

TRANSCULTURAL DIALOGUES

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SUMMER SOLSTICE

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FINE
India-Europe Foundation
for New Dialogues



INTELLECTUAL
DIALOGUE

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Jacques Cloarec
FIND Honorary President

Dear Friends and Readers,

Four years ago, at the beginning of 2015, FIND decided to change the name of its online publication from *FIND Newsletter* to *Cahiers de la Fondation* (the connecting thread remained “Indialogues”). This change, as FIND’s Advisory Committee President Anne Prunet said in an explanatory letter included in the first issue of the *Cahiers de la Fondation*, was not a mere change of label, but indicated a considerable development in our activities. This development was reflected in the contents of the *Cahiers de la Fondation* and in the level of the texts available to readers in each of its issues.

In this case too, I am glad to announce another change of name. The cycle of the *Cahiers de la Fondation* has reached a symbolic completion (or shall we say “limit”?), and FIND’s online publication will henceforth be called *Transcultural Dialogues*. What does this change of name mean? FIND’s Newsletter was merely informative, combining short texts and announcements of events, whereas the *Cahiers de la Fondation* mirrored precise and open-minded intellectual work on many aspects of Indian and European culture. This clear difference was based on a common dialogical intention. In the present case, *Transcultural Dialogues* adds new elements and expresses a challenge: the heritage of Alain Daniélou, the main focus of which remains, of course, India and Europe, is not limited to the Indo-European field. Daniélou’s intuitions on animism, his thoughts on Dravidian and Munda ethnic groups, his emphasis on the value of a religion of Nature, and his use of both theoretical and experiential comparatism beyond textual parameters reaches out to cultures and forms of religious thought that are not limited to India and Europe.

The change from *Cahiers de la Fondation* to *Transcultural Dialogues* was already inscribed in last year's intellectual production. The last issue of *Cahiers de la Fondation*, for example, presented a text on African Voodoo (not written – mind you – by a Western scholar but by a Voodoo priest with a remarkable background of his own local culture). Such a contribution also does justice to the heritage of Daniélou's work. In the first place, the publication of the text on African Voodoo relates to FIND's "Transcultural Encounters" Forum, in which interdisciplinary research and discussion encompass not only different forms of Hindu and European classical tradition, but also Amerindian, African and Far-Eastern cultural, religious and philosophical clusters. Secondly, one only needs to read Daniélou's writings, for example his essay for UNESCO written in 1978 on the Relationship between Dravidian and Negro-African cultures, or his contribution to the Latin-American review *Takiwasi* dated 1992 on the religious use of psychoactive substances. Last but not least, the name of Alain Daniélou is not only recorded in the register of Linga Rāja at Bhuvaneshwar and in Via Alain Daniélou at Zagarolo, Italy, but also in the Senegalese village of Sindia, West Africa!

The online review *Transcultural Dialogues*, as FIND's Director of Research and Intellectual Dialogue, Adrián Navigante, tells me, intends to broaden the horizon of cultural exchange with interdisciplinary contributions, since interdisciplinary research is now taking the place of encyclopaedic knowledge. FIND's idea of "dialogue" entails an attitude that is not so common in the West: a willingness to learn from "insider" knowledge, rather than imposing pre-ordained patterns of domination based on the exclusivity of Western knowledge. In this sense, *Transcultural Dialogues* in many ways expresses the same type of open-mindedness as FIND's Intellectual Forum "Transcultural Encounters", where debates go beyond the India-Europe axis – with the aim of further feeding and deepening related research. In a way, this is a symbol of the type of work carried out on FIND's Research and Intellectual Dialogue platform, proving itself adequate to face the challenges of our times.

Wishing this project every success, I look forward to seeing the spirit of Alain Daniélou taking shape in new contexts and with new (trans-)cultural inputs.

Jaques Cloarec



Adrián Navigante

Director FIND Research and Intellectual Dialogue

ALAIN DANIÉLOU AND KĀŚĪ: A PATH OF INTEGRATION

The present essay is a lecture that Adrián Navigante delivered at the Alice Boner Institute, Vārāṇasī, on March 5 in the context of the program “Lived Sanskrit Cultures in Vārāṇasī 2019”, organized by the universities of Heidelberg, Würzburg and Banaras. Since the text is published without any modifications, it should be borne in mind that the location of the speaker is Varanasi and all the deictic forms correspond to that location.



Terrace of the Alice Boner Institute in Varanasi. Photo: Adrián Navigante

India and the Western imagination

Alain Daniélou (1907-1994), like many Westerners that at some point in their life came to this country and especially to this legendary city (whatever their ideological orientation and personal feelings), belongs to the long and fascinating history of imaginary appropriation of India. I do not intend to trace this imaginary appropriation back to the origins of imperialism (Vasco da Gama, 1469-1524), or – even more complicated – to the ancient roots of imperial expansion (Alexander the Great). For me, the imaginary appropriation of India becomes interesting if we trace it back to an ep-

ochal coincidence that took place in the XVIII century. At the time of the Enlightenment and the enthronement of reason, a French orientalist, Abraham Hyacinthe Duperron (1731-1805), translated a collection of 15 Upanishads, enabling the modern Western world in search of its lost soul (as the Swiss psychologist C. G. Jung would put it) to approach the enigmatic and promising spirit of India. Although Duperron, like the encyclopaedists and the revolutionaries of 1789, was French, instead of a reductive epistemic reasoning, he disclosed a metaphysical and spiritual amplification (contained in the Upanishadic corpus he translated): *ātmavidyā*

“Daniélou’s Shaivism was closely related to Kāśī, where he didn’t exactly discover, but rather re-encountered or re-cognized the god of his childhood”

or Self-knowledge, meaning at the same time “knowledge of oneself” and “knowledge of the Self” (through the identification *ātman-brahman*).

It is also worth noticing that Duperron didn’t translate the Upanishads from the Sanskrit, but from Persian, and that the published translation was not in French but in Latin¹. India’s irruption into modern Western culture was characterized by the constitutive effacement of both source and target languages. We can take that aspect as a symbolic anticipation of what came next: a proliferation of inventions and reinventions of Indian culture: Schopenhauer’s fusion of Brahmanism and Buddhism in the doctrine of the negation of the will; Madame Blavatsky’s concoction of Tibetan Lamanism, Puranic cosmology, Gnostic and Rosicrucian doctrines which led to her famous *Secret Doctrine*; or René Guénon’s invention of a primordial tradition with its roots in a mythic version of Śaṅkaracārya’s Advaita Vedānta. The line traced by German Indology of the XIX century (which extends to our time) saw such experiments as a deviation from the norm (of course, a norm identified with the source language of the canonical texts), but even the scientific utopia of hard-core philologists couldn’t do without an imaginary basis. Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), one of the giants of Vedic studies, died without knowing India (and of course without regretting it). The thing was no better with Orientalists who, even at the time of the French Revolution, already knew India, like Henry Colebrook (1765-1837). For him, the

culture of the continent was represented by the type of (reformed) Brahmanism that fitted the expectations and needs of the colonialists.

As I said, Alain Daniélou also belongs to this history, but his story is quite different. We can take the personal equation of somebody to ask ourselves *in which way* a story belongs to history. I would say that Alain Daniélou belonged to the history of the imaginary appropriation of India in a diametrically opposed way to the authors I have mentioned so far, and I would like, beginning with his story, to show why and how. In doing that, I also intend to say something about his relationship with Kāśī and the way the local culture of this city changed his way of understanding the world. But Daniélou’s story is also connected with other stories that are part and parcel of the same “differentially articulated” history.

The European diaspora and Kāśī

At the beginning of the XX century, a group of Europeans established themselves in this city and adopted it as a homeland. We find ourselves in an India between the 1930s and the 1940s, that is, far away from the worldwide phenomenon of modernized Yoga and New-Age spirituality that constituted a massive “passage to India” in the last decades of the XX century. It was not a pattern of dominance (like that of the colonialists) that inspired their actions and thoughts, but one of visionary identification. This pattern is quite complex and has nothing to do with any passive fusion with the immediate environment. It consists of dis-

ciplined study, mimetic elaboration, selective reconstruction and creative expansion.

The first of these Europeans is the English poet Lewis Thompson (1909-1949), a cultivated British author who baffled both Indian anglophiles and orthodox Hindus with his humble attitude towards Indian life and tradition, as well as with his quite peculiar spiritual search. Thompson was untouched by the commonplaces of colonial racism and sought to insert himself in a tradition of uninterrupted spiritual gnosis going beyond the mediation of books. Before arriving in Vārāṇasī in the early 1940s, he had spent years in Southern India working on the effacement of the ego in poetry in order to reach the “absolute level” of literary practice (which for him coincided with *Līlā*, the divine play). Short after his arrival in the City of Light, he writes in his diary: “The vision-quality of sight has changed”². And it is a distillation of sight and an increasing vision that he cultivated in Kāśī until his untimely death (caused by sunstroke) at 40.

The second European of the artistic diaspora in Vārāṇasī is Alice Boner (1889-1981). Unlike Lewis Thompson, her life was not amputated by fate like that of the poet, and she could develop her insights and bring her work to maturity in a long-standing relationship with Kāśī, a city which ended up being her home for forty years. Alice Boner could be a subject of a separate talk, especially in this house, but I shall limit myself to saying (in the words of Bettina Bäumer) that her “main aim, both in the practice of art and in its understanding, has been the penetrating vision”³. If artistic creation can be understood as giving form to the formless, or manifesting the unmanifest, Alice Boner’s vision seems to retrace the way up to the ideal space where the full content of life may be experienced. Kapilā Vātsyāyan related this space with the *antarhṛdaya ākāśa* of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII-I, 1-3)⁴. This comparison can be

made only if we bear in mind that Alice Boner was – of course with the exception of Stella Kramrisch, who did not reside in Vārāṇasī but in Kolkata – the first modern European artist with a deep awareness of Indian traditional arts and the role of the experiential metaphysics. Her translation of the *Śilpa Prakāśa* (published in 1965) and of the *Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad* (1982) are clear examples of this. With the help of Paṇḍit Sadāśiva Rath Śarmā she could not only grasp the essentials of Śilpa Śāstra but realized that Indian tradition is a key to the development of modern artists (both in Europe and in India, since many modern Indians are fully detached from the past).

Alain Daniélou is the third of these figures, on whom I would like to focus this talk. His profile cannot be drawn so easily as in the case of the previous figures. He was known as a musician, painter, musicologist, indologist, philosopher and writer. Which of these epithets could be said to do justice to his life? His detractors say none of them, his supporters say all of them (Daniélou was quite an outspoken non-conformist and his reception is therefore very polarized). I would like to retrace those epithets to a sort of common denominator: Shaivism. Daniélou’s Shaivism was closely related to Kāśī, where he didn’t discover, but rather re-encountered or re-cognized the god of his childhood, as he explains in his autobiography: “Shiva is the god of the universe, the ruler of all living things, trees and animals as well as human beings. [...] Men built sanctuaries to honor him, but his true temple is nature, especially the forest [...]. Here at last was the god I had vaguely sensed in my childhood and had secretly been searching for all my life”⁵. In 1937, during a walk on the *ghāṭs* with a Brahmin, he found out that the abode of the Mahārāja of Rewa (Rewa Kothi, located only three hundred yards away from Alice Boner’s house) could be rented, and that the price was not higher than what he and his friend, Raymond Burnier, were paying at

English hotels. That was the beginning of a fifteen-year sojourn in this city, intentionally far away from the Anglo-Indian culture of that time. It was in this city and in a traditional milieu that Daniélou learned Hindi, Sanskrit, classical Indian music and philosophy⁶. It was also in the orthodox milieu of this city that he was initiated into Shaivism by order of Swāmī Karpātrījī⁷ (whom he knew very well), and he was called from then on “Shiva Sharan”. I think that initiation was important, but not in the sense most people today would believe. What I mean is that, in the context of “globalized Hinduism”, the usual attitude in the West is to search for “initiation” (overlooking altogether

the question of *adhikāra*) almost as an excuse to become a “guru”, that is, to stop learning and to start imparting. Daniélou might have had some other points we may criticize, but in this respect, he never confused a question of life-changing perspective with a question of empowerment and spiritual enlightenment.

Alain Daniélou and the presence of Shiva

Daniélou’s initiation was important because it enabled him to understand the logic of a culture from the inside, without falling back on reductionisms of any kind. However, this



Adrián Navigante’s lecture at the Alice Boner Library. Photo: Prof. Jörg Gengnagel

change did not efface the former Daniélou; it rather integrated him on another level of understanding. Daniélou never saw his *dīkṣā* as an event, but as a symbol of a whole process that not only re-educated him as a young adult, but also brought back to him a primal experience and transformed it into a vision for the future (not only the future within the framework of his own story, but also that of the history he belonged to). His primal experience is retold in his autobiography under the title “the discovery of the divine”; the setting is a forest in Brittany. Daniélou writes the following: “In one of the farthest corners of my father’s property was a thick wood with trees planted too close together. It was like an abandoned tree nursery, grown wild and as impenetrable as a jungle. I had cleared several narrow paths through the woods and spent long hours nestled among the friendly trees. Here alone, I could sense a mystery far greater than that of the ordinary human world. I created small sanctuaries and adorned them with sacred objects, symbols of the forest gods”⁸. This early experience of the divine was sometime later destroyed by his parents. His mother, a pious Catholic, gave him a gold cross blessed by the Pope to replace his forest altar, of course with the intention of sealing the end of his pagan tendencies. In view of this attitude, Daniélou concludes: “The religion of humans has nothing to do with the divine reality of the world”⁹. His vision for the future is something that developed when Daniélou definitively returned to Europe (at the beginning of the 1960s) and, after more than twenty years of immersion in the India of that time, felt himself a total exile¹⁰. In fact, he left Vārāṇasī right after Independence and moved to Southern India. Unfortunately, I must limit myself to barely mentioning his fruitful collaboration with the Indian pandit Ramachandra Bhatt, whose exceptional work and the influence he had on Daniélou would deserve a separate lecture no longer focused on Vārāṇasī but rather

on Adyar and Pondicherry. It was at that time that Daniélou found in the ancient layers of pre-Christian Europe (Etruscan religion, the Dionysian mysteries, Mithraic cults) parallels to the kind of religion that Shivaism was for him: 1. a religion embracing all levels of reality (from plants and animals to superior beings) as the body of the god, 2. a path of self-knowledge where moral principles do not cloud the process of learning, and 3. a living tradition preventing both the extreme fragmentation of atheistic individualism and the lethal rigidity of religious fanaticism.

While Lewis Thompson and Alice Boner emphasized, through their readings of the Upanishads, the experiential way of the artist back to the space challenging the very ontological constitution of *nāma-rūpa*, Alain Daniélou (well-aware of the refined metaphysics of transcendence in the Indic tradition) attempted to embrace the disclosure of divine energy in every aspect of the manifested world – the manifested world being the body of Shiva. The disclosure of the divine Shakti is manifold; therefore, Polytheism was for him the logical correlate of radical transcendence, as well as its appropriate phenomenological expression. This means that radical transcendence was ultimately no philosophy of the One but acknowledgment of the non-One (that which is impossible to grasp) and hence the need to understand the divine energy perspectively. That is perhaps the reason why he resorted many times to the Tantric-Puranic phrase *ekāśabdātmikā māyā* (cf. *Karpatriji’s Śrī Bhāgavat Tattva*, where he quotes the *Mudgala Purāṇa*¹¹). Embracing multiplicity meant for Daniélou remaining faithful to the different aspects of Shiva and aware of our limited role in creation.

It is impossible to even summarize the inexhaustible corpus of ancient Shaiva mythology in the context of this talk, but it is widely known that if a key-word definition is attempt-

ed, one should choose the term “paradox”. It has become a commonplace to say that Shiva is life and death, creator and destroyer, and even to relate his nature to the Latin expression *co-incidentia oppositorum*. But let’s go one step further. For Daniélou, Shiva is also the expression of desire in its most intensive form, hence his

tends not only upwards but also downwards. At the same time, Daniélou was very attentive to what John Marshall wrote in his book about the pre-Vedic civilization of the Indus Valley¹⁴ about the (in the meantime “famous”) seal depicting a male god. This god who seats in yogic posture, surrounded by animals and with

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ithyphallic character (*ūrdhva-medra*), symbol of the most powerful self-affirmation of Life. This central aspect - even if it can be said to challenge in a certain sense the Vedic condemnation of *śiśnadevā*¹² as well as the negative view of desire propounded by Buddhism (by means of the essential relationship between *tṛṣṇā*, that is, “thirst” or “craving” and *duḥkha*) - should not be reduced to eroticism. In the Indian context, ithyphallicism is ambivalent, because it does not only mean priapism (or erotic surplus) but also abstinence – if we leave aside the question of seminal retention in Tantra: *vajrolī sādhanā*. We should remember that, for example, in *Mahābhārata* (XIII, 17, 45-46), Shiva is called *ūrdhvaliṅga*, that is, a raised linga – which does not shed its seed¹³. Shiva’s desire circulates in all walks of life and enhances each aspect of human existence. What does this mean for Daniélou? His theory of perception is in this respect worthy of attention: in opposition to spiritualist authors, Daniélou tended to emphasize the fact that the divine is located on a higher level of perception, that is, the divine presents not only an analogical character with regard to the immanence of the world and the experience of the senses, but also a character of relative continuity, and this continuity ex-

an erect phallus, was considered a prototype of Shiva. Marshall called him Paśupati and Daniélou used this name extensively to speak about Shiva¹⁵; he saw in this iconography the prehistoric anticipation of what he could at the same time read in the mediaeval Purāṇas and learn in the dialogue he cultivated with pandits and Shaivite sādhus.

A philosophy of experiential expansion

Alain Daniélou did not reject scholarship altogether, but he never defined himself as a scholar and even warned against the entanglement of the intellect in purely textual knowledge, that is, he saw a problem in the detachment of the intellect from a philosophy of concrete experience. In his autobiography he writes: “The cultural importance of Benares has nothing to do with the university. It depends on the great traditional scholars who teach a few chosen disciples in their homes”¹⁶. Of course scholarship has changed and the situation of pandits in the reformed social structure after the Independence of India has also changed, so that many things today should be reconsidered before formulating such a judgement. But Daniélou’s polarization has to be understood in its own context: during the years following the

Independence of India, increasing funding by powerful industrialists led to the setting up of modern universities, whose method was totally detached from the kind of traditional learning that Daniélou had seen and experienced in Kāśī. This was for Daniélou the beginning of another civilization that not only ran parallel to the traditional one, but also sought to destroy it.

Of course one may point to two problems: 1. The lack of detailed analysis of complex transformation processes in Indian society and culture from 1948 onwards, and 2. An out-dated view of (at least one part of) Western scholarship, which has proven to be a source of enrichment for the understanding of the religious and philosophical complex called "Hinduism". But we should not forget the perspective from which he was speaking: he had embraced the traditional Hindu world as a source of values he did not consider so simple to replace, especially by a model that cannot be fully separated from certain historical phenomena like colonialism, imperialist wars and totalitarian regimes. Concerning Western scholarship, we have to say that many indologists in France at that time had no contact with the Indian world, and Daniélou was convinced that that branch of European indology (as the discipline of classical text interpretation) would never be able to grasp the complexity and integrality of the Hindu universe, however competent its Sanskrit scholars might be – at least by European standards.

Had Alain Daniélou remained his whole life in India, his work and heritage would not be as interesting as they actually are, especially for the challenges of our 21st century. When he returned to Europe, he took it upon himself to re-discover India in Europe (perhaps in the same way as he had re-discovered Shiva in India). His attempt to synthesize Indian and ancient European religion, is the last and - in

my opinion - most creative and interesting step along his "path of integration", an expression I would actually use to summarize his life. It was his conviction that what he had incorporated and understood as Shaivism had once been a religious complex with different nuances, but similar cultic, ritual and even symbolic patterns. Once perceived and traced, this should become a way of life in the face of the manifold problems of modern (or, as we would say today, "global") civilization, of which I name only two: the Ecological crisis (the so-called "anthropocene") and an increasing polarization between nihilistic atheism and religious fanaticism. How he understood his Shaivism in the last period of his life should be emphasized as a closing remark: this was a conscious process led by an unprejudiced intellectual effort to understand the universe beyond the limitations of modern rationality, partly by scientific inquiry, partly by artistic imagination, partly by a religious attitude (where myths and symbols may become realities), including all levels of experience. The title of his autobiography, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, summarizes his whole life's journey by means of an ancestral symbol expressing (as Daniélou himself said in an interview at Zagarolo, Italy) a spirally-coiled path along which one does not "lose", but rather "finds" oneself. Finding oneself is the result not only of integrating several elements of different cultures as personal (and also collectively functional) myths to fill one's life with meaning, but also the result of freeing oneself as far as possible from the inherited constraints of empty dogmas, prejudices, aversions, envies and inferiority complexes that separate us from the rest of creation and make it impossible to embrace (or at least perceive) its fullness. •

1 Duperron had also made a French version, but it was never published.

2 Lewis Thompson, *Journals of an Integral Poet: 1932-1944*, Virginia 2006, p. 386

3 Bettina Bäumer (ed.), *Rūpa Pratirūpa, Alice Boner Commemoration Volume*, New Delhi 1982, p. v.

4 Kapila Vatsyayan, *The Indian Arts: Their Ideational Background and Principles of Form*, in: *Rūpa Pratirūpa, Alice Boner Commemoration Volume*, pp. 11-26, here p. 22.

5 Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, New York 1987, p. 140

6 His teachers were Vijayānand Tripāthī (philosophy), one of the great scholars of Vārāṇasī, his son Brahmānand Tripāthī (Indian languages), and Shivendranāth Bāsu (music), known to his familiars as Śāntu Bābū, one of the finest Viṇā players in Northern India.

7 The initiation was carried out by Swami Brahmānand Sarasvātī, who later on became (by recommendation of Swāmī Karpātrī) the first Śāṅkaracārya of Jyotir Māṭh.

8 Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 5.

9 Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 6.

10 Not only because he was out of sync in Europe, but also because the India of Gandhi and Nehru had nothing to do with the traditional milieu in which he had been immersed back in the 1930s. This would open another long debate about the modern intellectual reform after India's independence, a debate I cannot and I don't want to enter in the context of this talk.

11 Daniélou never commented on that *Purāṇa*, which dates back to the 11th century (although an exact dating is impossible) and deals with the deity Ganesha. Probably what interested him is that in this text Ganesha is the ultimate reality of the world but his manifestations are endless including eight *avatāra* incarnations (the motive of *avatāra* being in this case a way of expressing the idea of a progressive disclosure of the divine in the world and a perpetual asymmetry between the energy and its visual manifestation).

12 There is a long debate about the translation of the Vedic passage concerning the "phallus worshippers" (*śiśnadevā*), that is, whether the Sanskrit compound should actually be translated in this way or whether the verse refers to a condemnation of lustful people (in which case it is true that *śiśna* is not *liṅgaṃ*).

13 Cf. Wendy Doniger, *Shiva: The Erotic Ascetic*, 1981, p. 9. The basic Sanskrit expression for abstinence is *ūrdhvaretas* (drawing up of the seed) or even *ūrdhvagāmivṛyaḥ* (with his seed moving upwards).

14 John Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, 3 volumes, 1931.

15 I leave aside the debate about whether that seal depicts a Proto-Shiva or a seated bull (cf. Asko Parpola, *Deciphering the Indus Script*, 1994), this is not important in considering Daniélou's expansion of Shaivism.

16 Alain Daniélou, *The Way to the Labyrinth*, p. 144.



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CONCEPT OF KÁLA IN HINDU ASTRONOMY

“Man lacked the enchanted hands of the unseen forces that created the universe brilliantly; but how he attempted to explore the mysteries with his limited talent and skill is no less splendid. The moment he opened his eyes he observed: on the one side lay stupendous beauty and on the other stood unyielding principles. Looking with curiosity into the laws that connect things in nature, he tried to grasp ideas from this. His ventures pass on from one generation to another and finally he has created an artificial world of his own”¹

Note: The author's use of Sanskrit quotation conventions has been retained.

There is nothing beyond Kála in this world. Everything is contained in Kála. When the human being was born he would see the planets rising and setting every day. He must have been surprised to see that all activities occur at fixed intervals. This same surprise inspired him to discover the interval of these events, which is called Kála. People in every corner of the world started defining it in their own way. First and foremost, the discussion about Kála is described in the Rig Veda², the earliest available literature in the world. After this, being a part of the Vedas also gave Kála a minor scale in Hindu astronomy.

Almost all the texts of Hindu astronomy describe two types of Kála: one is Sukshma and other is Sthoola Kála. Some texts like Aryabhatiya had a different point of view about classification in Sthoola Kála, but all scholars unanimously accept the two different distinctions of Kála. In these two types of classification, Sukshma Kála is that which is not measurable by man without a machine. In describing the concept of Sukshma Kála, Bhaskaracharya says,

*Yokshonornimeshasya kharambhagah
Sa tatparahtachhatbhaaguktah.
Trutirnimeshaih dhritibhishcha Kaasthaa
Tat trinstaasadganakaihkaloktaa.
TrinshatKálarkaashi ghatikaakshanahsyaat
Naadeedwayam taih khagunairdiinam cha.
Gurvaksharih khendumitaihasustaih
Shadbhirpalaih taih ghatikaa khasadbhih
Syadwaa ghatishashtirahakharamaih
Maasodinairtaih dwikubhishcha varsham
Kshetre samaadyen samaa vibhaagah
SyushchakrarasyanshKálaviliptaa.*

The time it takes to blink an eyelid is called Nimesha. The 30th part of Nimesha is called Tatpar and the 100th part of Tatpar is called Truti. Similarly there is a Nimesha of 18 Kastha; one Kála equals thirty Kastha and one Ghatika equals thirty Kála. This is called a constellation. There is a Muhurta of two Ghatika and a day equals thirty Muhurta^{4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11}. If we measure it in SI units then Truti = $\approx 35.5 \mu\text{s}$, Tatpara = $\approx 3.55 \text{ ms}$, Nimesha = $\approx 106.7 \text{ ms}$, Kastha = $\approx 3.2 \text{ s}$, Kála = $\approx 1.6 \text{ min}$, Muhurta = $\approx 48 \text{ min}$, Nakshatra Ahoratra (sidereal day) = $\approx 24 \text{ h}$. Every scholar of Hindu astronomy describes the smallest classification of Kála in this manner. On the other hand, however, there are nine types of Sthool Kála (Gross Period). (1)

Brahma Mána (2) Divya Mána (3) Paitra Mána (4) Prajapatya Mána (5) Gaurav Mána (6) Saur Mána (7) Saavan Mána (8) Chaandra Mána (9) Naakashatra Mána.

1. Brahma Mána

The period related to Brahma is called Brahma Mána. According to Brahma Mána, the age of Brahma is one hundred years. The day of Brahma equals 1,000 mahayuga and night is the same. An era of 1000 Mahayuga is called Kalp and it shows that the value of the day and night of Brahma is two kalpa. One Brahma Year is equal to seven hundred and twenty Kalpa. The full age of Brahma is 7,200 Kalpa. According to the belief of Hindu Astrology, great geographical changes happen during this period. As the beginning of the Sat Yuga and at its end, there will be a conjunction period of 14,400 solar years. Similarly there will be a conjunction of 108,000 solar years in the Treta Yuga and 72,000 solar years in the Dwapar Yuga and 3,600 solar years in the Kali Yuga. Thus a Maha Yuga is 4,320,000 solar years and a kalpa of 1,000 Mahayug means 4,320,000,000 solar years. If we multiply 432,000 by 4, 3, 2 and 1, we will get the length of every yuga¹².

Sat Yuga = $432,000 \times 4 = 1,728,000$

Treta Yuga = $432,000 \times 3 = 1,296,000$

Dwapar Yuga = $432,000 \times 2 = 864,000$

Kali Yuga = $432,000 \times 1 = 432,000$

At the beginning and end of each Yuga, the conjunction period equals the sixth part of that particular era. The value of the Maha Yuga includes the conjunction periods. The day of Brahma equals one Kalpa and night is the same. This means the whole value of night and day of Brahma is two kalpa. In solar value, it equals 8,640,000,000 solar years. The value of the year will be $8,640,000,000 \times 3600$, so Brahma lives $8,640,000,000 \times 360 \times 100^{13}$ solar years according to this value. This period called MahaKalp and Bramh Mana.

At the beginning of the day of Brahma, creation takes place and at the end of the day there is a catastrophe, at that time all creation is submerged.

2. Divya Mána: (Divine value)

The period related to the gods is called the divine period. When one cycle of the sun is completed, it is called a solar year and the same solar year is called the divine day of the Gods¹⁴. When the sun moves from Aries to Virgo, that period called Uttar Gola, which is called the “day of gods”. And when the sun is located in Capricorn to Pisces then it is called the “night of gods”. Thus the divine year of the gods numbers 360 solar years, which value is called the Divine value.

3. Paitra Mána: (Period of the forefathers)

A lunar month is called a day of ancestors, in which 15 days (half dark paksha) have one day of the ancestors and 15 days (the other half, bright paksha) have the ancestral night. Thus we have a year of 360 lunar months of the ancestors.

4. Prajapatya Mána: (Period of Prajapati)

The period of Prajapati is called the Prajapatya Mána. As we know that there are 4,320,000 solar years in one mahayuga, similarly there are 71 mahayugas in one manu.

$$4,320,000 \times 71 = 306,720,000 = 1 \text{ manu}$$

According to this value there are fourteen Manus in the day of Brahma (kalpa). They are: Swayambhu Manu, Svarocisha Manu, Uttama Manu, Tapasa Manu, Raivata Manu, Chaakshus Manu, Vaisvat Manu, Savarni Manu, Daksha-savarni Manu, Brahma-savarni Manu, Dharma-savarni Manu, Rudra-savarni Manu, Deva-savarni Manu, Indra-savarni Manu.

At the beginning and end of each Manu, the conjunction period equals Sat Yuga. Thus in Kalpa, there are 14 manus and 15 conjunctions. This period of Manu is considered to be the period of Prajapati.

5. Gaurav Mána: (Jupiter's Period)

The period in which Jupiter completes 30 degrees of its orbit is called Samvtsas or Barhaspatya Mána. This we know by the rule of three. The revolution of all the planets in an era is given in the book of Hindu Astronomy. Jupiter completes its 364,220 cycles in one Maha Yuga and there are 1,577,917,828 civil days in one Maha Yuga. So, according to the rule of three, if we find 364,220 cycles in 1,577,917,828 days, then how many days will Jupiter take to complete the 30 degrees of its orbit? It will be 361 days, 2 ghati, 4 pala and 45 vipala. It is 9 days, 13 ghati, 25 pala less than the solar year. Jupiter has a cycle of sixty Samvabsaras. It completes its 5 cycles in sixty Samvatsaras. In Agnipuran, these are:

1	Prabhav	16	Chitrabhanu	31	Hemalamba	46	Paridhavi
2	Vibhav	17	Svabhanu	32	Vilamba Naan	47	Pramadi
3	Shukla	18	Taaran	33	Vikari	48	Aanand
4	Pramoda	19	Pardhiva	34	Sharvari	49	Raakshas
5	Prajapati	20	Vyaya	35	Plava	50	Nala
6	Angira	21	Sarvajittu	36	Shubhakrita	51	Pingala
7	Shreemukha	22	Sarvadhari	37	Shobhakrita	52	Kàlayukta
8	Bhava	23	Virodhi	38	Krodhi	53	Siddharthi
9	Yuva	24	Vikruti	39	Vishvaavasus	54	Raudra
10	Dhata	25	Khara	40	Parabhava	55	Durmati
11	Ishwar	26	Nandana	41	Plavanga	56	Dundubhi
12	Bahudhanya	27	Vijaya	42	Keelak	57	Rudhirodhagari
13	Pramathi	28	Jaya	43	Soumya	58	Raktaaksha
14	Vikram	29	Manmatha	44	Sadharana	59	Krodhan
15	Vrisha	30	Durmukhi	45	Virodhakrita	60	Kshaya

Agni Purana, Lesson-131, versa-1-13

6. Saur Mána (solar period)

As we know, the sun is stable and our earth is moving. But for the calculation we assume that our earth is stable, according to this hypothesis. The time taken to completes one revolution by the sun is called a solar year. When it completes 30 degrees, this period is called a solar month and when it completes one degree it is called a solar day. The changing of the zodiac sign of the sun is called Sankranti. There are different types of Sankrantis (Solstice), i.e. the Sankranti of Capricorn and Cancer is called Ayansankranti and the Sankranti of Aries and Libra is called Equatorial Sankranti (Equinox). The Sankranti of Gemini, Virgo, Sagittarius and Pisces is called Vishanupadi Sankranti (Vishnupadi solstice).

7. Saavan Mána: (Civil period)

The period between one sunrise and another sunrise is called Savan mana (Civil Period)

8. Chandra Mána: (Lunar Period)

When the sun and the moon are in same position (Rashi, Amsha, Kála), that mo-

ment is called the new moon. The angular difference between the sun and the moon on the new moon is zero. Similarly, this period between one new moon night and the next new moon night is called a lunar month. There are thirty Tithis (days) in a Lunar Month.

No.	Shukla Paksha Tithies		Krishna Paksha Tithies
1	Pratipada	16	Pratipada
2	Dwitiya	17	Dwitiya
3	Tritiya	18	Tritiya
4	Chaturthi	19	Chaturthi
5	Panchami	20	Panchami
6	Shashthi	21	Shashthi
7	Saptami	22	Saptami
8	Ashtami	23	Ashtami
9	Navami	24	Navami
10	Dashami	25	Dashami
11	Ekadashi	26	Ekadashi
12	Dwadashi	27	Dwadashi
13	Trayodashi	28	Trayodashi
14	Chaturdashi	29	Chaturdashi
15	Poornima	30	Amawashya

9. Náakshatra Mána (Sidereal Period)

The duration between one star rise and the next star rise is called Náakshatra Mána (Sidereal Period). It contains 24 hours and is a constant value. There are 30 days in Náakshatra Mása (Sidereal Month) and 360 days in Náakshatra Varsha (Sidereal Year). •

1 Sanjay Kumar Pandey, thesis, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, 1997, Mathematical modeling of peristaltic transport in physiological systems,

2 Rigveda, 7th kaand, 103th shookta, versa no-7

3 Bhashkaracharya, Siddhantshirmani, gaitaadhyaya, Madhyamadhikar, versa-16-18.

4 Manusmriti, chapter 1st, versa-64

5 Vishnupurana, chapter 3rd, versa-8-10

6 Brihadabhisitha Siddhant, Chapter 1st, versa-4

7 Aryabhata, Aryabhatiyam, Kaalkriyapada, versa-2

8 Vateshwaracharya, Vateshwar Siddhant, Madhyamadhikara, versa-7

9 Sripatai, Siddhant Shekhar, Madhyamadhikar, versa-8

10 Soorya Siddhanta, Madhyamadhikar, versa-11-12

11 Brahmagupta, Brahmsphuta Siddhanta, Madhyamadhikara, versa-5-6

12 Surya Siddhant, Madhyamadhikar, versa-17-18

13 Brahmgupta, Brahmsphuta Siddhant, Madhyamadhikar, versa-7-8.

14 Bhaskaracharya, Siddhant Siromani, Kaalmanadhyaya, versa-19



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THE ART OF YOGA: TO INCARNATE BEAUTY

This essay explores the relationship between aesthetic experience (*rasāsvāda*) and religious experience (*brahmāsvāda*) in the framework of non-dual tantric Yoga of Medieval Kaśmīr, especially the peculiar ‘aesthetic perspective’ of this kind of Yoga. The Śaivite initiate is simultaneously a *yogin* and a *jñānin*, but his approach to knowledge is specifically concrete: it is based on the senses. The quality of his perception can unleash not only a profound power of attention, but also a fine sensitivity that is generative, ever-new, a vehicle of fresh insight (*pratibhā*) and beauty.

The author is profoundly grateful to Raffaele Torella, her mentor and inspiration for many years, who originally rediscovered in recent studies the importance of aesthetic experience in non-dual Tantrism and its correlation with religious experience.

Le beau est la preuve expérimentale que l'incarnation est possible. Dès lors tout art de premier ordre est par essence religieux.

Simone Weil, *La Pesanteur et la Grâce*

Knowing is feeling; knowing is generating

The concept of non-dual Tantrism that developed in Kaśmīr in the Middle Ages features an affinity and intertwining of philosophical and religious implications between *rasāsvāda*, the enjoyment of beauty through art, and *brahmāsvāda*, the spiritual dimension that Yoga incarnates¹. The present article aims to identify the original 'aesthetic prospect' of Kaśmīri Tantric Yoga, a ritual form *sui generis* that integrates the different tendencies of Rāja Yoga and of the Tantric transmissions that preceded it, incarnating the apex of the Tantric phenomenon *tout court*.

The relationship between aesthetic (*rasāsvāda*) and religious (*brahmāsvāda*) experience² emerges particularly in an original interpretation of Abhinavagupta³ in his comment on the *Nāṭya śāstra*, the *Abhinavabhāratī*⁴, and in the *Locana ad Dhvanyāloka* by Ānandavardhana⁴. In these texts, the great Kaśmīri master tackles the aesthetic dimension in a structured manner, while allowing a glimpse of a new concept of religious experience, independent of artistic enjoyment, but with roots in the same soil.

First and foremost, the Kaśmīri masters conceived of *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda* not only as two actual doors giving access to knowledge,

but as knowledge itself (*pramāṇa*). Both in ancient India and in ancient Greece, knowing means investigating the truth with all one's being, body and soul, viewing the body broadly as physical awareness. Furthermore, knowledge oriented towards liberation is the ultimate goal of the Yoga rite, whatever the line of transmission to which it belongs.

Tantric schools of non-dual persuasion – and generally speaking the more extreme types like the Krama school – decidedly support the primacy of knowledge over ritual activity, of which Yoga may be considered an extension, but Abhinavagupta never underestimated the need for what we may call 'incarnate' knowledge⁶; the central role of the practice, moreover, is the core of religious India. According to the view of the *Gama tantra* quoted by Abhinavagupta, *mati* – knowledge – alone is unable to affect reality in any operational and transformative fashion. In order to fulfil its task as 'living heaven', it requires the support of Yoga. As the living nucleus of the rite, Yoga thus manages to activate abstract knowledge in a functional manner, transforming it into experiential understanding.

Knowledge is thus an empirical way, distinguished by full deployment of the senses. The religious experience (*brahmāsvāda*), like the perception of beauty (*rasāsvāda*), involves intellectual use of the senses. A real cognitive act is thus the outcome of both experiences, while sensory deployment is the concrete and tangible high road of such cognizance⁷.

"Both in ancient India and in ancient Greece, knowing means investigating the truth with all one's being, body and soul, viewing the body broadly as physical awareness."



The maternal and generative power of Śakti, Kamakhya Temple, Assam
photo: Gioia Lussana

Samvid (knowledge) accepts reality congruously and in its entirety starting from what is visible and can be experienced, before reaching what no longer needs experience and is recognised, as it were, as being ‘beyond experience’. Fully experienced sensorial fact ignites in *samvid* ‘the experience that cannot be experienced’, by means of direct, vivid intuition (*pratibhā*). Furthermore, the quality of knowledge that relates the enjoyment of beauty and the art of Yoga is not only ‘sensory’, but generative⁸. Indeed, the experience of the artist and of the yogin possesses a self-creative quality, like living matter: it has a continuously transforming energetic and vibrant nature, ever producing something new. These ‘new products’ are both physical and psychical.

The self-generative fecundity of Tantric knowledge closely recalls the non-dual view of the Western philosopher who discovered the *lógos*, Heraclitus of Ephesus⁹. *Lógos*, primordial and universal intelligence, common to the individ-

ual soul and to the Absolute, is capable of ‘increasing itself’, like an ever-burning fire. This same generative *lógos* is found in the Gospel of John, and in this regard several scholars make a connexion, due to phonetic affinity and probable etymological relationship, between the two Greek verbs *gígnomai* (I generate) and *gignósko* (I know)¹⁰.

In Kaśmīri Śaivism, the result of this ontological knowledge (*alaukika*) as compared to reductively conceptual ordinary knowledge (*laukika*) is found in *pratibhā*¹¹, the fruitful intuitive aptitude that gives birth both to *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda*. And it is the senses, the goddesses of the senses (*karaneśvarī* or *svasamvid-devī*), who reawaken and trigger this conscious intuitiveness, a presentiment of being, an experience that surpasses the use of the senses, making the noetic value of the experience even more direct and unfiltered, if that were possible.

Intuiting truth: an expansion of being

Dhī or *pratibhā* denotes an increased capacity of vision and perception, a quality expanding both mind and body, which, through artistic creation or Yogic gesture, free from mechanical and compulsory repetition, spreads wide the wings of the mind. Then everything appears perfect by itself, in a coherent amalgam between the observer and the object observed. *Pratibhā* arouses perception of beauty (*saundarya*), revealed like a spark between the observer and the object observed. *Saundarya*, the elusive *momentum*, is consequently not a quality belonging to the subject or object, but a mysterious and independent *quid* surpassing both. In this 'superabundance' (*bāhulya*) can be recognised the quality generating that special type of awareness that is achieved by tasting (*bhogopadeśena*).

The term *pratibhā*, intuition, incarnates a diversified semantic capacity: awareness connoted by immediacy, vividness, freshness¹²; it is revelation, understanding, adequacy, a flash of light. By experiencing *pratibhā*, which is the prerogative of the artist or beneficiary of art, as of the yogin, the meaning of things is learned, their inner coherence, manifest as intrinsic beauty. Beauty is the meaning we grasp; beauty is truth; beauty is what is: *Satya* (truth), the unfathomable 'that which is', revealed by *pratibhā* is the realm of beauty.

In the Tantric view, the mineral, vegetal, animal and human world, whatever exists, is the expression of the intrinsic divinity of all. In all things can be perceived the freedom and beauty of artistic creation with its own inner intelligence, an existing harmony that also expresses the authentic sacrality of life in all its aspects. Awaking to this evidence is *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda*.

Pratibhā, the seminal source of all creativity, means grasping the expansive dimension of existence. R. Torella¹³ rightly renders the term

vikāsa (expansion), so central to the work of Utpaladeva and later of Abhinavagupta, as 'joy'. This joy has a simultaneous aesthetic and ontological value. The three states of mind that together represent this joy are expressed by Abhinavagupta¹⁴ in his theory of *rasa* as *druṭi* (fluidity), *viśtāra* (widening) and *vikāsa* (expansion). It is living, energetic happiness, ontologically connected with *ānanda sakti*, the first ferment at the basis of being. When the effervescence of emotion moves awareness, the original nature of awareness itself can be tasted. *Rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda* are its expression.

Beauty is a happy rhythm

Happiness (*ānanda*) is consequently - according to the Kaśmīri masters - none other than the primordial nature of knowledge (*cit, samvid*), which has an expansive and flowing quality. Utpaladeva¹⁵ uses the term *ghūrṇana* (*ghūrṇ-* means to whirl around) to denote a rhythmic and swaying movement of the body, referring to the state of ecstatic absorption of the *bhākta* (yogin). This is an interesting term in that it attempts to bring us even closer to *saundarya*, the expression of beauty. Utpala explains *ghūrṇana* as a spontaneous swaying of the body due to its own intrinsic happiness. For the Kaśmīri master, this kind of movement is actually a natural flow that gushes from the astonished tasting of reality (*camatkāra*), or from a fragrance (*āmoḍa*), from the subtle scent of life that rejoices the heart¹⁶. This expansive condition of mind and body issues spontaneously, like the scent of a wild flower, and dissolves in rhythmic movement of the whole being. This is the quality of Yogic action: the discovery of a rhythm connected with the energetic vibration of consciousness itself (*spanda*) translated as ritual gesture. The rhythm expressing the Yoga gesture is revealed to the yogin immersed without reserve in bodily action¹⁷, recognising within a wholly natural movement an internal coher-

ence, an appropriate repetition that generates harmony, an order simultaneously structured and spontaneous¹⁸.

***Sahṛdayatva*, the art of forefeeling beauty**

*Ānandavardhana*¹⁹ extended the semantic capacity of the term *artha* (meaning) to the point of including in it the human emotional sphere, the psyche in its entirety. Feelings, emotions, sentiments trigger awareness. The yogin of a higher level²⁰ appears to all effects as an arthin and a rasika, the activator of the sensitive and creative capacity with which the poet (*kavi*), the dancer (*nartaka*) is endowed, or the artist more widely speaking. For the yogin, the *āsana* becomes a *pātra*, a container or form, the living space of contemplation in which he – in the double role of *nartaka* (dancer) and *prekṣaka* (spectator) – is able to incarnate religious experience. The opening of the senses and the in-

rush of passion, not mortified but liberated, express full participation in the spectacle of life. Śiva, who rides the unrestrained nature of his emotions without being dominated by them, is at once the prototype of the *rasika* and the *mahāyogin*.

Non-dual Yoga is consequently not indifference or apathy (*tāṭasthya*), a condition that Abhinavagupta attributes to the inferior sort of Yoga. The yogin is a *sahṛdaya*, animated by that active involvement (*anupraveśa*) that makes possible the perception of beauty and the vivid knowledge of reality through emotive experience²¹. Knowing how to grasp beauty²², and participating in it emotionally, is a significant feature of Superior Yoga.

Emphasis on inner experience rather than physical posture is the characteristic of this Yoga. The gnosiological and contemplative hallmark that qualifies non-dual Tantric Yoga



Beauty as nourishing quality, Hirapur Temple, Orissa
photo by Gioia Lussana

“Everything is accepted and worthy of being experienced, if embraced as it were ‘aesthetically’, without desiring to possess it or be possessed by it. Everything reveals its intrinsic beauty and, consequently, everything is sacred.”

as compared to the dominant physical and therapeutic trends of Hatha Yoga practices constitutes an evolutionary step in the meaning of Yoga and of Hindu thought as a whole. In mediaeval Tantrism, the physical nature of techniques assumes a contemplative value. The opening of the senses belonging to the bodily dimension is disengaged from any achievement of an intentional or performative result. In non-dual Yoga, the body becomes in a meaningful way the support, vehicle and expression of *sahṛdayatva*, attentive and participant observation. The latter is more than mere awareness. It is extensive attention, always present on the horizon (*sadā-udita*), a ‘special commitment’ (*prayatna-viśeṣa*), as Utpaladeva defines it²³, which is of itself a form of awareness (*anuvyavasāya*), as stated by Abhinavagupta, referring to *rasāsvāda* and *brahmāsvāda*.

Rasa, in Abhinavagupta’s conception, is not just tasting; its function is also to remove the dense clouds obscuring awareness, since it leads us to Yoga experience, in which such a function is central.

As noted by Somadeva Vasudeva²⁴, *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* Yoga is characterised by a marked epistemological quality together with an experiential quality of a contemplative nature. The yogin does not acquire an abstract ontological cognition of reality, but a vivid incarnate

awareness, a spiritual achievement that passes through the intensity of ecstasy²⁵, and includes pleasure, as well as pain. The senses, deployed in all their force, concretely ‘devour’ external reality (*grāsa* is this devouring) and bring it inside. From this intense sensorial passion that burns the outer world by devouring it, the perception of beauty is produced (*saundarya*), distinguished by a special vividness (*sphuṭatva*) or presence for the experiencer. The climax of this experience coincides with passion alone: the senses burn up, as it were, even themselves. A naked burning presence remains, an experience, as we said above, no longer of the senses in any literal way, because divested of any reference to an object.

In the rite of Yoga, this presence is identified with *jīvana* or *prāṇana*, the sensation of being alive and feeling emotions which, in the *Trika* is the primary expression of which everything is made. The artist and the yogin know through *sahṛdayatva*²⁶, which is true aisthesis, an aesthetic sensibility activated by sensations and emotions, without identifying itself with any hedonistic search for pleasure. Everything is accepted and worthy of being experienced, if embraced as it were ‘aesthetically’, without desiring to possess it or be possessed by it²⁷. Everything reveals its intrinsic beauty and, consequently, everything is sacred. •

1 As Utpala notes in *Śivastotrāvalī* (15.6), worshippers (*bhakta*) can taste (*āsvādayanti*) the inexpressible; they can achieve a perceivable experience of the divine. This particular quality of super-enjoyment (*āsvāda*) equates the artist and the yogin.

2 In the *Sāhitya Darpaṇa* III, 2-3 appears an authoritative definition of aesthetic experience (*rasa*): “*Rasa* is tasted (*āsvādyate*) by those special persons who have an innate awareness (*kaiścitpramāṭrbhiḥ*), provided with its own light (*svaprakāśaḥ*), composed of mental beatitude (*ānanda-cin-mayah*), free from the cognizable (*vedyāntara-sparśa-sūnyaḥ*), the twin of brahmāsvāda (*brahmāsvāda-sahōdaraḥ*). Aesthetic experience and religious experience are thus like twins, together (*saha*) in the same womb (*udara*). Abhinavagupta validates the connexion between these two experiences.

3 Bhaṭṭa Nāyaka was probably the first to compare aesthetic and religious experience. Abhinavagupta explicitly recalls his comments (v. *Dhvanyālokalocana* I.6) and – while criticising some of his theories – takes his inspiration from this work in creating an original and more complex theory of *rasa*.

4 Cf. Nagar, R.S., *Nāṭyāśāstra of Bharatamuni with the Commentary Abhinavabhārati by Abhinavaguptācārya*, Parimal Publication, Delhi 1998. A fundamental reference for any penetration of these texts is R. Gnoli, *The Aesthetic Experience according to Abhinavagupta*, Chowkamba Sanskrit Studies 72, 2nd ed. Varanasi, 1968.

5 Cf. Abhinavagupta, *Dhvanyālokalocana*, Kashi Sanskrit Series 135. Ed. Pattābhirāma Śāstrī, Benares 1940. Ingalls. D.H.H. *The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana with the Locana of Abhinavagupta*. D.H.H. Ingalls, J.M. Masson and M.V. Patwardan, eds. and trans. Harvard Oriental Series 49, London 1990.

6 On this specific theme, cf. H. Brunner, “Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas”, in T. Goudriaan (ed.), *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism. Studies in Honor of André Padoux*, SUNY Press, Albany 1992, pp. 1 - 59. Personally, I consider of great value the oral contribution of R. Torella during a series of lectures on Tantric Yoga held in Rome in 2013, which I edited in collaboration with the Università Popolare dello Sport and the sponsorship of the Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali of Rome's La

Sapienza University.

7 Abhinavagupta in *Abhinavabhārati I (rasasūtra)* states: *rasanā ca bodharūpaiva* (‘even aesthetic tasting actually consists of cognition’).

8 On the generative quality of beauty, Plato is our guide: cf. for example *Symposium*, 206c et seq. In the famous *scala amoris* presented by Diotima in Plato's text, beauty tirelessly generates new forms up to the highest degree: Beauty itself.

9 Cf. for example DK, B 115: “A *lógos* that increases itself is from the very soul”

10 Cf. for example, M. Vannini, *Storia della mistica occidentale*, Le Lettere, Firenze 2015, p.100. The Gospel of John was drafted, according to tradition, at Ephesus itself, the home of Heraclitus.

11 In *Dhvanyālokalocana* I.6, Abhinavagupta defines *pratibhā* “[that form of] intellect capable of producing new and extraordinary objects”.

12 Cf. N. Rastogi, “Utpala's Insights into Aesthetics and his Impact” in R. Torella, B. Bäumer (Eds) *Utpaladeva, Philosopher of Recongnition*. Rastogi refers to a well-known article by Gopinath Kaviraj, “The Doctrine of Pratibhā in Indian Philosophy” (1923-24 ABORI, Poona),

13 ĪPVV II, 411. Cf. N. Rastogi, *ibidem*, p.171.

14 Abh I, 177.

15 ŚDVr, 10. Cf. N. Rastogi, *ibidem*, cit. p.136.

16 Śiva, the supreme Reality, is, according to the words of Somānanda, *pramodātmā*, incarnate joy. Cf. Rastogi, *ibidem*.

17 The term rhythm is connected to the Indo-European root *ru-* (or *sru-*), which evokes the noise of running, flowing water (cf. Greek *reo*)

18 The term harmony is connected to the root *r-/ār-* meaning to move, to go towards; to unite, to fix. Appropriately enough, it means ‘orderly’ (*rta* in Vedic India is the cosmic order).

19 Cf. Mazzarino V. *Ānandavardhana, Dhvanyāloka*. I principi dello *Dhvani*, Einaudi, Torino 1983.

20 For the Kāśmīri masters, the lower level of Yoga corresponds to a ‘Yoga of techniques’ in which aesthetic perception is not required. Superior Yoga, dealt with in this study, on the other hand requires the experience of beauty (*saundarya*). In this way, the yogin even has access to ‘super-beauty’ (*atisaundarya*).

21 On the quality of tasting (*asvāda*) common to both experiences, Abhinavagupta in

Dhvanyālokalocana III.43 states that rasāsvāda is but the reflection (*avabhāsa*), only a drop of that bliss that distinguishes *brahmāsvāda*.

22 In the *Trika* various terms are used to denominate 'beauty'. Besides *saundarya*, *cārutā* (often used by *Ānandavardhana*), *lāvāṇya* ('grace'), *aucitya* ('harmony'), just to mention a few.

23 Cf. Rastogi, *ibidem*, p.177.

24 *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (MVUT), chapters I - 4, 7, II - 17, *The Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (ed. , trans. and notes by Somadeva Vasudeva), All India Press, Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2004

25 We could say *aisthesis*, which is both *ékstasis* and *énstasis*.

26 *Sahṛdaya*, 'endowed with heart' is literally someone who can get in tune with the heart of others, who can make another's qualities resound like a bell within himself (*hṛdayasaṁvāda* or 'heart resonance' is a synonym of *sahṛdayatva*). The definition is found in *Dhvanyālokalocana* 1.1. *Sahṛdaya* is also one who knows how 'to share his heart', according to a nuance found by Abhinavagupta. Utpaladeva anticipates Abhinavagupta using the analogous term *hṛdayamgamatva*.

27 Utpaladeva calls *āṇavamala* the original stain of living as though separated from everything and at the centre of everything, *abhilāṣamala*, the greed to possess everything. *ĪPVV* III, 252.

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MEISTER ECKHART AND MĀNIKKA VĀŚAGAR IN THE EYES OF THE RECEPTION: THE TENSION BETWEEN ONENESS AND DUALITY

In this essay Amanda Viana de Sousa traces the relationship between German philosopher Meister Eckhart and Tamil mystic Māṇikka Vāśagar in the work of the Indian theologian Hilko Wiardo Schomerus, an interpretation that in many ways challenges the famous one by Rudolf Otto in his well-known book *West-östliche Mystik* (in which he equates Meister Eckhart with the emblematic figure of the modern Western reception of India: Ādi Śaṅkaracārya). Schomerus' work epitomizes the complex texture of transcultural reception and shows (perhaps unwillingly) that in matters of comparative metaphysics the difficulties lie in the rule rather than the exception.

1. Rudolf Otto's attempt at a bridge between Western and Eastern mysticism

Śaṅkaracārya, the main representative of the philosophical system called Advaita Vedānta, is one of the most widely-known figures of Indian thought. His radically monistic doctrine has had a particular reception in the Western culture. In his book *West-Östliche Mystik: Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung* (1971), German historian of religion Rudolf Otto sees Śaṅkara's doctrine as a foundational element for bridge-building between East and West. The other element he views is that towering figure of mediaeval Christian mysticism: Meister Eckhart. At first hand, such a comparison is far from self-evident: What does a radical monistic system of thought based on the affirmation of an acosmic and impersonal principle (*brahman*) have in common with the relational mysticism of Christian religion revolving around the birth of the human soul (in analogy to the birth of the Son) in God? One of the central ideas of Rudolf Otto is grounded in the possibility of comparing Śaṅkara's designation of the Absolute, *brahman*, with an instance going beyond the sphere of a personal deity, which Meister Eckhart calls 'Godhead' [*Gottheit*]. Both designations refer to an absolute, eternal and unchanging being devoid of qualities, which in philosophical vocabulary can be translated as *the pure One*. Precisely because of the emphasis on radical ontological oneness, the affirmation of this Absolute or Godhead implies a negative judgement on the world as the sign of *the Many*. In other words: the world ultimately belongs to the sphere of *māyā* (in Śaṅkara) or *entia creata* (in Meister Eckhart), and the main soteriological operation, which both authors teach, is the unity of the soul with the pure One.

Given this affinity between Śaṅkara and Meister Eckhart, Rudolf Otto points nonetheless to an undeniable difference: while Śaṅkara's *brahman* is exclusively static, impersonal and

without relation, Meister Eckhart's conception of God is dynamically inclusive and entails aspects of personality and relation that are very important in Christian tradition. In this sense, Rudolf Otto regards Śaṅkara's relationship between the One and the Many as rigid and inflexible, whereas in Eckhart's philosophy the One and the Many are presented in an active, dynamic and lively fashion¹. This difference is so ostensible that one is entitled to ask: What is the value of this comparison and what was Rudolf Otto's (ideological?) motivation for embarking on such a task?

2. Hilko Wiardo Schomerus' critique and alternative model of comparison

Hilko Wiardo Schomerus, a Christian priest from southern India who lived in Germany, tried to give a plausible answer to the question posed above in his book *Meister Eckhart und Mānikka Vāṣagar: Mystik auf deutschen und indischem Boden* (1936)²: Rudolf Otto's aim was to show the value of Meister Eckhart as a scholastic author, that is, a master of learning and interpretation (*Lesemeister*) – which is justifiable if one thinks of the Latin biblical exegesis he produced on, for example Genesis, Exodus, Wisdom and the Gospel of John. Precisely for this reason, states Schomerus³, Rudolf Otto thought it wise to choose the great Indian philosopher Śaṅkara as a complementary pole for his comparison between East and West, the very author who had not only delved into the most abstruse deductive and theoretical reflexions on the Absolute, but had also written famous commentaries on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma-Sūtras* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. However, Meister Eckhart was not only a master of learning and interpretation. Schomerus emphasizes other aspects of this author: "the preacher, the priest and the mystic"⁴. These aspects open quite another comparative perspective (no longer intellectualist and scholarly, but rather mystic and spiritual), and within

this perspective the Eastern pole needs to be replaced. Schomerus therefore concentrates on a figure of mediaeval Shaiva Mysticism of southern India: Mānikka Vāśagar⁵.

Mānikka Vāśagar was not a man of speculative nature whose work focused on conceptual explanations of theological and philosophical problems, but first and foremost a devotee (*bhakta*) with Dravidian background who composed religious hymns in the Tamil language. For Schomerus, the meaning of a comparison between a Christian mystic like Meister Eckhart and a Shaiva devotee like Mānikka Vāśagar is twofold: on the one hand, one comes – through a perspective going beyond mere intellectualism – closer to an understanding of the essence of mysticism, and on the other one can better expose the divergences between Christian mysticism and authentic or true Christianity⁶. His essay shows another contrast, not quite explicitly mentioned, though: that of mysticism as a differential path with regard to the dominant, authoritarian and even tyrannical system of mainstream institutions. Furthermore, both Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāśagar conceive the union between God and the soul in a way that can be defined neither as ontological monism in the radical sense of fully undifferentiated oneness, nor as a dualism with an unsurpassable split between the transcendent instance and the individual human soul. In view of such interesting claims in Schomerus' book, one can pose the following question: How can the union between God and the soul be conceived if it escapes the parameters of both monism and dualism? In order to deal with this question, it is necessary to consider the role of the divine in

Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāśagar.

3. The divine in Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāśagar

One of Meister Eckhart's principal ideas is the difference between the Godhead and God. The first term refers to the simplicity, purity and plenitude of a perfect and non-changing being standing above all instances of existence, life and thought; the second term describes an active and dynamic being effectuating the order of creation, a being that also discloses the inner-trinitarian unity (the unity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost). In Mānikka Vāśagar's thought there are basically two divine instances: *Śivam* (neuter in Sanskrit) as a radically transcendent principle or pure and motionless oneness, and *Śiva* (masculine) as an active and dynamic God. Here there is a certain analogical correspondence with the conception of the Father and the Son in the Christian religion, since the dynamic unity of *Śiva* and *Śakti* flows from the hidden and radically transcendent Godhead *Śivam* into a divine space of manifestation. *Śiva* and *Śakti* are essentially 'one' but at the same time 'different' in terms of a relation of forces. Both for Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāśagar, the static transcendent principle devoid of qualities instantiates an internal outflow (the Father-Son dynamics in Christian terms, the dual unity of *Śiva* and *Śakti* in Hinduism), remaining nonetheless transcendent to this instantiation. It is important to note that the divine outflow shapes a model of the soul and brings the world into existence – which explains the ambivalent nature of the individual soul: it can

“The inner world of the soul is the place where the divine dwells and acts, i.e. where a transcendent creative energy flow, rules and prevails.”



Portrait of Meister Eckhart by Giovanni Bellini (XV century)
Source: nationalgallery.org.uk

incline itself either to the world or to God – and be therefore determined either by the corruption of the imperfect sphere or by the perfection of the divine.

Both Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāśagar analyze the ambivalence of the soul on the basis of an important distinction between ‘soul’ and ‘ground of the soul’ (Meister Eckhart) or ‘soul in itself’ (Mānikka Vāśagar). The soul carries forces related to the outer world, that is, a kind of knowledge essentially linked with matter, time and plurality⁷. However, both thinkers are convinced that the soul can also attain a superior form of knowledge related to its inner world, which Meister Eckhart calls ‘ground of the soul’ and Mānikka Vāśagar calls *Śakti*⁸. The inner world of the soul is the place where the divine dwells and acts, i.e. where a transcendent creative energy flow, rules and prevails. If the soul gains access to this place, it attains self-realization, it becomes one with the

divine, and it is this becoming-one that should be deemed the highest form of knowledge.

It should be clearly understood that, in the context of both conceptions, the empirical (or world-related) knowledge of the soul plays no role when it comes to considering the inner world (or *the essence*) of the soul. Furthermore, the type of knowledge related to the outer world is a trap for the soul, because it can lead it astray⁹. As a result of this, Meister Eckhart affirms that the soul leads a miserable, bitter shadow-life¹⁰. Mānikka Vāśagar, for his part, adds to the negative limitations of individual mundane existence the question of reincarnation as a result of the law of *karma*. This question goes beyond individual existence in a single lifetime and considers the problem of *māyā* as the sphere in which the soul is trapped and confined to its unfortunate existence¹¹.

4. Birth in God (*Gottesgeburt*) and descent of *Śakti* (*Śaktinipāta*): towards an explanation of the experience of the (non-)One

Both Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāṣagar share a fundamental idea: no act of the soul can lead it to be one with God; all that the soul can do is open itself in all freedom for God to act¹². Here one should become aware of a very important exigence: the soul must let its ties with the outer world fall away and reach its ultimate silence, so that the divine may emerge from within. This accomplishment of the divine act in the human soul is what Meister Eckhart calls ‘birth in God’ (*Gottesgeburt*) and Mānikka Vāṣagar defines as ‘descent of *Śakti*’ (*Śaktinipāta*).

On the one hand, Meister Eckhart affirms that birth in God takes place without interruption, “whether you like it or not, whether you sleep or are awake”¹³. The subjective appropriation of this event can only ensue if one is imbued with the divine¹⁴, which means when the soul abandons the outer world and severs itself from its influence. Meister Eckhart equates the birth of God in the soul with the instance of becoming a ‘Divine Son’.¹⁵ According to Schomerus, Mānikka Vāṣagar regards world renunciation as the sign of a necessary process of maturity taking place throughout many incarnations. When the soul becomes mature, it can receive the gracious and atoning power of *Śakti*. It is this effect of *Śakti* in the individual soul, or perhaps - better formulated - the occupation of the soul by the divine *Śakti*, that Mānikka Vāṣagar calls *Śaktinipāta*¹⁶. Here one should consider the following aspect: through the birth of God

in the soul and the *Śaktinipāta*, the soul is one with the divine in the modality of emanation¹⁷, in which it takes part in the dynamics of the Trinity (Meister Eckhart), or in the dual union of *Śiva* and *Śakti* (Mānikka Vāṣagar).¹⁸ This means that the soul is one with God or *Śiva* in their living and acting aspect, but not with the transcendent abyss devoid of qualities: this ultimate union is still a task to be accomplished. Schomerus explains that the union with this aspect of the divine prevents the soul from entangling itself in the sphere of mundanity and renders it free from determinations of plurality and fragmentariness and even detached from the relational dynamics of the divine.¹⁹

The union of the soul with the Godhead or with *Śivam* is part of the inner divine process in which the divine instantiates itself retroactively in its very modality of emanation. In this sense, no effect takes place on this level. The soul rests upon the bosom of the perfect and fully quiescent Being as pure potentiality of manifestation.²⁰ One notes in both authors, Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāṣagar, a kind of metaphysics of *flow*.²¹ Exactly as in the divine sphere, in which a movement of emanation takes place from the static modality of being to the dynamic aspect and at the same time a reverse process of ontological implosion signals a return to the primal condition, the individual soul should not confine itself to the material world, but rather return to the divine sphere in correspondence with the flow of the divine, opening itself to it.

As a result of the birth of God in the soul or the *Śaktinipāta*, the human being is no longer fettered to the empirical forces of the soul,

“Through the birth of God in the soul and the *Śaktinipāta*,
the soul is one with the divine in the modality of emanation”

but submits himself to the divine. However, Meister Eckhart's and Mānikka Vāṣagar's effort to show the attainable union of the individual soul with the Godhead or *Śivam* does not suppress their awareness of the impossibility of any complete identification of the soul as such with the abyss of the Godhead. This is the crucial point which distinguishes the two concep-

follows: neither two nor one; two as well as one".²³ He argues that it is a junction of two beings (*Wesenheiten*), whose manifestation-aspect crystalizes as being in the order of phenomena – albeit having an essential identity with its own non-manifested root, since the dynamic God is fully permeated by the primal transcendent instance of the Godhead. There-

"The divine and the human are two, but according to their mode of living, they may appear as one"

tions in question from the radical monism of Śaṅkaracārya, for whom such union is possible owing to the ontologically determined essential identity between the two. Schomerus points to this fact although both authors, Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāṣagar, recur to a necessary and ultimate unity between the Godhead/*Śivam* and the soul (creating thus an ambivalence as to possible monistic undertones in their doctrines, especially when they say that at that point no discourse about 'soul' or 'God' makes sense any longer). In reality, it is an experience of the soul that surpasses language but does not tracelessly merge the individual singularity in an undifferentiated chasm of being²² – especially if the soul lives in the outer world.

5. Non-duality and third perspective

It is therefore clear that neither Meister Eckhart nor Mānikka Vāṣagar stands for a radical ontological monistic perspective, but this does not mean that they embrace a dualistic one, as the argument of the birth of God in the soul and the *Śaktinipāta* demonstrates. Schomerus says in this respect: "one can perhaps describe this question in the most proper way – though only limiting oneself to the formal side – as

fore "one can call the very being entering the phenomenal sphere Godhead as well as Soul, admittedly without denying the specific existence of the one or the other"²⁴.

Neither monism nor dualism, this *third perspective* announces a way of overcoming the discourses of total union with the divine, as well as ontological separation from it: it is the way of dynamic integration between the divine and the human, a way that takes a critical distance from established reductionisms and is therefore open to everyone. The divine and the human are two, but according to their mode of living, they may appear as one, insofar as the divine and the human disclose themselves towards each other in a profound act of self-donation, which for the human is a cipher of a decisive individual transformation. But, Schomerus adverts, because a human being is not God, he must strive to achieve existential completion and growth. At this point, there is a fundamental difference between Meister Eckhart and Mānikka Vāṣagar: the former sees the possibility of strengthening the link between the human soul and God as an *ars vivendi*, therefore his turning-away from the world does not ultimately lead to an absolute contemptum

mundi, but a radical transformation of being-in-the-world (as being permanently born in God)²⁵. The latter, on the contrary, emphasizes the evil character of everything related to the worldly sphere and affirms that he no longer fits with that order of being²⁶. Mānikka Vāṣagar's devotional path is a feverish yearn-

ing for the Absolute that configures itself as a relentless dissociation from the relative order of being in which the soul can get enmeshed and forget its own source. •



Bronze representation of Mānikka Vāṣagar, Tamil Nadu, XI/XII century.
Source: Wikipedia

- 1 Cf. Rudolf Otto. *West-Östliche Mystik. Vergleich und Unterscheidung zur Wesensdeutung*. München: C. H. Beck, 1971, p. 101.
- 2 D. Hilko Wiardo Schomerus. *Meister Eckhart und Manikka-Vasagar: Mystik auf deutschen und indischem Boden*. Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1936.
- 3 Cf. *Ibidem*, p. VI (preface).
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Cf. Mānikka Vāṣagar. "Die Hymnen des Manikka-Vasagar (Tiruvāṣaga)", translated by D. Hilko Wiardo Schomerus. (*Religiöse Stimmen der Völker*, edited by V. Walter Otto. *Texte zur Gottesmystik des Hinduismus*). Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1923; Cf. also *Sivaitische Heiligenlegenden (Periyapurāṇa und Tiruvātavūrar-purāṇa)*, translated by D. Hilko Wiardo Schomerus, Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1925; D. Hilko Wiardo Schomerus. *Der Caiva-Siddhanta, eine Mystik Indiens. Nach dem tamulischen Quellen bearbeitet und dargestellt*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912.
- 6 Cf. Schomerus, 1936, p. 4.
- 7 Cf. *Tiruvāṣaga* XLI, 1.3, S. 9. With regard to Meister Eckhart cf. Pr. 11 [EWI 132/133, 25–26] und Pr. 12 [EWI 142/143, 16–17]. Cf. Meister Eckhart. *Deutsche Werke I: Predigten 1–65*, edited by Niklaus Largier, Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker, 2008 (= Band 24).
- 8 Schomerus, 1936, p. 27.
- 9 Cf. *Tiruvāṣaga* X, 17, p. 79.
- 10 In *Ioh.* n. 308 [LWIII 256, 13–19]. Cf. Meister Eckhart. "Expositio sanc. ev. sec. Iohannem", in: *Lateinische Werke III*, edited and translated by K. Christ, B. Decker, J. Koch, H. Fischer, A. Zimmermann, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994.
- 11 Cf. Schomerus, 1936, pp. 49–50.
- 12 Cf. *Tiruvāṣaga* VVIII, 9, p. 41.
- 13 Cf. Pr. 22 [EWI 262/263, 16–17].
- 14 Cf. Pr. 38 [EWI 418/419, 3].
- 15 Cf. Pr. 4 [EWI 54/55, 20–23].
- 16 Cf. Schomerus, 1936, pp. 27–28. Cf. *Tiruvāṣaga* III, p. 14.
- 17 Cf. Pr. 46 [EWI 490/491, 13–19].
- 18 Cf. *Tiruvāṣaga* XXXIV, 2, p. 152.
- 19 Cf. Schomerus, 1936, p. 165.
- 20 Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 166–167.
- 21 Cf. McGinn, 2001, p. 71: "A good way to understand Eckhart's implied systematic is through the dynamic reciprocity of the 'flowing-forth' [*exitus-emanatio/uzganc-uzfliessen*] of all things from the hidden ground of God, and the 'flowing-back', or 'breaking-through' [*reditus-restoratio/inganc-durchbrechen*], of the universe into essential identity with this divine source. From this perspective, Eckhart's metaphysics is aptly described as a 'metaphysics of flow' [i.e., *fluxus*]".
- Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The mystical thought of Meister Eckhart*. New York: Herder Books, 2001.
- 22 Cf. Schomerus, 1936, p. 133.
- 23 Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 168.
- 24 Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 168.
- 25 Pr. 86 [EWI 210/211, 16]. Cf. Meister Eckhart. *Deutsche Werke II: Predigten 66–86, Traktate, Lateinische Werke (Auswahl)*, edited by Niklaus Largier, Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker 2008 (= Band 25).
- 26 Cf. Schomerus, 1936, p. 135. Cf. also *Tiruvāṣaga* VVI, 8, S. 33. Cf. also *Tiruvāṣaga* V. VI, 10, p. 33.



Alain Daniélou

MANTRA: THE PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE AND MUSIC ACCORDING TO HINDU COSMOLOGY

This essay appeared in the *Cahiers d'Ethnomusicologie* N°4, 1991. Alain Daniélou deals with the question of mantra from an integral viewpoint, bearing in mind metaphysics, cosmology, language, music and psychology. This is the first part of the rather long essay originally published in French.

Translation by Adrian Navigante
Revision by Kenneth Hurry



Alain Daniélou at the Labyrinth in 1982. Photo: Jacques Cloarec.

Hindu cosmology poses the fundamental problem of the possibility of communication, the principle upon which different forms of language are based: the language of smell, taste, touch, sight (gestures and symbols) and sound, as well as its two branches: spoken and musical language. Hindu philosophers regard the universe as stemming from an initial manifestation of energy and developing according to the principles contained in its germ, following a sort of genetic code based on mathematical elements.

Shaped out of pure energy relations, the world develops its multiple forms, using the same basic formal principles. All manifestations of matter, life, perception and sensation are parallel branches stemming from a common tree.

The fundamental identity of energy components in matter, life, thought and perception enable relations and analogies to be established between them. This same identity also establishes a bridge between visual or acoustic language and certain aspects of thought, sensation, emotion and the harmony of forms. If such relations were lacking, we could not evoke one by means of the other, that is, none of them would have any vehicle function.

In the logic of creation, a world only exists if it is perceived. There is no perception without an object, or object without perception. For each state of matter there is, in living beings, a sense of perception and a form of awareness. In places perpetually devoid of light, fish have no eyes. Sound perception, particularly in mu-

sic, is very important for us, since it can be easily analysed in terms of frequency ratios, that is, in numerical terms. By means of language (spoken or musical), we can gain insights into the equations on which the structures of matter, life, perception and thought are based. This is why, in antiquity, music was considered as a sort of key to all other sciences.

Thus, it is not fruitless to seek – after the fashion of ancient philosophers – parallels and affinities between certain peculiarities that musical intervals reveal to us and the various forms of matter and life, plants and animals, atom and planetary structures, as well as of the mechanisms of perception, emotive reactions or structures of thinking. In order to understand them, they must be expressed as equations, ciphered.

In a general manner, we can call ‘language’ the whole set of procedures living beings use as means of expression and communication. Language consists of a number of symbols making it possible to represent or evoke objects, persons, actions, emotions, feelings and even abstract principles. However, as with every symbolic system, a language is only an approximation, an evocation. It indicates or suggests an idea, a form, a person, a sensation, an emotion, but it cannot *really* represent them.

Every means of communication is, by definition, a language. Different kinds of language are classified according to a hierarchy referring to the different states of matter (or elements) and to the senses of perception relating to them. Visual forms of language correspond to the element of fire, which is the sphere of sight. To this domain belongs, for example, the *yantra* or symbolic diagram, as well as images,

hieroglyphs, and in a certain way the system of writing, since they are all visual forms of communication. The sphere of sight is in turn related to gestures or *mūdra*, which are quite a broad means of communication. Ritual acts, which enable us to communicate with the invisible world of spirits, are to a great extent related to the language of *mūdra*.

The fundamental element is called ether. It is the domain from which other elements develop. The distinctive features of this element are space and time. A wave is composed of length and frequency. Its perception is related to the limited value of our perception of space and time. Living beings from other dimensions, with a different perception of time, cannot be known by us. Our efforts to establish contact with subtle beings or spirits presuppose that they have the same perception of time duration as we have. That is why such efforts are very often useless. If a day in the life of a god corresponds to the duration of a whole human life, this shows that the god is not on the same wave frequency as humans, and communication is therefore very difficult.

The principle of everything that exists is only a manifestation of energy or vibratory nature in space and time, that is, in ether. We have no organ that immediately perceives all the vibrations of ether, otherwise we would know the secret nature of the world and its formation process. We can only perceive pure vibrations through their repercussions in the air. That is the domain of sound. Since it is the closest representation of the process through which the thought of the Creator manifests itself in the universe, sound appears as the most suitable

“In the logic of creation, a world only exists if it is perceived. There is no perception without an object, or object without perception.”

means to express – albeit in a limited manner – the different aspects of the world, of being and thought.

Sonic language is of two kinds. If we use only the numerical ratios between sound vibrations –analogous to the geometric ratios of *yantras* –, we obtain musical language. If we use the peculiarities of our vocal organ to interrupt, differentiate and pace the sound, we obtain spoken language enabling us to shape a great variety of distinct sonic symbols that we can use to represent objects, notions, and roughly circumscribe the forms of thought. That is the domain of *mantra*.

The world has no substance. It is a divine dream, an illusion to which divine power gives a semblance of reality. The world is but pure energy, tension, vibration, the simplest expression of which appears in the phenomenon of sound. That is why it is said, in the theory of the divine word, that the Creator utters the universe. The world is only a word, a divine song through which the Creator's ideation is realised. This explains why, by means of yogic introspection, we can go back to the point at which thought becomes a word and emotion is born from musical sound, which allows us at least partially to understand how the divine makes manifest the world and life itself.

During such a process of introspection, we can observe that thought manifests itself in language in four stages: first of all in a substratum called *para*, the “beyond”, after which it arises as a precise and indivisible entity of which we have a kind of global view. This state is called *paśyantī*, vision. We then try to delimit the contours using the acoustic symbols we call “words”. This formulation is more or less precise according to the richness of our vocabulary, the number and the quality of words that we have learned to use. This state of mental formulation of an idea is called *madhyamā*, that is, the intermediate state. Then, we can exteri-

orize this formulation using an acoustic form called *vaikharī*, which means utterance, but we can also express it through gestures, such as a *mūdra*.

Ascent to the sources of the word is one of the most important techniques of Yoga. The process of manifesting the idea through sound uses the energy centres of the subtle body, the chakras, whose reality words help us to perceive. If we follow the path of manifestation of the word backwards, starting from the form *vaikharī* in the middle of the throat, we reach the point of formulation, *madhyamā*, in the chakra located near the heart. As a result of this, we arrive at *pashyantī*, vision or ideation, where an idea appears in the bulbous centre located at the level of the navel. Finally, beyond the idea, we can reach the very substratum of thought, the place of its coming into being, where human and divine are intertwined at the *mūlādhāra*, the centre of energy coiled up at the base of the spine. This return to the source of language is one of the most efficacious methods of attaining a perception of the formless bliss of the divine. *Mantra-yoga* with its use of articulated sound, and *svara-yoga* which retraces the source of musical sound, are essential aspects of the spiritual experience that is the ultimate purpose of *Yoga*.

Only from the state of *madhyamā*, or formulation, can we analyse the relationship between thought and language. In doing so, we realize that the possibilities of language are extremely restricted. The limits of our perception, that is, of the power of distinction of our ears, do not allow us to distinguish and use more than fifty-four articulated sounds that we call vowels and consonants – from which comes the material used to build all articulated acoustic forms, all *mantras*, and the totality of words used in all languages. It is with this scarce material that we must build nouns, verbs and adjectives permitting us to describe, in a more or less adequate fashion, the contours of an idea. At

"The world is but pure energy, tension, vibration, the simplest expression of which appears in the phenomenon of sound."

this point, a true inner conflict takes place: we seek words that enable us to express an idea, whereas in fact we are tentatively delimiting a contour. Acoustic elements are like tokens that we align to shape the outline of thought. That is the reason why it is dangerous and sometimes absurd to take words for ideas.

In the domain of music, we find a similar problem, since we can only distinguish fifty-four distinct sounds in an octave, which the Hindus call *śruti* (that which can be heard). The number fifty-four seems to indicate a limit both of our perceptive capacity and conceptual classification. As with all the senses, these limits determine our world view, what we are structurally preordained to perceive and our role in creation. There are similar limits in our perception of colours, forms, tastes and smells. The totality of articulated and musical elements constituting the whole range of sound material accessible to us is rated at one hundred and eight. That is one of the reasons why this number is considered sacred: it represents, for human beings, the totality of the Word. In the gestation of the world and the disclosure of divine thought, the number one hundred and eight corresponds to certain numeric codes found in all the different aspects of the created world.

It is relatively easy to explain the limits of our musical perceptions, since relationships between sounds can be analysed and expressed in numerical terms. Mathematics thus also enables us to establish affinities between musical sounds and *yantras* (geometric symbols), as well as harmonies, or proportions constituting what we call "beautiful". Indian sacred sculpture, for example, is conceived according to a

very strict canon of proportions. The image of a god is a figurative form based on a *yantra*, with proportional characteristics analogous to those uniting the notes of a *rāga*, a musical mode, or the elements of a *mantra* – the corresponding articulated formula.

A cosmic principle – a deity – may thus be evoked equally by a *mantra*, a *yantra*, a *rāga*, or an image.

The complementary forms of spoken and musical language are related to different aspects of our perception. Musical sound, *svara*, acts upon our emotive centres, while articulated forms, mantras, belong to the intellectual circuit within the field of language. These two aspects of our perception correspond to the two sides of our brain where the channels of the subtle body, *idā* and *piṅgalā*, are located. Through these channels flow the vital energies from the root chakra, *mūlādhāra*, to the lotus of a thousand petals, *saḥasrāra*, above the crown of the head. *Idā*, the left circuit, is called lunar and stands for the so-called female aspects of our personality, the expression of which is musical language. *Piṅgalā*, the circuit on the right side, is by contrast of a solar nature and connected with the active, male and intellectual dimension. Here the expression is *mantra*. This order may be inverted according to the aspect of manifestation envisaged, that is, the female principle can become active and the male passive. It is because of the female aspect, *śakti*, that the world becomes manifest, and it is thus through music – being closest to the non-manifested vortex of pure vibration – that we can sense something of the divine state, a state of bliss that is inconceivable to our understand-

ing. *Mantra*, for its part, enables evocation of the ideational (male) principle beyond manifestation.

Spoken and musical language are parallel and complementary aspects of acoustic language; furthermore, these two forms of expression are closely related to each other and impossible to separate. The flow of pure vowel sound in spoken language is a kind of combination or arrangement of harmonics. In addition to this, every language uses tones as means of expression. For example, if I want to leave a place, I can use the interrogative “Shall we go?” with a rising tone on the last syllable, and I can answer affirmatively with a falling tone: “Let’s go”. In chant or psalmody, words are entwined with the purely musical element. Spoken language makes use of tones, accents, rhythmical or durative elements belonging to the domain of music. For the *japa* (repetition of *mantra*), *matra-yoga* uses certain rhythmical elements or characteristic measures, or *tālas*. The *gaṇas*, clusters of long or short syllables serving as a basis for metric arrangements in poetry, are identical to those defining musical rhythms or *tālas*.

As a complement to articulated language, gestures, or *mudrā*, are sometimes added. Complete language does not consist only of word and music, but also of gesture. Thus, we can say that there is a correspondence and a complementarity between *mantra* (articulated sound), *mudrā* (gesture) and *svara* (musical sound). Rites and magic acts, which are part of *tantra*, use these three forms of language, adding elements from the language of smell (such as incense) and the language of taste (such as the consummation of sacrificial offerings).

It is in the field of musical experience that each one of us can discover his basic vibration, *sa*, the tonic syllable corresponding to our most profound nature. The discovery of *sa*, the expression of our veritable nature and of the place assigned to us in a world that consists purely of vibration, is an essential element of self-knowledge and a necessary starting point of any learning process. Becoming aware of our most intimate *sa* is the first exercise in training a musician, an exercise that may take months, and that in the practice of yoga is extended to the search for *nāda*, the primordial sound or first manifestation of the creation principle. It is from *nāda-brahman* that the world arose. •

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