belonging to this world of imagination is nothing other than an unending dissolution of the one in the many and a chaotic whirl destroying all contents” (G. W. F. Hegel, Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Religion I, Frankfurt 1986, p. 338).
(2) Identifying polytheism with idolatry is in fact a product of the imagination of the first Western voyagers in India. It has to be borne in mind that back in the XVIII century – when the first Indian monuments were discovered and the first Sanskrit texts translated – the only way in which Europeans could explain non-Christian religions was by means of the aniconic/idolatric dichotomy, which implied a very strong judgment of values. This distinction permeated not only the imagination of the European population of the period but also the minds of Indian people and their own perception of the Hindu view of the world (cf. Catherine Weinberger Thomas. “Le crepuscule des dieux. Regards sur le polythéisme hindou et l’athéisme bouddhique”, in: Francis Schmidt (ed.). L’impossible polythéisme. Études d’historiographie religieuse, Paris 1988, p. 225).
(3) The book review was written by Jamshed Mavalwala of the University of California in 1966. The positive character of the review is beyond any doubt, confirmed by the final judgment at the end of the review: “The style [of the book] is lucid; the lack of polemic is particularly attractive. The total result is a volume that is a pleasure to behold and an invigorating experience to read. Anthropologists interested in any aspect of India can hardly fail to ignore this decisive work on its religion” (American Anthropologist No. 68, 1966, p. 242).
(4) That is, the tendency to emphasize one God [hénas theós] as the highest among many others without excluding them.

(8) Cf. supra, Note 2.


(12) Basing his analysis on Abhinavagupta's comment on the īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā and Rāmakantha's comment on the Matangapāramesvarāgama, Raffaele Torella shows quite clearly that the meaning of rāga should not be limited to the sphere of individuated feelings (pratyaya) or even unconscious imprints (vāsanā), and that its ontological significance is central to an understanding of Tantric tradition (cf. Raffaele Torella, Il Tantrismo Hindu, in: Giuliano Boccali/ Raffaele Torella. Passioni d'Oriente. Eros ed emozioni in India e Tibet, Torino 2007, pp. 61-92, especially pp.74-75).

(13) This does not mean that Daniélou deliberately ignored the ascetical way of self-realization. His book Yoga. Method of Re-integration (1949) provides sufficient evidence that he approached the subject of Indian asceticism in no superficial way.


Goethe’s Indian Inspirations

Iris Hennigfeld, Philosopher and Artist

Repeated Mirrorings: Goethe and India

The German poet and thinker Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) had a life-long interest in foreign cultures and literature. “Repeated Mirroring” (1) is a symbol, originally stemming from the field of entoptics, used by Goethe to transform life-historical events into science and arts. Just as multiple reflections between two mirrors causes colour phenomena in transparent objects, repeated reflections between the self and the world, between past and present and multiple points of view do not weaken or blur the image, but rather enhance or even complete the original experience (2). Goethe’s extensive correspondence with artists and intellectuals of his period, his interest in the arts and particularly the poetry of other nations show how he viewed and understood himself as mirrored in others.

The young Goethe was enthusiastic about Homer, the Irish poet Ossian, and Shakespeare. Later, in his journal On Art and Antiquity (Über Kunst und Altertum), which appeared between 1816 and 1832, he published Serbian, Bohemian, Slovakian and modern Greek translations. He also had a strong fascination with Asian literature. Persian and Chinese literature, for example, inspired his lyrical cycle West-Eastern Divan (West-östlicher Divan, 1819/1827), a tribute to the Persian poet Hafez with more than 200 poems, and Chinese-German Hours and Seasons (Chinesisch-Deutsche Tages- und Jahreszeiten, 1827).

At first sight, Goethe’s relationship to Indian culture seems ambivalent: Whereas he uttered critical remarks about India’s philosophy and religion, his attitude toward its literature was quite the opposite. It is not too far-fetched to see in Goethe’s interest in India not merely the expression of some of his odd “curiosities”, but rather, as Gerhard Lauer remarks, the “other side of his “classicism” (3). Throughout his life, he abundantly praised Sanskrit poetry. Here, especially Shakuntola and Meghadhuta, two works of the classical Indian poet Kalidasa, who lived in the golden age of Indian history (4th/5th century), and the Gita Govinda by the 12th-century poet Jayadeva, play a prominent role. Especially with Kalidasa, the author of Faust had some sort of a spiritual kinship.

The origin of Goethe’s fascination with Indian literature goes back to the 1780s and the Western encounter with Eastern culture. In European imagination, the high culture of India acts as some kind of countertop to Western cultural heritage and plays a crucial role in the quest for European identity (4). European interest in the Sanskrit language at the end of the 18th century paved the way for Indian influence on German ideas. Charles Wilkinson undertook the first English translation of the Baghavad Gita (1785), which induced an “oriental Renaissance” or, as it were, an “Indomania,” (5) in German Romanticism. In the case of Johann Gottfried Herder, the Orient played a distinct role in his treatise Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity (Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit, 1784-91), and he sees in the Far East the “birthplace of humanity” (“Wirge des Menschengeschlechts”) (6). Friedrich Schlegel’s treatise On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians (Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier, 1808) was a cornerstone for Indian Studies in Germany.
Several poetical works and numerous autobiographical passages in Goethe's *Journals for the Day and Year* (Tag- und Jahreshefte, 1819-1825), diaries and correspondence — especially in the years when he wrote the *East-Western Divan* — indicate his fascination with classical Indian poetry. In 1797 he wrote the ballad "The God and the Bayadere: An Indian Legend" ("Der Gott und die Bajadere. Indische Legende"). In *Notes and Essays for a Better Understanding of the West-Eastern Divan* (Noten und Abhandlungen zum besseren Verständnis des West-östlichen Divans) Goethe devotes numerous pages to Indian literature. In his poem "Pariah’s Prayer of Thanks" ("Paria. Des Paria Gebet, 1824), which consists of a prayer by a Pariah to Brahma, the telling of a legend and, finally, a prayer of thanksgiving, Goethe creates a symbol of mediation between the human and the divine and its inherent grace.

**Goethe and Jayadeva’s Gita-Govinda: An Unfinished Story**

In a letter (January 22, 1802) to his friend Friedrich Schiller, Goethe wrote about Jayadeva’s *Gita Govinda*, an epic poem about the god Krishna and his romantic affairs: "What struck me as remarkable are the extremely varied motives by which an extremely simple subject is made endless" (8). In his posthumously published essay *Indian Poetry* (Indische Dichtung, 1817/18) he also spoke in high terms of the poem: "The elaborateness of this (lyrical) painting consistently appeals to us" (9). William Jones translated the *Gita-Govinda* from Sanskrit into English (published in 1799 in Calcutta), Friedrich Hugo von Dalberg undertook a German translation in 1802, entitled *Gita Govinda oder die Gesänge Jajadeva’s eines altindischen Dichters*, which Goethe read. Jones had omitted parts of the epic poem, which were, as Dalberg writes in his preface, "too luxuriant and too bold for an European taste" (10). The German translator concedes that he had, in addition to the already attenuated verses, already toned down some others. Goethe complains, particularly for aesthetic reasons, in a letter (February 19, 1802) to his friend Friedrich Schiller, about the interventions of the German translator. Dalberg, as Goethe clearly writes, "has entirely misunderstood some very beautiful, innocent passages, and translated them quite wrongly" (11). Goethe even considered undertaking a new translation of this poem and continues in his letter: "I may perhaps translate the end myself, as this part has more especially suffered from this German blight, and you will then see the old poet in the beauty in which the English translator thought fit to leave him." (12) Goethe was well aware of the difficulties with translations and advocated deviating as little as possible from the original (13). However, in 1811 he still confessed that he would be "very happy, if I could witness a complete translation of the *Gita Govinda*" (14). Unfortunately, his plan to translate the text was never accomplished. It was not until 1829 that Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866) presented the first complete translation of the Gita-Govinda into German.

**Goethe and Kalidasa’s Skakuntala**

Sir William Jones undertook the first English translation of Kalidasa’s Sanskrit poem *Shakuntala*, which appeared in 1789. *Shakuntala* is Kalidasa’s most famous work and represents the summit of Indian classical literature. The drama is based on an episode from the Mahabharata and from the *Puranas*: The love and secret marriage between King Dusyanta and Shakuntala, foster-daughter of the hermit Kanva, the loss and retrieval of a ring and the separation and reunion of the two lovers. The drama had a great impact on German Romantics, so that one can rightly speak of the "Germans’ Shakuntala-experience" (15). In 1791 Georg Wilhelm Forster (1754-1794) published a German translation of the text and sent it to Goethe and Herder (16). Goethe must have been enchanted by the poem’s aesthetic appeal, the emphatic power of the lyrical poetry, the subtle composition of the figures, and its strong feeling for nature. Shortly after receiving the German translation, he wrote a quatrain and sent it to his friend F. H. Jacobi:

*If I want the blossoms of the early year and the fruits of its decline,  
If I want that by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted and fed,  
If I want heaven and the earth combine in one sole name,  
I name you, Shakuntala, and all at once is said.* (17)
Goethe’s “Shakuntala” represents the first poetic account of an interest for India in German literature. Henceforth, he consistently praised this gentle, profound and charming work (18). In these verses the poetic imagination of Shakuntala elevates to an ideal sphere encompassing and unifying both heaven and earth. By naming various polarities or different manifestations (“blossoms” and “fruits”, “early year” and “its decline”, “heaven” and “earth”), Goethe’s Shakuntala also symbolizes a higher unity within all differences, which already anticipates his later view of world literature.

Goethe had a philosophical mind and took a strong interest in the philosophy of his time, but several of his remarks about Kant and the German Idealists also show his reservations against any speculative, metaphysical philosophy dismissing any unbiased commitment to experience based on genuine sensual and spiritual intuition. It is not surprising therefore, that Goethe, the “eye-man” — unlike the German Romantics or the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer — was not so much attracted to Indian religion or philosophy, but particularly to its literature and poetry. In his essay Indian Poetry Goethe also refers to Shakuntala. He declared, naming Kalidasa as a prominent example, that it is the unique achievement and mission of “admirable” Indian poetry to resolve the “conflict between the most abstruse philosophy on the one hand and the most monstrous religion on the other hand” (19).

In 1826 Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) sent Goethe two of his treatises about the Baghavad Gita. Recalling their early conversations at the time of Fichte’s speculative philosophy and Goethe’s reservation against any kind of “metaphysics”, von Humboldt was rather sceptical about Goethe’s reaction. Goethe, reflecting the aesthetic impact of Indian philosophy, replied that he was not reluctant in general, but rather feared the danger of dispersing the poet’s “imagination” among the “formless and scattered”, which he “more than ever must be aware of” (20).

Goethe’s eyes (both physiological and spiritual) were educated by the condensed and strict form of ancient – especially Greek – art and sculpture, and its apotheosis as the “beautiful human being” he encountered during his journey to Italy (1786-88). His classical idea of form was one reason why Goethe, in a poem of the cycle Zahme Xenien (1827), with a tone of irony regarding “animal-headed” deities, claims: “And thus I want for once and all No animals in the gods’ hall!” (21). In the next verses he again praises the Indian poet Kalidasa, who freed poetry “from the snare of the unformed and unordered” (22):

What more pleasant man could wish?
Sakontala, Nala, these must one kiss;
And Megha-Duta, the cloud messenger,
Who would not send him to a soul sister! (23)

Goethe’s Morphology and Kalidasa’s Megha-Duta: Towards a Notion of World Literature

Since 1817 Goethe had owned an English translation of Kalidasa’s Megha-Duta (24), an epic poem with 111 stanzas about a servant at the court of Kuberas, god of wealth, who sends a message through a cloud to his wife in his hometown Alaka. In 1818, the orientalist J. L. G. Kosegarten sent Goethe a sample of his German translation. Due to its vivid description of nature and emphatic portrayal of feelings, Goethe sees in Megha-Duta a crystallization of “purely human relations” (25). In his Notes to the West-East Divan Goethe declares that “[t]he first meeting with a work such as this is always an event in our lives”, and later on he confesses: “Megha-Duta is indispensable for me” (26).

Goethe intensively studied Luke Howard’s Essay On the Modification of Clouds (1803) in 1815. Two years later he wrote in his diary: “Reflecting scientific issues. Indian wisdom” (“Nachdenken über naturwissenschaftliche Gegenstände. Indische Weisheit”) (27), and adds elsewhere that the reading of Megha-Dhuta will now follow naturally (28). In these
years, Goethe sought a synthesis between meteorology and poetry, which indicates his classical notion of form (29). In Goethe's morphological worldview, nature springs forth from the same origin and follows the same laws of being. He wrote four poems, entitled “Stratus”, “Cumulus”, “Cirrus” und “Nimbus” (December 1817-1821) and later added verses in order to introduce the context of Howard's meteorology. The initial verses, evoking a classical stillness within the movement and dynamic appearances of the clouds, are devoted to the cloud messenger Camarupa from Kalidasa's Epos Megha-Duta:

When Camarupa, wavering on the high,  
Lightly and slowly travels over sky  
Now closely draws her veil, now spreads it wide,  
And joys to see the changing figures glide,  
Now firmly stands, now like a vision flies,  
We pause in wonder, and hardly trust our eyes. (30)

For Goethe, the ephemeral nature of clouds was a visible manifestation of a higher lawful order within nature: “Everything is metamorphosis in life.” (31) Meteorological phenomena can be understood as a sensuous-suprasensuous symbol for this dynamic process of generating and reshaping the diversity of forms (Gestalten). In the opening lines to In Honour of Howard (Howard's Ehrengedächtnis), Camarupa appears as the deity of metamorphosis, who is able to realize permanence within changing conditions. Kalidasa, the author of Camarupa, implicitly figures a transformation of the seemingly grotesque world of Indian gods into images of nature and into the field of aesthetics. In this worldview the seemingly grotesque represents only the changing surface of the continuous (32). Thereby, Megha-Duta reaches a classical height, which the aged Goethe elsewhere called “world literature” (33).

Goethe's notion of world literature is the fruit of his lifelong occupation with the arts and literature of other nations. Different literatures are, just like clouds, metamorphoses of the one, and of one language which, conversely, becomes visible only in a diversity of forms (Gestalten). Thus, the term "world literature" does not indicate a standard of so-called classical transnational literature, but rather aims at a dynamic process of universal intercultural dialogue and mutual enrichment among cultures. Goethe announced that the time for world literature would come when differences within one nation are compensated by the views of others (34). Universality on an intercultural level does not mean universalizing any specific culture or merging all differences between cultures. Rather it aims at producing a shared confluence point of different cultures, which might be the aesthetic value of beauty (35).

I wish to conclude my reflections with Goethe's own words to Johann Peter Eckermann (1792–1854):

“I am more and more convinced … that poetry is the universal possession of mankind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. One makes it a little better than another and swims on the surface a little longer than another—that is all … national literature means little now, the age of world literature has begun; and everyone must work to speed up the arrival of this period (36).”

Notes:
(2) “[Sp wird man der entoptischen Erscheinungen gedenken, welche gleichfalls von Spiegel zu Spiegel nicht etwa verbleichen, sondern sich erst recht entzünden”: Goethe: Autobiographische Schriften der frühen Zwanzigerjahre, p. 569.


Goethe's diary entry for September 15, 1817.


(17) "Will ich die Blumen des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres, Will ich, was reizt und entzückt, will ich, was sättigt und nährt, Will ich den Himmel, die Erde mit einem Namen begreifen, Nenn' ich Sakuntala, dich, und so ist Alles gesagt." (On June 1, 1791)


(20) "[E]sz zieht meine Einbildungskraft ins Formlose und Difforme, worov ich mich mehr als jemals zu hüten habe". See Goethe's letter to Humboldt (October 22, 1826).

(21) "Und so will ich, ein für allemal, Keine Bestien in dem Götter-Saal!"

(22) Dorothy Matilda Figueira: Translating the Orient, p. 13.


(26) "Megha-Duta ist mir unentbehrlich." Goethe in a letter to his son dated December 19, 1817.

(27) Goethe's diary entry for September 15, 1817.


(30) "Wenn Gottheit Camarupa, hoch und hehr, Durch Lüfte schwankend wandelt leicht und schwer, Des Schleiers Falten sammelt, sie zerstreut, Da staunen wir und traun dem Auge kaum."

(31) Goethe in a conversation with Sulzlip Boisserée on August 3, 1815.


(33) See Lauer, p. 179. Rabindranath Tagore also enunciates the idea of "world literature" in his essay "Visva Sahitya".

(34) See Goethe's letter to Sulpiz Boisserée dated October 12, 1827.


Aesthetics in the Non-Dualistic Śaivism of Kaśmīr

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Nartaka ātmā
The dancer in this field of universal dance is his Self of universal consciousness.
(Verse 3.9, Śiva Sūtras, translated by Swami Lakshmanjoo)

Preliminary remarks

Dancer, actor, director or musician – all metaphors which derive from the arts or an "aesthetic experience" – play a central role in Kaśmīr Śaivism and seem to attract many people connected to the artistic field. Swami Lakshmanjoo, the last "living master" of this tradition, gives the following explanation:

What is this universal dance? It is everything that you experience in your life. It may be coming. It may be going. It may be birth, death, joy, sadness, depression, happiness, enjoyment. All of these forms are part of the universal dance, and this dance is a drama. In this field of drama, the actor is your own nature, your own Self of universal consciousness.

The Art of Drama and its related analogies referring to "the stage" of human life become relevant if we wish to inquire further into a soteriological dimension of the aesthetic field.

Since this article is a contribution to FIND’s Cahiers de la Fondation, a publication after the spirit of Alain Daniélou, I would like to highlight the deep interconnection of aesthetics and philosophy in Kaśmīr Śaivism. Since this paper deals with the most relevant concepts of this tradition, it is interesting to bear in mind that Daniélou's spirit was closely connected with those two fields, and even merged them together in his own work. Many points of connection regarding aesthetics and philosophy have been discovered fairly recently and have not been previously discussed. In this sense, I hope to contribute to FIND's interdisciplinary approach and set the ground for a comparative cross-cultural view recognising the common endeavours of those interested in the afore-mentioned fields.

The non-dualistic Śaivism of Kaśmīr has come more into the focus of Indological studies recently. This is due to the fact that in the last 30 years many scripts have been made accessible and critical text editions published. The topic thus became "fit" for scholarship and is now slowly reaching both a broader public and the field of interdisciplinary research. Although a lot of pioneering work has been done – for example by Raniero Gnoli on Abhinavagupta’s Abhinavabhāratī (which is still not fully translated) – the classical Indian aesthetic theory is gaining greater importance and attention, and recent publications give new interesting insights into the very special interconnection of Indian philosophy and Indian aesthetics. The confluence of art and philosophy, especially in the works of Utpaladeva and later on in Abhinavagupta, shows a dimension in which mere sensory experience is transcended and the door opened to mystical and spiritual experience. These authors also use refined psychological knowledge based on ancient Indian systems of thought.
This article provides an overview covering the main principles of aesthetics in Kaśmīr Śaivism providing a short glimpse into the current status of research.

Trika, which appears to be a culmination of Indian philosophy, follows the doctrine of vibration (spanda) and, contrary to other existing traditions such as Vedānta or Buddhist Schools, regards the universe as a manifestation of the divine rather than an illusory dream. If we take a look at the Trika Philosophy or the Pratyabhijñā Śaivism of Kaśmīr, we should bear in mind, as Bettina Bäumer indicates, that “we are dealing with texts and authors at least 1200 years old, and which are still in a process of editing, translation and interpretation”. As in all Indian theories of art, the concepts appear in a “context of cosmology, philosophy and spirituality” (2). Unfortunately this short text can only scratch the surface of an immensely profound topic, so I hope the reader will be inspired to dive deeper into the literature mentioned in the course of the article.

**Manifestation, Svātantryavāda and the Pratyabhijñā Philosophy**

According to Bettina Bäumer, what we generally call ‘aesthetics’ refers to “concepts of beauty, a positive approach to the role of the senses and sense-perception, an analysis of the aesthetic experience implying a whole psychology, and a philosophical understanding of reality as transparent to beauty” (3).

As mentioned above, the non-dualistic tradition of Kaśmīr Śivaism sees the world as a manifestation of the divine rather than as an illusion. This sets the ground for a positive attitude towards sensory experience. Whether we sacralize the senses in the ritualistic field or in the conscious observation of an aesthetic event, there is no abandonment or suppression of the senses. This is a common feature of Tantric schools. The following passage written by Mark Dyczkowski in one of the standard introductory works to Kashmīr Śaivism gives a brief glimpse into the theory of manifestation:

> "The nature of the Absolute, and also that of Being, is conceived as an eternal becoming (satatodita), a dynamic flux or Spanda, the agency of the act of Seeing. It is identified with the concrete actuality of the fact of appearing, not passive unmanifest Being. Appearance (ābhāsa) alone is real. Appearing (prakāśamānatva) is equivalent to the fact of being (astitva)."

Kṣemarāja writes in his commentary on the *Stanzas on Vibration*:

> "Indeed, all things are manifest because they are nothing but manifestation. The point being that nothing is manifest apart from manifestation."

> "The absolutely unmanifest, from this point of view, can have as little existence as the space in a lattice window of a sky-palace.” (4)

One of the main principles in the Trika School of Kashmir Śaivism relevant for our understanding of aesthetics is called svātantryavāda, that is, “the doctrine of the Absolute Sovereignty and Freedom of the Divine Will to express or manifest itself” (5). In its limited form within manifestation it would be called ābhāsa (vāda), and resembles a reflection of cit, universal consciousness. By recognizing the interconnection of the two distinctive principles ‘Bimba-Pratībimba’ (the archetypal original and its reflection or mirror), the whole universe appears within the consciousness or the self-consciousness (cf. Yogarāja in *Paramārthasāra*, p.39) and its expression of an advaitic, nondualistic relation (6).

Bettina Bäumer describes the development of the theory of manifestation as based on the identity of Śiva Bhairava (and the whole of reality) with light (prakāśa). She explains how the entire metaphysics of light and manifestation, when connected with autonomy (svātantrya), can be seen in the context of aesthetics. Glossing the very important term vimarśa (self-reflective awareness) as relevant to aesthetic theory, she quotes a modified version of Jürgen Hanneder’s *Mālinīślokavarttika* translation in order to explain this:
The individual is capable of self-realization by transcending the process of interdependence between manifestation (prakāśa) and its reflection (vimarśa) that leads to self-awareness. The aesthetic experience can serve by contributing to the refinement of awareness, achieved by a certain training that helps to discriminate and observe multi-sensorial perceptions.

**Pratyabhijñā Philosophy**

The philosophy of the Pratyabhijñāḥṛdayam (“The Heart or Path of Recognition”) points to what the individual self is supposed to realize, namely its union with Śiva and hence a union of subject and object, manifestation and reflection. The achievement of bliss (ānanda) is a central concern of the Trika schools and Dusan Pajin sees a clear interconnection between remembrance, recognition and bliss in the concept of camātkāra (wonder), which will be explained in detail below. “Blissful moments are based on non-intentional, involuntary remembering while voluntary remembering is governed by some (practical) aim. The common feature of blissful moments and camātkāra is overcoming time and obstacles. This brings bliss.” (8) It is through the wonder of camātkāra that we can reach states of absorption and “taste the bliss of freedom” and the divine throughout drama or music. Raniero Gnoli finds wonderful words connecting bliss and freedom in his translation of the Abhinavabhāratī:

> “The so called supreme bliss, the lysis, the wonder, is therefore nothing but tasting... of our own liberty.”
> (9) (Abhinavabhāratī XLIV, translated by R. Gnoli)

In order to taste this “liberty”, it is necessary to go through a process of mastering the emotions and the senses. The yogi achieves it through practice and meditation, a feature we commonly find in Yogic traditions. The artist undergoes special training as well.

**Arts and Aesthetics: the Aesthetic Experience in Kaśmīr Śaivism**

Arts in Kaśmīr Śaivism mainly refer to the genres of poetics and drama. The latter is considered to be the highest form, since all major genres are inherent in it: poetics, acting, music, dancing, so it is a multisensory experience for the performers as well as for the audience. Besides the Kāvyaśāstra or Alankārośāstra (both of them texts on poetics), Abhinavagupta’s commentaries on the Nātyaśastra and on the Dhvanyāloka (the light on poetic suggestion by Ānandavardhana) are of immense importance.

The aesthetic discourse in the non-dualistic tradition of Kaśmīr Śaivism was mainly influenced by Abhinavagupta and his predecessor Utpaladeva, who elaborates the theory of recognition in relation to philosophy on one side, and by bhakti hymns in his Śivastotravali on the other. Especially Utpaladeva’s thoughts on aesthetics have been investigated in detail recently in Utpaladeva, Philosopher of Recognition, which contains current perspectives and insights in a collection of articles edited by Raffaele Torella and Bettina Bäumer (10). In this book we also find comparative approaches and a clarification of terms in connection to Western systems, for example the Greek term “aesthetics”, which is connected to sense perception as such, and to the English word “aesthetics”, which is widely used and is the “crux”, since it is rooted in a Greek category (11).
Ānanda and Ānandaśakti

Beauty and ānanda (bliss) are deeply interconnected. The sense of bliss we experience when we are touched (sparśa) by beauty can be considered as direct energy of the divine. It is also called "the very ānandaśakti of the Lord":

"Every pleasure, even that which derives from ordinary objects, is ultimately only a particle of the infinite bliss of brahman, the reality which is underlying and constantly present in all conditions, even though we experience it only as an impure and limited form. It is enough if the network of artificial relations is swept away by the bliss born of sense experience in order to reveal fully the cosmic and limited bliss." (12)

Beauty as an aspect of the ānandaśakti of Śiva should be placed right after cit, the Śakti of consciousness. In descending order of manifestation, the Śaktis (energies) are cit (consciousness), ānanda (bliss in a transcendental context), icchā (will), jñāna (knowledge) and kriyā (activity). The śaktis represent the dynamic aspect of manifestation, and although Śiva is often depicted as the calm, stable, unmoving core, he will always remain in subtle touch and connection with his energies. The inherent pulsation of spanda (vibration), which permanently contracts and expands itself in the universe, is literally the heartbeat of Kashmir Śaivism (13).

Sahṛdaya

Adoration to that brilliantly throbbing consciousness, the Heart of the Lord, which takes the form of the highest Śakti and all other Śakti-s, the essence of the Universe and yet transcending it. (14)

(Introductory verse of Kṣemarāja to the Spanda-Kārika)

Hṛdaya, the heart, is a complex concept in the Kashmir Trika philosophy and regarded as the seat of consciousness. We find several translations for the term sahṛdaya which literally means "a person with a heart", but is often translated as "aesthete" or "connoisseur of beauty" (although the latter does not seem to apply to the full spiritual dimension that occurs within the contextual reading of Abhinavagupta). A main characteristic of "a person with a heart" is sensitivity. It is definitely neither dullness nor a numbed state. Especially when expanded to the soteriological level, we see that this state leads to increasing attention and an expansion of consciousness in general. Sensitivity can enable the person to attain focused states of observation – both are equally important, whether in the case of the artist and his audience or in the yoga practitioner. Bettina Bäumer translates "appreciating aesthete" and explains the term as follows

"The identification with the heart is central to the entire Trika and Pratyabhijñā system, and the Paratṛtiśīka Vivārana develops it to the utmost extent. The aesthetic experience is one of entering or accessing the heart (hṛdayamgamata, hṛdayānupraveśa), resonance with the heart (hṛdayosāmvāde), and resting in the heart (hṛdayaviśrānti), all of which are required of a sahṛdaya or appreciating aesthete." (15)
There are several important terms which will not be elaborated here, but it should be noted that viśrānti (repose, rest), mentioned in the quote above, is one of them.

Camatkāra

A sensitive person (sahṛdaya) is able to perceive a state of ‘camatkāra’ (wonder or, according to Raffaele Torella, “wondrous enjoyment”). Bettina Bäumer points to the fact that Abhinavagupta defines camatkāra (wonder) in his Abhinavabhārati (ABh I.278) and the phenomena produced by the state of wonder in the body can hardly be distinguished: “The physical changes generated by it, such as trembling, horripilation, upward shaking of body or limbs, etc. are also called camatkāra”. The two experiences come so close that we can draw the following conclusion: the aesthetic experience is also a kind of prayabhijñā, though of a passing nature (16). Camatkāra is followed by carvaṇā (chewing, tasting), both terms originally derived from the vocabulary of eating and drinking. Navjivan Rastogi devotes a whole article to the concept of camatkāra and explains that in Sanskrit it is usually applied in “the sense of some miracle or inexplicable extraordinary happening”. Furthermore he distinguishes on a philosophical level between:

a) gratification of sensual appetite, derived from camat (a kind of sound produced automatically on swallowing delicacies), a word stemming from the root cam- = to drink, to sip or to lick.

b) joyful state of a well-contented mind as a result of satisfying an appetite (called bhoga (enjoyment, indulgence)).

c) a joyous state of mind marked by self-experience devoid of objective strings (17)

The more sensitive the person, the more able he/she is to discriminate the nuances within any experience. This person will be able to receive the rasas of existence or the rasas that produce the atmosphere in an artistic creation.

Rasa

galatu vikalpokalarkāvali samullasatu ḫṛdi nīrargalatā /
bhagavannānandarasa piutāstu me cinnayī mārtiṁ //
O Lord, may the chain of the stigmas of contradictions perish.
May absolute freedom flash forth in my heart. May the image made of consciousness be flooded with the nectar of bliss.
(Śivasottrovāli 7.3) (18)

The term rasa means “essence”, “juice”, “aesthetic sentiment” or “aesthetic savouring” and appears mainly in the arts and in connection with drama or poetics, but as seen in the quote above, it is also part of the bhakti literature – in the case above, the famous Śivasottrovāli of Utpaladeva (19). We also find the term rasānanda in the context of sensual pleasure, leading to mahānanda. Mahānanda means “great bliss” or “supreme delight” and the following quote of the Vijñāna Bhairava, translated by Jaidev Singh, illustrates how Kashmir Śāivism integrates life and manifestation into the spiritual practice:

When one experiences the expansion of joy of savour arising from the pleasure of eating and drinking, one should meditate on the perfect condition of this joy, then there will be supreme delight.
(cf. Verse 72, Vijñāna Bhairava).

But the important point is “the passage from the sensual to the aesthetic, and hence to the spiritual experience” (20). As we see in the example of bhakti Literature, such concepts (and this is a common feature in many traditions, for example in
the Sufi or bhakti Movements) borrow terms from human life, especially love, which they use to make the divine, mystical experience more approachable, more understandable. Dealing with opposites or ‘extremes’, explosive metaphors hence serve as a tool of communication and meditation. Mystical language has to live with this paradox of limitation, because “the mystic cannot help using language which is also conventional (sānketika) and in a way unfit to the language-transcending experience” (21). Sheldon Pollock mentions the counterpart to rasa as the aesthetically displeasing “virasa” (tasteless) by quoting (22) Amoghavarsha’s Kavirājamārgam:

“If however one intentionally decides to join in compound expressions [the afore-mentioned] Sanskrit and Kannada words without understanding [the conditions of their combinability], the poem will be aesthetically displeasing (virasam), as when mixing drops of buttermilk with boiling milk.” (KRM 1.51, 58).

Before classifying the traditional rasas, I would like to point to the specific connotation of rasa in Kashmir Shaivism as described by Navjivan Rastogi: “the nature of rasa – rasa is the basic paradigm symbolizing a fluid state of uninterrupted flow of consciousness characterized by joy, relish and beatitude” (23).

Bharata mentions the following eight rasas in the Nāṭyaśāstra: śṛṅgāram (eros, love, attraction), hāsyam (laughter, comedy), raudram (fury), kārtvayam (compassion, pathos), bhīhatsam (odium, disgust, aversion), bhayānakam (horror, terror), viram (heroism) and odbhutam (wonder, amazement). The listed rasas result in sthāyi (permanent, basic) bhāvas, or emotional states. There are eight of them, as there are eight rasas, and eight bhāvas in the Nāṭya śāstra: rati (delight), hāsa (laughter), śoka (sorrow), krodha (anger), utsāha (heroism), bhaya (fear), jugupsā (disgust) and vismaya (wonder).

The special contribution of Abhinavagupta has to be seen in the additional śāntarasa, to which I will refer later on, but I should already mention that precisely this rasa is the source of transversal perspectives in many religious, spiritual and soteriological approaches. Gerow discusses this topic in his article “Abhinavagupta’s Aesthetics as a speculative paradigm”, in which he mentions the paradox of the rasa of tranquillity that seems to have a “flavour” of mokṣa and “risks, by its generality and ease, to make salvation aesthetic”. Furthermore he discusses fundamental secondary literature such as the 1969 classic “Śāntarasa” by Masson and Patwardhwan (24).

**The Rasa theory and Abhinavagupta**

“Rasa is not limited by any difference of space, time and knowing subject. As the taste of wine, indeed, does not stay in the vessel, which is only a means necessary to the tasting of it.” (A.Bh.291)

The rasa theory was developed partly under the influence of kāvya (poetic/drama) and contrary to the “cold Brāhmanic legacy, characterised by emotional restraint that was driven by ascetic denial and renunciation of desire (vairāgya) in this context as a generic category including terms such as kāma, rāga and trṣṇā) (25). The most important exponent of the rasa Theory is the often mentioned Abhinavagupta (950-1012A.D), which he discusses precisely in the Abhinavabhāratī, his commentary on the Nāṭyaśastra, one of the main treatises on performing arts. The work of this Kāshmirī Śaivite writer, yogi, poet, musician and philosopher has to be understood in the textual context of his whole opus and the philosophy of the Trika school, a Tantric system he himself shaped, established and transmitted as an acknowledged master in a Śaivite guru paramparā.

By calling the aesthetic experience the little brother of the mystic experience (26), one could assume that the way of the artist and the way of the yogi are similar. Being a musician and poet himself, Abhinavagupta can easily be said to have had an interest in merging the fields of art and philosophy, that is, aesthetics and spirituality, into an experience of Oneness,
especially if we consider the non-dual, universal aspect of it. In his *Tantrāloka* (Light on Tantra) we find several references to arts, music and how they can be used for meditation. But we must not forget that the main concern of this monumental work was to provide a manual or path for teachers as well as a ritualistic manual for the Kashmir Brahmanic "householder"- his main target group. At this point I would like to recall the aesthetic and sensorial dimension we find in rituals in general, and in Vedic and Tantric rituals specifically.

It belongs to the nature of rituals to (re-)create a sphere of reality using a detailed and refined "dramaturgy" to please conceptualized forms of the divine pleasing to the participants of the ritual and concretely related to the sphere of life.

**Abhinavagupta, Śānta and Śāma**

The theory of śānta rasa has a long history and was harshly criticized before finally being "officially" included by Abhinavagupta in his own system. Until then, Bharata's *Nāṭya Śāstra* was frequently discussed from different perspectives. The many perspectives on Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, Bhaṭṭa Lollata or Dhananājaya included in themselves very complex aesthetic studies. Dhananājaya, a contemporary writer of Abhinavagupta, still refused śānta rasa, mainly arguing that it couldn't be presented on stage. Abhinavagupta tried to establish śānta as an "independent and most basic" rasa, also suitable for the stage. Abhinavagupta is also an exponent of dhvani (literally means 'sound' or 'tone' but also 'allusion' and in this case dhvani represents a poetical style), the theory of Ananda Vardhana, which concedes to language the power to convey spiritual meaning. Dhananājaya followed the prominent teachings of Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka, who rejected the theory that "dramatic presentation gives rise to motive experience in the spectator as related to his individuality", or that cognition could give rise to aesthetic experience. To him, aesthetic experience is "due to the objective cognition of the presented". He does see some freedom in the experience, because the "cognising self and the cognised object are free from all limitations, which give individuality". This leads to a state of perfect rest with sattva as the predominant quality, a reference to his Vedāntic influence. This is highly emphasized in his theory of bhojakatva, one of the three powers of poetic language, which "throws the two qualities of the percipient of the aesthetic object, namely rajas and tamas, into the background and brings sattva to the forefront" (27).

Abhinavagupta’s theory on śānta (peace, calm, tranquility) contains the view that "it is the absence of affection preceding all affections. It is freedom from affections consequent on the destruction thereof" (28). The aesthetic experience enables the Self to free itself from the "entire set of painful experiences which derive from external expectations". It leads finally, according to Abhinavagupta, to a "blissful state of identity with the Universal" and opens the path to self-realization. The aesthetic experience claims to be the highest form of enlightenment: since "drama is the re-narration of the things of all the three worlds" (*N. Ś.*, I, v. 207 ). Abhinavagupta follows the tradition of Utpaladeva, who "can be viewed as the very icon of the integration of the rational and emotional sides of man". The "full fledged aesthetic system" developed by Abhinavagupta is based on Utpaladeva, to whom "we do owe the entrance of aesthetics into philosophical-religious speculation" (29). The tendency to think in a linear fashion might lead to the temptation of permanently thinking in
hierarchies, but in fact we find movements of synchronicity throughout most of the concepts. Looking for example into the tattvas, the [36] levels of reality, we find śivatattva as the “highest”. In Abhinavagupta’s Abhinavabhāratī; which lists nearly all tattvas as invocational mangalāsikhas, we find in mangala 36 a connection between śivatattva and the aesthetic sphere. In the same work, Abhinavagupta adds a mangala [37] in which he praises anuttara, the Absolute, which is one of the main characteristics he elaborates in his Trika Philosophy (30). This Absolute (as mainly described in his Vivarana of the Paratṛṣīka), despite its highest form of transcendence, permeates at the same time everything. The theory of sarvam sarvātmakam, total interconnectedness, and anuttara and its all-pervasive essence, must be seen together.

Whether aesthetics can be seen in terms of “detonating or defusing desire” is a central question Daniele Cuneo tries to answer in his homonymous article. He concludes that, in his works on art theory, Abhinavagupta follows the intention of “defusing desire” whereas the path of “detonating desire” seems to be preferred in his other texts and mainly in the writings of Utpaladeva (31). All arts or actions when elevated to the level of consciousness (cit) carry the potential of bliss. The realization of one’s Śiva nature, of one’s Self or natural state (svabhava) can eventually be inspired by the artistic process. Whether the artist or the spectator “gets stuck” in the aesthetic realm or transcends it into mystical experience will depend on his personal level of development, aspirations and ability to overcome impurities (malas). It will be the paśu (the soul which, although by nature infinite, perceives itself as limited) that must strive to be a jīvanmukta – a liberated being in this existence.

Notes:
(2) These quotations are a part of Bettina Bäumer’s paper “Some less explored sources of Aesthetics in Trika Saivism of Kaśmirī”, Institute of Advanced Studies Shimla: “National Seminar on Comparative Aesthetics in a Contemporary Frame”. November 2015
(3) Ibid. p. 4
(6) Ibid. p.16-18.
(12) As referred to by B. Bäumer in her article Beauty as Ānandaśakti in Kaśmirī Shaivism; where she also translates and quotes Silburn’s Commentary to the Dhāraṇā 73 of the Viṣṇu Bhairava, translated and commented by Lilian Silburn, Paris (Ed. De Boccard) 1983, p.174.
(13) Nemec elaborates this in his translation of the Śivadṛṣṭi describing the Śivatattva; in: Nemec, John, The Ubiquitous Śiva, Somānanda’s Śivadṛṣṭi and his Tantric Interlocutors, New York: Oxford University Press 2011. p.265.
(15) This quote is a part of Bettina Bäumer’s paper “Some less explored sources of Aesthetics in Trika Saivism of Kaśmirī”, Institute of Advanced Studies Shimla: “National Seminar on Comparative Aesthetics in a Contemporary Frame”. November 2015.
(16) This quote is a part of Bettina Bäumer’s paper “Some less explored sources of Aesthetics in Trika Saivism of Kaśmirī”, Institute of Advanced Studies Shimla: “National Seminar on Comparative Aesthetics in a Contemporary Frame”. November 2015.
(19) The reader might be interested to know that it is said that Swami Lakshmanjoo, the last "living master" of this tradition, claimed it to be his favourite book. And if forced to take only one book to the forest, it would have been the collection of devotional hymns composed by Utpaladeva.

(20) Bäumer Bettina, "Beauty as Ānandaśakti in Kaśmiri Śaivism", in Saundarya; The Perception and Practice of Beauty in India, ed. H.V. Paranjape, New Delhi: Samvad India Foundation. 2003.

(21) Bäumer Bettina "Viṣam Apy Amṛtāyate...Paramādvaita in the Mystical Haymns of the Śivastotrāvalī" in Utpaladeva, Philosopher of Recognition, ed. Torella Raffaele, Bäumer Bettina, DK Printworld, Delhi: 2015, p.27.


(23) Rastogi, Utpala's Insight into Aesthetics and his Impact on Abhinavagupta's Aesthetic Speculation p.107.


The Sanskrit terms of the quote translate as follows: kāma = love (erotic, sexual); rāga = passion, beauty, desire; tṛṣṇā = strong desire, craving, thirst, greed.


(28) Ibid. p.239.


(30) I refer to Mark Dyczkowski, who repeatedly points out in his Lecture Series on the Tantralokā that Abhinavagupta establishes "Anuttara" systematically as a superordinated principle in the Trika School of Philosophy.

(31) Cuneo Daniele, “Detonating or Defusing Desire” in Utpaladeva, Philosopher of Recognition, ed. Torella Raffaele, Bäumer Bettina, DK Printworld, Delhi: 2015, p.68.
The “parable” of limitless knowledge: Alain Daniélou and the study of Indian classical music

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Non è bella porta ma ciò che si vede attraverso
(It is not the door that is beautiful, but what is seen through it)
Alain Daniélou

There is so much to say about the activities of a tireless thinker who had decided never to stop on the threshold of knowledge!

After some thinking, I now find myself, like many others before me, looking for words to sing the praises of the precious library collection belonging to Alain Daniélou and donated by him to the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice in 1971, so that the whole community, both scientific and non-scientific, could make free use of it.

For nearly three years I have been working on the archive and have been able to appreciate this magnificent gift, whose uniqueness can be estimated only if you have the time and willingness to surrender to it and to let yourself get carried away in different fields of knowledge.

The library, donated to the Institute "Venice and the East" (IVEO) (1), has grown in line with the interests of Daniélou, who did not consider himself an academic, but he rather preferred to compare his approach to knowledge to that of a Renaissance humanist. The whole is conceived as the integration of different parts.

The Fondo Alain Daniélou is an exemplary work of preservation and collection of ancient written sources, mainly on Indian philosophy, religions and musicology. The written corpus is corroborated by audio-recordings of the oral traditions kept alive by classic musical heritage custodians (2).

The archive consists of almost 3000 books (3), some magazine issues (4), a "collection of manuscripts" (Indian musicological treatises, Sangīta śāstra, both handwritten and typewritten) (5), a card database (three hundred thousand handwritten and typewritten sheets) (6), several negatives and microfilms of manuscripts, and many heterogeneous documents (translations, articles, journey reports, conference reports, correspondence, brochures, programmes, projects, etc.).

In his autobiography, The Way to the Labyrinth, Daniélou writes:

"I was asked along with the famous singer Omkarnath Thakur, to organize a music school in the Benares Hindu University. Omkarnath became its director and I assistant director; I was also made a "professor". Here with the help of a dozen scholars, I created a research center for music documents written in Sanskrit. I had already collected several hundred manuscripts on musical theory written between 500 B.C. and the sixteenth century. We compared texts and prepared a card index on terminology. (…) The search for texts involved a great deal of work. First I had to find the manuscripts in public and private libraries, then have them recopied, and finally transcribe them into devanāgarī, the classical Sanskrit alphabet – for even in Sanskrit, each province uses a different writing system. In fact, I was far too ambitious. Instead of working on a few texts and preparing an imperfect edition, which even then would have made my reputation shine, we assembled documents on more than eight hundred works. We prepared over three hundred thousand index cards, and though this vast project was later abandoned, it still remains accessible to scholars in the Oriental section of the Cini Foundation in Venice, to which I have donated my library." (7)
As has been pointed out (8), the quality of this unique collection has less to do with the originality of the materials that make it up (which are, in fact, re-written copies, both handwritten and typewritten) than with the completeness and the focus of the corpus itself.

Daniélou’s aim was in fact to gather as many possible treatises on musicological literature mainly in Sanskrit but also in Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Telegu, Brajbaṣa, Hindi and Marāṭhi (9). The pioneering project envisaged meticulous study and exegesis: recovery of texts, copying, checking the copies, translation and analysis, comparison of the different versions, compiling indexes, cataloguing and transcription of quotations and essential references on index cards.

The anthologies of quotations concerning different topics related to Indian music, accompanying the collection of manuscripts, are the first tangible result of the “exegetical effort” made by the French musicologist and by the paṇḍit-s who worked with him. The content of these booklets is merged in the extensive paper-database whose compilation reflects the extraordinary “encyclopaedic ambitions” of its creator. The index cards not only integrate and complete the work on the manuscripts but represent one of the most creative attempts to monitor Indian musical traditions.

For this reason, their undisputed documentary value requires a systematic intervention of analysis and organization (10).

The polyhedral experience of Daniélou in India and free access to the documents collected by him in the course of his life, have allowed me to identify – almost continuously – the many references to the Hindū “sonic theology”, which is the subject of my research and which was a very dear survey area for the French scholar.

In the light of this, my research is part of a wider project for the rediscovery of the Fondo Alain Daniélou, in respect of this invaluable legacy and of his intent to promote and encourage a dialogue and exchange between scholars in different fields of knowledge.

I think it is our inescapable duty to make visible and available to the scientific community Daniélou’s valuable and eclectic contribution to the study of Indian musicological treatises, and in general to the study of musical sound and of musical cultures outside Europe.

In this regard, before concluding, it is important to remember that one of the most original results of years of research and experimentation by Daniélou in the field of Indian modal music, microtones and emotional reactions associated with the different intervals, is a musical instrument called the “Semantic” (11) currently being set up, but which can be heard at the FIND Foundation headquarters in Paris.

Daniélou’s work is an essential invitation to the persevering and concerted study of musical science and of the many threads that bind Indian music both to the aesthetic and to the mystical-religious dimensions.
nāda bheda apramāṇa
(disclosure of sound is boundless)
Rāga hindola, dhrupad

Venice and the East library at the Giorgio Cini Foundation where the A. Daniélou’s archive is located.

Manuscript Collection.

Manuscript Collection.

Index card.

Incipit of the Manuscript “Rāga Candrodaya”

Unesco Lp Collection.

Notes:
(1) Currently the Institute, which has received other donation, such as Tiziano Terzani’s archive, is been renamed “Centro di Civiltà e Spiritualità comparate” (Centre for Compared Civilisations and Spiritualities).
(2) Family lineage of apprenticeship, gharānā. See Unesco Collection.
(3) The Veda and the major Purāṇa-s, all the classical literature of the six orthodox schools of Hindū philosophy, darśana-s; many English and French works on religion, philosophy, art and architecture, music and dance written until the late sixties.
(4) Issues of the Journal of the Music Academy of Madras, of the Sangit Natak Akademi Journal and of The World of Music Journal, etc.
(5) The manuscripts and the typescripts, almost 300 texts, appear only partially in the Catalogo del Fondo Alain Daniélou edited by Alessandro Grossato (Orientalia Veneziana 1990); I am currently working on the edition of a Descriptive Catalogue of the Collection of Manuscripts of the Alain Daniélou archive, forthcoming publication by summer 2016.
(6) Index cards (14 cm x 10 cm).
(8) See the Catalogo del Fondo Alain Daniélou edited by A. Grossato.
(9) The texts come from several Indian libraries (Varanasi, Kolkata, Chennai, Pune, Mumbai, Trivandrum, Tanjavur), from some European libraries (Indian Office library in London, and the National library in Paris), as well as from private collections.
(10) The incompleteness of the existing documentation led me to the decision to draft the aforementioned Descriptive Catalogue of the Mss collection.

http://www.fnd.org.in/danielou-semantic/
A new window on the world: FIND’S Website restructured and redesigned

In the course of last year, FIND’s whole team embarked on a very challenging task: the restructuring and redesign of our official website in its trilingual format English, French and Italian. A major part of that task has been accomplished, and a new window on the world is now displayed when the Internet surfer opens the site of the Indian Europe Foundation for New Dialogues.

Redesign was carried out by Valentina Barsotti with the support of Christian Braut and Walter Beschmout, while the technical restructuring was carried out by Christian Braut and Walter Beschmout with contributions by Valentina Barsotti. As far as content is concerned, Riccardo Biadene and Petra Lanza have reshaped and renewed the whole domain of Artistic Dialogue, which entails not only concerts and workshops but also film production (Riccardo Biadene’s documentary Into the Labyrinth). Adrián Navigante, Sarah Eichner and Anne Prunet have provided the Intellectual Dialogue section with new images and very precise textual references to events, projects and interactions on an international scale, including congresses, seminars, workshops and special events of intellectual interest.

FIND’s President, Jacques Cloarec, has expressed his gratitude to the team involved in this first phase of the work: Valentina Barsotti (www.takk.studio), Christian Braut, Walter Beschmout, Riccardo Biadene, Petra Lanza, Adrián Navigante, Sarah Eichner, Kenneth Hurry and Alan Taylor.

Although an important part of the task has been successfully achieved, the restructuring of the website should be seen as work in progress, since its contents are subject to change. FIND’s team is constantly working to improve quality even in minor details (such as IT defects, language and typing mistakes, as well as the updating of existing content), which has to be done incessantly, with the awareness that it is a permanent process.

We invite friends of FIND and all those interested to click on the following link: www.find.org.in. Take a look: we hope you enjoy it!