

The Cidvilāśastava

“Hymn to the Play of Consciousness”

by Amṛtānanda

(fl. 1325-1375 C.E., Andhra Pradesh)

translated from the Sanskrit by Dr. Ben Williams
with an introduction and notes by Brian Campbell

published by Tripurā Tallikā

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Tripurā Tallikā is a small group of Śrīvidyā practitioners working to make high quality Śrīvidyā texts, and related knowledge, accessible to practitioners worldwide. Our goal is to revitalize knowledge in the Śrīvidyā tradition, its foundational texts, practices, and rich history through our publications and work. Key to our mission is providing our publications open access and free of charge, thereby ensuring that the widest audience can access them. Our mission is guided by our values: Wisdom, Excellence, and Responsibility. With deep gratitude to our respective gurus, and with their full blessings, Tripurā Tallikā is an independent research and publishing group.

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Amṛtānanda:

The Great (14th Century C.E.) Śrīvidyācārya & the Cidvilāsastava

Amṛtānanda, also known as Amṛtānandanātha and Amṛtānandayogin (approx. 1325-1375),¹ was a prolific author, intellectual, and *Śrīvidyācārya* (teacher of Śrīvidyā) hailing from what is currently known as Andhra Pradesh, India. Amṛtānanda is widely considered to be one of the most authoritative voices in the tantric tradition of goddess worship known as Śrīvidyā and is perhaps best known for his foundational, and widely cited, commentary (entitled the *Dīpikā*) on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra*. Along with the *Nityāṣoḍaśīkārṇavatantra*, the *Yoginīhrdayatantra* is one of the two primary scriptures (*mūlāsāstra*) of the Śrīvidyā tradition. Amṛtānanda's *Dīpikā* proved to be highly influential and informed the opinions of many future gurus and *ācāryas*, including the famous Bhāskaraṛāya Makhin (eighteenth century)—although interpretations between these two teachers on critical points were not always in agreement. Gopinath Kaviraj suggests that Amṛtānanda represents a more traditional understanding and lineage of Śrīvidyā,² which was clearly supplanted by more Vedanticized forms of interpretation and practice throughout the centuries leading up to Bhāskaraṛāya. Along with his two earlier thirteenth century predecessors, Śivānanda and Vidyānanda, Amṛtānanda helps to make up a triad of three of the most important voices in the early history of Śrīvidyā in South India.

Amṛtānanda's guru lineage is legendary. He was a disciple of Puṇyānanda (1275-1325),³ an important *Śrīvidyācārya* from the *Hādi sampradāya* of Śrīvidyā who was, according to Gopinath Kaviraj, "of Kashmir reputation."⁴ Puṇyānanda was a highly influential teacher who penned the famous Śrīvidyā treatise, the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa*, a foundational text that outlines the esoteric doctrine, cosmology, and emergence of the Śrīcakra. Tracing Amṛtānanda's guru lineage even further back, one finds that he is in the lineage of Kalyāṇadeva, the fifth guru in the *mānavakrama* of the *guru parampara* listed in the famous *Khaḍgamālāmantra*. Amṛtānanda lists his *guru parampara* in the *Saubhāgyasudhodaya* (6.5) as follows:

¹ Approximate date following Sanderson 2007, 412-416 and C. Kunhan Raja in Krishnamacharya and Sarma 1949, xliii.

² Kaviraj 2006, 100.

³ Approximate date following Sanderson 2007, 412-416.

⁴ Kaviraj 2006, 100.

Chart of Succession

1. Paramaśiva	7. Kaṅkalātāpasa	13. Tejodeva	19. Deveśa
2. Caryānātha	8. Dharmācārya	14. Manojadeva	20. Keśaveśa
3. Krodhamuni	9. Muktakeśinī*	15. Kalyāṇadeva	21. Puṇyānanda
4. Ṣaṣṭhīśa	10. Dīpakanātha	16. Paramānanda	22. Amṛtānanda
5. Mitreśa	11. Jīṣṇudeva	17. Svātmānanda	
6. Lopāmudrā*	12. Prabhākaradeva	18. Trilocaneśa	

While the specificities of Śrīvidyā *guru paramparas* differ slightly between texts and traditions, it is without a doubt that Amṛtānanda represents an important and traditional lineage of Śrīvidyā.

In addition to his expertise in Śrīvidyā, Amṛtānanda was also an intellectual theorist of poetry and drama, and penned the *Alaṅkārasaṅgraha*,⁵ an important work on Sanskrit poetics and *rasa* theory. Moreover, the *Alaṅkārasaṅgraha* includes many of Amṛtānanda's own poetic stanzas that are illustrative of various aesthetic principles, demonstrating that he not only possessed mastery of the technical knowledge of literature and theater, but also the skills of poet.

In the *Alaṅkārasaṅgraha*, verses 1.3-9, Amṛtānanda describes the context and impetus behind his composition as follows:

"Bhaktibhūpati, a bee at the lotus feet of Śiva, ruled all lands of the earth which give forth extraordinary fruit and serve as a girdle for the great ocean. His son was the venerable Mannabhūti, adorned with great praise as a vast ocean of dispassion, a beautiful ornament to both his lunar and solar dynasties. One day in a learned gathering, in the midst of speaking in a discussion on poetry, that [King] respectfully addressed the master poet (*kaviśvara*), Amṛtānanda: "in service of the expertise of good people, compile [a text on] the phonemes, sentence construction, aestheticized sentiments and emotions, the types of characters, figures of speech, poetic faults and excellences, the principles of theater, the major and minor kinds of dramas, and different kinds of sweet speech and literary compositions, all conjoined into a single work, and teach it to them." Collecting from numerous sources, the teachings and theories taught in other systematic works, I who received this request, Amṛtānanda, comprehensively composed this Compendium on Poetic Figures (*Alaṅkārasaṅgraha*)."⁶

⁵ Following compelling evidence from Sanderson 2007, based on the *maṅgala* of the *Alaṅkārasaṅgraha* 1.1 *jagadvaitryajanana-jāgarūkapadadvayam aviyogarasābhijñam ādyaṃ mithunam āśraye*.

"I take refuge in the primordial pair of [the Guru's] feet, which awaken one to the diversification of the world and [simultaneously] bring awareness to its underlying undivided Essence." (translation by Ben Williams).

* Both Lopāmudrā and Muktakeśinī were women, a noteworthy fact given most lineage holders in Śrīvidyā (and within many traditions) were men.

⁶ Translation by Ben Williams.

Among his original writings and commentaries, Amṛtānanda's short hymn, entitled the *Cidvilāsastava* ('Hymn to the Play of Consciousness'), stands out as particularly noteworthy and representative of his understanding and lineage of Śrīvidyā. The *Cidvilāsastava* meticulously outlines and provides highly learned, beautifully poetic, and radically nondual *bhāvanās* (creative contemplations that fuse the mind with reality) for several important steps in the ritual worship of Tripurasundarī. Amṛtānanda's contemplations include many recognizable elements from a standard *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā* (sixteen offerings), as well as offerings specific to the practice of Śrīvidyā, such as the worship of the fifteen *Nityākalā devīs* (the goddesses of the individual lunar days). Reading through the *Cidvilāsastava*, it is abundantly clear how deeply the Pratyabhijñā school of nondual Śaivism from medieval Kashmir influenced Amṛtānanda's contemplations on ritual. Even though Amṛtānanda provides numerous citations from this tradition in his highly learned *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginībrdayatantra*, the *Cidvilāsastava* further establishes this connection.

It is also worth mentioning that the specific form of nondualism expounded in the *Cidvilāsastava* is more inline with the Pratyabhijñā school, and related tantric and Kaula traditions, than it is with the vastly more popular nondual teachings from the Advaita Vedānta tradition propagated by several of the post-Ādi Śaṅkarācārya *maṭhas* (monasteries). With an unprecedented amount of new access to both the early and medieval Advaita Vedānta traditions, as well as the tantric and Kaula traditions, some of Śrīvidyā's early influences and connections are now being learned about for the first time outside of a small group of academic specialists and closed circles of orthodox practitioners who hold, and often guard, rare manuscripts and knowledge.

Contemporary Śrīvidyā gurus and authorities, such as Ātmānandanātha (Ramesh Kutticad) of Chennai, have publicly written on the differences between Śaṅkarācārya's Vedānta and what is popularly known as "Kashmir Śaivism" and have even suggested, "learned scholars may debate on the aspects, but for us sadhakas, it is suffice to know that all tantra has mainly kashmira shaiva basis."⁷ Following the lead of great scholars like Professor Vrajvallabha Dwivedi, interested readers can now clearly see that even the great *Śrīvidyācārya*, Śivānanda wrote in his *Rjvīmarśinī* commentary on the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇavatāntra* that Śrīvidyā in his *sampradāya*, originated from Kashmir.⁸ Śivānanda's grand-disciple, Maheśvarānanda of Cidambaram (fl. 1275-1325 C.E.), echoes this understanding in his masterpiece, *Mabārthamañjarī*, by citing the exact line from his *paramaguru*, thereby proving that this knowledge was being passed down through the generations within important Śrīvidyā lineages. The *Cidvilāsastava* provides its readers with a window into both Amṛtānanda's world and the early history of Śrīvidyā in South India.

⁷ Kutticad 2016, 30.

⁸ *sampradāyasya kāśmīradeśobbūtatatvāt yoginīpradhānatayā vidhāyāḥ prakṛtabhāṣāviśeṣatvāc ca yathāsampradāyaṃ tasya vyavahāra ity upadeśaḥ*. See Dwivedi 1985, 114.

The *Cidvilāsastava*

The *Cidvilāsastava* was first edited, on the basis of several manuscripts, and published in Sanskrit by Professor Vrajvallabha Dwivedi as an appendix to his 1985 critical edition of the *Nityāśoḍaśīkārṇavatāntra*. One of Professor Dwivedi's students, Dr. Sthaneshwar Timalina, published a short summary of the *Cidvilāsastava* as part of an article on tantric visualization in an academic journal in 2013,⁹ but it is not a complete translation and remains largely unknown to practitioners of the *vidyā* who are not academic specialists. A Śrīvidyā practitioner from Bangalore, simply named "Sriram," offered a summary and analysis of the *Cidvilāsastava* in a series of posts on an online forum in 2009,¹⁰ but they did not offer a comprehensive translation, and are subject to deletion at any time.

This new translation provides the original Sanskrit, following Professor Dwivedi, a transliteration into Roman script using the International Alphabet for Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) scheme, comprehensive notes to help contextualize and explain esoteric concepts, history, and vocabulary, and the most complete, accessible, and poetic translation to-date by Dr. Ben Williams, a Harvard-trained Ph.D. and a specialist in tantric literature.

The Practice of the *Cidvilāsastava*

The *Cidvilāsastava* belongs to a category of texts within Śrīvidyā that describe the interiorized (*antar*) modes of worship and creative contemplations (*bhāvanā*) on the goddess and consciousness. Deeply meditative and internalized practices within Śrīvidyā are exemplified in texts such as the *Bhāvanopaniṣad* where all nine *āvāraṇas* (circuits) of the Śrīcakra are related to the body and a host of other esoteric correlations that help reorient a practitioner's awareness away from the denser aspects of worship and into more subtle, refined, and internalized modes of *sādhana*. Interiorized practices such as *mānasapūjā* are often based on the purely mental recitation of mantra accompanied by an inner rehearsal of the ritual within the mind alone. Other forms of contemplative worship are taught in texts such as Śivānanda's *Subhagodayavāsanā*, which teaches the contemplation of subtle esoteric knowledge known as *vāsanā*. In this tantric context, *vāsanā* doesn't refer to its more well-known definition as deep impressions and tendencies from past lives, but rather to a special type of knowledge based on esoteric correlations, deep contemplation, and subtle (often hidden) knowledge of the mantra and ritual procedures. The repeated practice of *vāsanā* contemplations creates subtle impressions within the mind that enliven ritual worship by purifying thoughts (*vikalpasamskāra*) that hinder ritual efficacy and one's innate bliss and realization.

The various modes and *upāyas* of practice is a vast topic, dealt with in various tantras and by numerous commentators, and might be summarized as ultimately relating to the inner qualification and mental proclivities of the practitioner. Whether or not one is ringing a bell and

⁹ Timalina, 2013, 63-67.

¹⁰ Sriram 2009.

chanting mantras, ringing a bell and intensely focusing on specific *bhāvanā* contemplations, or just in deep contemplation without touching or even thinking of a bell at all, depends on what mode of practice one is capable of performing. The qualification to perform various modes of *sādhana* is grounded in one's power of concentration and the freedom one experiences from differentiated, rogue, diverse, and unwanted thoughts. Each mode of *sādhana* is capable of bringing one to the highest realization of practice—it is simply a matter of one's individual predispositions that will determine which *upāya* is most effective for a given aspirant at a given time.

Based on the text of the *Cidvilāsastava* alone, it is somewhat unclear whether the contemplations taught are meant to accompany external rituals (*bahiryāga*), or are to be performed without the need for external *pūjā*. However, reading through the *Cidvilāsastava* it seems abundantly clear that unlike forms of *mānasapūjā* where the ritual and its structure are maintained, Amṛtānanda's higher level contemplations actually work to dissolve ritual, its procedures, and even the practitioner's mind into pure consciousness.

In other Kaula traditions, external ritual worship melts away into inner contemplation and ultimately into movements of consciousness as the adept moves through various modes of practice, which may include dispensing with ritual action altogether as their budding knowledge of the Self becomes more and more readily apparent. Understood in this way, formalized ritual worship slowly dissolves away following a foundational classification of base (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), and supreme (*para*). The *Yoginīhrdayatantra* teaches a nearly identical triadic set of worship known as superior (*parā*), intermediate (*parāparā*) and lowest (*aparā*) as follows:

pūjāsanketam adhunā kathayāmi tavānaghe |
yasyaprabodhamātreṇa jīvanmuktaḥ pramodate || 3.1 ||
tava nityoditā pūjā tribhir bhedair vyavasthitā |
parā cāpy aparā gauri trītyā ca parāparā || 3.2 ||
prathamādvaitabhāvasthā sarvaprasaragocarā |
dvitīyā cakrapūjā ca sadā niṣpādyate mayā || 3.3 ||
evam jñānamaye devi trītyā svaprathāmayī |

"Now, O flawless One, I will teach the practice of worship, by the mere awareness of which, one who is liberated in this life rejoices. The worship of You, O Gaurī, taught as obligatory and regular, is three-fold: higher (*parā pūjā*), lower (*aparā pūjā*), and integrated (*parāparā pūjā*). The first [higher form of worship] has as its domain the outward flowing of all [the senses] inasmuch as they are abiding in the state of nonduality. The second [lower form] is the [external] worship of the [Śrī]cakra. I [Bhairava] am always performing that. O Goddess, the third [form of worship integrates both the higher and lower] inasmuch as it consists of the outward array of distinctive [rites] arising within [the adept's all-encompassing] knowledge."¹¹

¹¹ Translation by Williams 2019 and indebted to the translation and interpretive engagement of Anya Golovkova (2019), see p.115ff.

Amṛtānanda further clarifies these three modes of worship in his *Dīpikā* commentary as follows:

*yatra yatra mano yāti bāhye vābhyantare priye | tatra tatra parāvasthā vyāpakatvāt kva yāsyati ||
yatra yatrākṣamārgena caitanyaṃ vyajyate prabhoḥ | tasya tanmātradharmitvāc cillayād bharitā matiḥ ||
iti vijñānabhairavabhāṭṭārakoktarīyā bāhyasya cillayalakṣaṇādvaitaprathā parā pūjety arthaḥ*

"The higher [form of] worship is the expansion of non-duality characterized by the dissolving of external objects into Consciousness. This accords with the following practice taught in the revered *Vijñānabhairava* (116-117): "Wherever the mind goes, either internally or externally, O Dear one, there [it finds] the state of supreme reality. Where else can it go, because that [reality] is all-pervading? Wherever an awareness of God manifests through the pathway of perception, then, given that this [Consciousness] possesses the qualities of that [apparently objective sense object], it dissolves into Consciousness. As a result there is an all-embracing cognition [of reality]."12

*dvitīyā cakrapūjā aparā pūjā caturasrādibaindavāntaśrīcakrasadanāvāraṇadevatārcanam
aparā pūjetyarthaḥ | sadā niṣpādyate mayā | sadā pratyahaṃ mayā sarvajñenāpi niṣpādyate kriyate
abhedapratītibodhakatvāt | abhedapratītyartham aparā pūjā sarvair api jñānibhiḥ kāryety arthaḥ ||*

"The second, lower worship is the external worship of the [Śrī]cakra. To elaborate, this [lower worship] is the propitiation of the retinue of deities in their [respective] abodes, namely in the Śrīcakra, from the outermost square and to the central point. That is always, i.e. every day, performed by me, even though I am omniscient, because it causes one to awaken to the perception that all is one. The implication [of this statement] is that this "lower" worship should be performed even by all adepts endowed with insight without exception, in order to give rise to non-dual perception."13

*evaṃ jñānamaye pūrvoktādvaitabhāvanāmāyā dhāmmi svaprathāmayī bāhyasya
pṛthagātmakāvaraṇārcanarūpasya karmaṇo jñānamayatāviśrāntis trītyā parāparā pūjā ||*

"In the same way the third, the integrated [form of] worship consists in the outward array of distinctive [rites] arising within the radiant domain of knowledge consisting of a unified meditative awareness described before [as the higher *pūjā*]; in other words, the external ritual in the form of the worship of the distinctive nature of each circuit [of the Śrīcakra, i.e. 'lower *pūjā*'] comes to rest in pure knowledge ['higher *pūjā*']."14

Based on the three types of worship presented in the *Yoginīhrdayatantra*, it seems the *Cidvilāsastava* could very well accompany the external (*aparā*) worship of the Śrīcakra, as well as lead one into the intermediate level of worship (*parāparā*) where external worship blends together with the cultivation of (nondual) knowledge. Aside from this threefold classification, the *Cidvilāsastava* could also be read as purely contemplative worship. Building on

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

Amṛtānanda's powerful commentary, Dr. Ben Williams suggests a more holistic approach to how the *Cidvilāsastava* may work together with ritual:

"Amṛtānanda adds some key information here; namely, an explanation of the unusual point that Bhairava shares with the Goddess in the *Yoginībr̥daya*: that he is always performing the outer ritual of worshipping the Śrīcakra. Adding the caveat that Bhairava does this, even though he is omniscient, leads Amṛtānanda draw the conclusion that 'all initiates, even those endowed with direct insight into reality (*jñāni*), must perform the outer ritual as a daily obligatory rite.' This is clear evidence that, in Amṛtānanda's view, the inner meanings of ritual, the forms of liberating knowledge that rites ultimately signify [comprising the core objective of the *Cidvilāsastava*], are not meant to replace ritual action. Rather the two are meant to be harmoniously fused in a form of *pūjā* that fully integrates inner knowing and outer action."¹⁵

Regardless of how the *Cidvilāsastava* is practiced, its teachings and contemplations are clearly an antidote to duality-saturated conceptions of ritual worship—whether performed in the mind alone, or accompanying external *pūjā*. By offering nondual contemplations that aim to purify differentiated thought-forms from the practitioner's mind, the *Cidvilāsastava* is an enhancement to whatever mode of practice one might be performing.



¹⁵ Williams 2019, 13.

The Cidvilāsastava

“Hymn to the Play of Consciousness”

meter: *Ratboddhatā*, 11 syllables per quarter verse (*pāda*)

names of individual verses are not given in the text and are only suggestions

VERSE I:

Gurupādukā Dhyāna

स्वप्रकाशशिवमूर्तिरेकिका तद्विमर्शतनुरेकिका तयोः ।
सामरस्यवपुरिष्यते परा पादुका परशिवात्मनो गुरोः ॥ १ ॥

**svaprakāśaśivamūrtir ekikā tadvimarśatanur ekikā tayoh |
sāmarasyavapur iṣyate parā pādukā paraśivātmano guroḥ || 1 ||**

The form of Śiva as innate luminosity is unique; the embodiment of His self-awareness is also unique. The fusion of the pair is the true form of the divine sandals of the Guru who is one with Paraśiva.

Notes:

The contemplation and worship of the guru's feet are of prime importance in many Indic religious traditions spanning Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Buddhism, Jainism, and lineages of Kaula tantra such as Śrīvidyā. In Indic culture, feet are considered to be the most humble part of the body and their veneration, care, and adoration is a humbling, respectful, and emotionally moving practice.

The guru's sandals (*pādukā*) are a stand-in for the actual feet of the guru and represent the *guru parampara*, the succession of teachers in a lineage—the very foundation of what keeps the traditions alive through the generations. *Pādukā* can also mean imprint, or footprint, and signals a subtle impression such as footprints in the sand—a sign of presence. Śrīvidyā, like many tantric lineages, requires a human guru to initiate a practitioner into its fold and meditation upon the guru's feet, sandals, and presence is an essential part of how this is done. From the first mantra given to an aspirant, known as the *Gurupādukā* mantra (the mantra of the guru's sandals) to one of the most repeated mantras (*pādukām pūjayāmi*) within Śrīvidyā *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* (the worship of the nine circuits of the Śrīcakra), the role of the *Gurupādukā* within Śrīvidyā cannot be overestimated.

The *Gurupādukā*, and the guru's feet, are often contemplated as various qualities and principles such as the powers of knowledge and action, the lineage, and especially grace. In nondual Śaiva doctrine, reality consists of two inseparable aspects: the pure light of consciousness (*prakāśa*) and its reflective [contemplative] power of awareness (*vimarśa*). The complete union of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, also known as Śiva and Śakti, is understood to be a supreme state of unity sometimes described as Paramaśiva, the thirty-seventh *tattva*.¹⁶ Many important gurus and Śrīvidyā commentators, including Bhāskararāya Makhin (eighteenth century C.E.), understood the thirty-seventh *tattva* to be the goddess, Tripurasundarī—a homology based on her

¹⁶ The summation of all the foundational thirty-six *tattvas* (principles of reality), see appendix one.

mūlamantra, the fifteen syllabled *Pañcadaśākṣarī*, which (in its *Kādividyā* form) actually consists of thirty-seven individual *akṣaras* (phonemes).

Meditation upon the blissful play and intimate union (*sāmarasya*) of *prakāśa* as Śiva and *vimarśa* as Śakti, is a defining element in Śrīvidyā doctrine and practice.¹⁷ In Śrīvidyā, and other related lineages of Kaula tantra, the guru's feet are often visually depicted as *rakta śukla*, thereby color coding red (*rakta*) for *vimarśa* and white (*śukla*) for *prakāśa*, a powerful symbol of their intimate union that is further embodied in the red *kumkuma* (vermillion power) and off-white *candana* (sandalwood paste), offered in ritual worship. Envisioning the red and white feet of the guru in this way is a form of meditating upon the nondual (*sāmarasya*) reality of Śiva and Śakti and is built upon the ancient Indic theory of conception that understands the progenerative power of sexual intercourse as the combination, and mixing, of menstrual blood (red) and semen (white) — a teaching highlighted by Maheśvarānanda in his *Mahārthamañjarī*.¹⁸ This highly charged visual representation directly invokes the totalizing magnetic union of Śiva and Śakti as the highest state of nondual realization and their blissful play (*vilāsa*) as the creative power of consciousness to manifest (generate) itself into numerous forms. The process of how this all takes place in — and through — consciousness is visually depicted as the emergence of the Śrīcakra.

In Amṛtānanda's first verse of the *Cidvilāstava*, he presents the practitioner with a beautiful meditation on the supreme (*para*) form of the *Gurupādūkā*. In keeping with the Sanskrit literary tradition where the first verse of a text often encapsulates the entirety of its meaning, Amṛtānanda may be subtly hinting at the main teaching of the text: ritual worship is the play of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*) dancing as the blissful interpenetration of Śiva as reality (*prakāśa*) and Śakti as awareness (*vimarśa*) — the unified nondual state of the supreme *gurutattva*, known as Paramaśiva.



¹⁷ See verse fourteen.

¹⁸ See Sanderson 2007, 414, fn. 611.

VERSE 2:

Gurupādukā Mantrajapa

चित्रभानुशशिभानुपूर्वकत्रिभिर्भेदनियतेषु वस्तुषु ।

तत्तदात्मकतया विमर्शनं तत्समष्टिगुरुपादुकाजपः ॥ २ ॥

citrabhānuśaśibhānupūrvakatritribhedaniyateṣu vastuṣu |

tattadātmakatayā vimarśanaṃ tatsamaṣṭigurupādukājapaḥ || 2 ||

Objects of experience are encompassed by the nine divisions [of the Śrīcakra] based upon the [three] luminaries: fire, sun, and moon. The awareness of any object as corresponding to that luminous nature is the repetition of the mantra of the Guru's sandals—the holistic form of the triad.

Notes:

In Śrīvidyā, practice always begins with the recitation of the *Gurupādukā* mantra. This all-important mantra is the first, and in many ways, the most treasured and powerful mantra a practitioner receives from their Śrīvidyā guru during their first initiation. The *Gurupādukā* mantra has a number of considerable variations, recorded within ritual manuals and tantras such as the *Paramānandantra* and was even personally inscribed in a surviving seventeenth-century unpublished manuscript of the *Śyāmāpaddhati*.¹⁹ Since the *Gurupādukā* mantra is secret, it is understandably absent from much of Śrīvidyā's early written history. In all likelihood, the *Gurupādukā* mantra was first openly published (in Sanskrit) in the *Nityotsava* of Umānandanātha in 1923, followed by Cidānandanāthar's (Nedimindi Subramania Iyer) foundational and widely referenced ritual manual for the worship of the Śrīcakra, the 'Śrīvidyā Saparya Vidhi,' in 1938.

The *Gurupādukā* mantra is a complex mantra that embodies multiple levels of meaning. It is principally taught that the mantra connects the aspirant to their guru by invoking their grace, blessings, and protection—just as sandals protect one's feet from hazards while walking on the ground. The *Gurupādukā* mantra is a treasure chest of rare, precious, and sacred mantric gems—an 'inheritance' of the great legacy, diversity, and history of Śaivism and Kaula tantra that is given to an initiate at the very onset of their *sādhana*.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the recitation of the *Gurupādukā* mantra as an subtle meditation on awareness. In its most basic sense, Amṛtānanda is suggesting that everything one sees in the world of objectivity is connected to the nine *āvāraṇas* (circuits) of the Śrīcakra based on a three by three mapping relating to the fire, sun, and moon. Amṛtānanda teaches that the true repetition of the *Gurupādukā* mantra is recognizing that every object of perception is intimately connected to the nine levels of Śrīcakra. Amṛtānanda closes the verse by teaching that the *Gurupādukā* is the fusion of the fire, sun, and moon, implying the totality (all nine

¹⁹ Special thanks to Maciej Karasinski-Sroka for this reference.

āvāraṇas) of the Śrīcakra. In a more yogic sense, the fusion of the fire, sun, and moon also relate to the union of the three yogic breaths:

- inhalation (*apāna*) as the moon traveling through the *īḍa nāḍī*
- exhalation (*prāṇa*) as the sun traveling through the *piṅgala nāḍī*
- the middle 'rising' breath (*udāna*) as fire traveling in the *susūmṇā nāḍī*

In a more nuanced understanding, Amṛtānanda is teaching a profound moment-to-moment meditation on the expansion of consciousness in relation to both cosmogony and epistemology, spoken of in terms of the structure of the Śrīcakra. The background to understanding the deeper aspects of this verse requires a brief explanation about how consciousness and perception work together to create the experienceable world of objectivity.

The world of objectivity is the manifested reality that is experienced by the knowing subject (consciousness). Objects of experience refer to perceiving (experiencing) differentiated forms in the world—made possible through three foundational aspects of knowing described as *prameya* (the known), *pramāṇa* (the means of knowing), and *pramātr* (the knower). These three fundamental nodes of knowledge operate together to bring awareness to, and knowledge of, the world of objectivity. Kaula tantra often describes this triadic epistemology in terms of the three classic *dhāmans* (luminaries) known as the fire, sun, and moon—although the specific correspondences between *prameya*, *pramāṇa*, and *pramātr*, and the fire, sun, and moon vary significantly between texts and traditions.²⁰ The most coherent and well developed conception of how these three luminaries operate together is that of the great polymath, *Śaivācārya*, and *Jagadguru* of Kaula tantra, Abhinavagupta (fl. 975-1025 C.E. Kashmir) who teaches in the third chapter (3.121-123) of his masterpiece, *Tantrāloka* ('The Light on Tantra'), their correspondences as follows:

- Fire *pramātr* the knowing subject
- Sun *pramāṇa* the means of obtaining knowledge
- Moon *prameya* the objects of knowledge

Every experience in the world of objectivity is cognized through a knower, an object being known, and the means by which it is known. Objects of experience are made knowable through sensory perceptions (and thoughts) that appear, remain, and disappear, following the three primary modes of cosmogony known as *sṛṣṭi* (emanation), *sthiti* (stability), and *sambhāra* (dissolution). The dynamic interplay between these three modes expands in three ways, resulting in a nine leveled map that reveals how one experiences the world of duality.

In this understanding, *sṛṣṭi*, *sthiti*, and *sambhāra* are not stand-alone processes, but are actually constituted by micro-movements of each process within each other. The *Tantrarājatantra* describes how each of the nine *āvāraṇas* of the Śrīcakra follow this mapping and culminate in

²⁰ For a few of these variants see Timalsina 2007, 159, fn. 45.

the *bindu* of Śrīcakra with the complete and final dissolution of all duality into supreme blissful nondual consciousness, described as *sambhāra sambhāra*.

1st phase *sṛṣṭi* (fire)

<i>bhūpurā</i>	<i>sṛṣṭi sṛṣṭi</i>
<i>ṣoḍaśadalapadma</i>	<i>sṛṣṭi sthiti</i>
<i>aṣṭadalapadma</i>	<i>sṛṣṭi sambhāra</i>

2nd phase *sthiti* (sun)

<i>manvaśra</i>	<i>sthiti sṛṣṭi</i>
<i>bahirdaśara</i>	<i>sthiti sthiti</i>
<i>antardaśara</i>	<i>sthiti sambhāra</i>

3rd phase *sambhāra* (moon)

<i>vasukoṇa</i>	<i>sambhāra sṛṣṭi</i>
<i>trikoṇa</i>	<i>sambhāra sthiti</i>
<i>bindu</i>	<i>sambhāra sambhāra</i>

Confirming the relationship between the fire, sun, and moon and the *āvāraṇas* of Śrīcakra, Amṛtānanda's *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra* (3.169) lists how the first three *āvāraṇas* of Śrīcakra are related to fire; the second three to sun; and the last three to moon.

In this more nuanced understanding of the verse, Amṛtānanda is teaching that the supreme form of the recitation of the *Gurupādukā* mantra is to be consciously aware that each experience and perception in the world, as well as their associated thoughts, begin, remain, and dissolve into a single supreme consciousness through the one who knows, the objects known, and the perception by which they are known. Amṛtānanda closes the verse by suggesting that the *Gurupādukā* is the fusion of the triad of fire, sun, and moon, calling attention to how a refined moment-to-moment contemplation on any experience in the world through these epistemological and cosmological cycles constitutes the supreme form of the recitation of the *Gurupādukā* mantra. To be aware that each and every object of experience is actually one with the supreme *gurutattva*, Paramaśiva, and to recognize how this cyclical unfolding of consciousness takes place is the true recitation of the *Gurupādukā* mantra.

Abhinavagupta teaches a similar subtle contemplation on awareness in his *Tantāloka* (5.19-42) which he terms "*buddhidhyāna*." Rather than describing nine levels of perception, Abhinavagupta built on the teachings of his *guru parampara* and included a fourth level to each phase (of *prameya*, *pramāṇa*, and *pramātr*) known as *anākhyā* (the nameless state). The inclusion of a fourth element is a teaching perhaps inaugurated in Jñānanetra's *Kālikāstotra* which describes twelve aspects of perception, rather than nine—an understanding that lines up with his deity-specific revelation of twelve Kālīs, rather than nine levels of the Śrīcakra. Regardless, the method of practice is nearly identical and only varies in terms of how different lineages perceive the number of phases in the sequential dynamism of consciousness to consist of three, four, or five aspects.

Several generations later, the great Kaula master and *Śrīvidyācārya*, Maheśvarānanda (fl. 1275-1325 C.E.) of Cidambaram helped to clarify in his masterpiece, *Mahārthamañjarī*, how the supreme *gurutattva* brings forth illumination of the world through perception and cognition:

*sa ca guruḥ grṇāti prakāśayati viśvavyavahāram iti niruktyā sarvānugrābakaḥ |
tādrkprakāśakavyatireke viśvasyāndhabadhiratādiprāyatāpatteḥ | sa ca paryantataḥ
paramśivabhaṭṭarakāparaparyāyaḥ svātmārūpo mahān pramātā yaduktam śrīśivasūtreṣu gurur upāya iti
| tasya carāṇau jñānakriyālakṣaṇam svātantryam caryate gamyate prāpyate budhyate cābhyām viśvam iti
hi carāṇāv ity ucyete ||*

"And this illumination is 'guru,' which shows its favor to all, as [can be seen] through the etymological analysis that it 'proclaims,' that is to say 'it reveals' the workings of the world, since in the absence of such a revealer, the world would devolve into blindness and deafness. And, in the final analysis, it is the great percipient, the Self, otherwise called Paramaśivabhaṭṭaraka. For as it is said in the Śivasūtra, "the guru is the means." The "two feet" of this [Illumination] are the [Power of its] autonomy consisting of [the Powers of] awareness and action. By these two the world is 'approached,' which is to say it is 'gone to,' 'obtained,' 'known, and 'experienced;' thus they are said to be 'feet.'"²¹

Deeper teachings on the "holistic form the of triad" (fire, sun, and moon) are taught by Abhinavagupta in the fifth chapter of his *Tantrāloka*:

*kadalīsamputākāram sabāhyābhyantarāntaram |
īkṣate hrdayāntaḥstham tat puṣpam iva tattvavit || 21 ||
somasūryāgnisāṅghaṭṭam tatra dhyāyed ananyadbhīḥ |
taddhyānāraṇisamkṣobbhān mahābhairavavyabhuk || 22 ||
hrdayākhye mahākunde jājvalan sphītatām vrajet |
tasya śaktimataḥ sphītasakter bhairavatejasah || 23 ||
mātrmānaprameyākhyam dhāmābhedena bhāvayet |
vahnnyarkasomaśaktīnām tad eva tritayam bhavet || 24 ||*

"He who knows the principles of existence (*tattvajñāna*) sees that (reality) within the Heart, like a flower, the form (of which is like) the (mutually) encapsulated (leaves) of a banana plant (*kadalī*), (wherein all things), both external and internal, and (their innermost) core, (are gathered together). There the undistracted (yogi) should contemplate the dynamic union of the Moon, Sun, and Fire. The fire of the mighty Bhairava, blazing intensely in the great sacrificial hearth called the Heart, aroused by (rubbing together) the fire stick of that meditation, swells. He should contemplate the (three) abodes of subject, means and object of knowledge of that possessor of power, at one (with each other and the Lord, the supreme subject), His abounding energy, Bhairava's fiery effulgence (*tejas*). That itself is the triad of the powers of Fire, Sun, and Moon."²²

²¹ Translation by Cox 2006, 206.

²² Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, IV, 23-27.

Closing the teaching that the *Gurupādukā* is the foundation of the Kaula revelation and the supreme mantra, the following two verses stand out from the *Kulārnavatantra*:

*vāgbhavā mūlavālaye sūtrādyāḥ kavalīkṛtāḥ |
evam kulārṇave jñānam pādukāyām pratiṣṭhitam || 12.3 ||*

"The *sūtras* arising from Speech [all] dissolve in the root center. In the same way, the wisdom in the *Kulārṇava* is established in the *Pādukās*."²³

*na pādukāparo mantrō na devaḥ śrīguroḥ paraḥ |
na hi śāktāt parā dīkṣā na puṇyam kulapūjanāt || 12.12 ||*

"There is no mantra higher than the *pādukā*, no god higher than the guru, no initiation higher than the *śākta*, and no merit higher than the kula worship."²⁴



²³ Translation by Ben Williams.

²⁴ Translation by Rai 1999, 191.

VERSE 3:

Snāna

तीर्थमद्वयसुधारसोदधेर्वारितं निजविमर्शवेलया ।
आणवादिमलमोचनोचितं स्नानमत्र विधिना निमज्जनम् ॥ ३ ॥

tīrtham advayasudhārasodadher vāritaṃ nijavimarśavelayā ।
āṇavādimalamocanitaṃ snānam atra vidhinā nimajjanam ॥ 3 ॥

Encompassing the ocean of the nectarean essence of nonduality with the shoreline of one's innate awareness is the sacred bathing place. According to this method, immersing oneself in such a [*tīrtha*], which liberates one from [the three] impurities such as the contraction of consciousness, is the true ritual bath.

Notes:

Bathing is one of the essential preliminary steps before ritual worship can take place and bathing at a sacred pilgrimage site, known as a *tīrtha* (lit. where one 'crosses over'), is considered to be even more purificatory and auspicious. Visiting *tīrthas* for the express purpose of bathing in their waters is an important part of many Indic religious traditions, perhaps best exemplified by visits to bathe in the Gaṅgā.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda explains how contemplating the infinite expanse of the ocean of nondual reality within one's own awareness is the true bathing site, and immersing oneself in its nondual waters, removes the three *malas*, or impurities that "veil" the ever pure soul in the form of:

- *āṇavamala*: The impurity of 'individuality,' the deepest and most subtle impurity that one is incomplete, fundamentally lacks something, and is separate from the unified divine.
- *māyīyamala*: The impurity of 'differentiation' (*māyā*) between subject and object, and primarily between oneself, others, and the world.
- *kārmamala*: The impurity of 'action' (*karma*), often associated with pleasure and pain. This impurity only functions because of identification with the two previous impurities.

Amṛtānanda's contemplation on the supreme form of bathing likely builds on the *Vijñānabhairavantra* and the works of his *Śaivācārya* predecessors, such as Somānanda (circa 900-950 C.E.) who inaugurated the influential Pratyabhijñā school of nondual Śaivism, Abhinavagupta, and the great *Śrīvidyācārya*, Śivānanda (thirteenth century C.E.) of the early Śrīvidyā tradition, all of whom describe a "supreme" ritual bath.

The *Vijñānabhairavatantra*, in one of its contemplative meditations (*dhāraṇās*), provides a description of the ultimate ritual bath as:

svatantrānandacinmātrasārah svātmā hi sarvataḥ |
āveśanam tatsvarūpe svātmanah snānam īritam || 152 ||

"The essence of Self consists universally in autonomy, bliss, and consciousness. One's absorption in that essence is said to be a (real) bath."²⁵

Somānanda teaches in the seventh chapter of his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*:

pratipattiyānyā snānam nirmalīkaraṇam matam | duḥkhe vāpi sukhe vāpi sarvāsu pratipattiṣu || 88 ||
śivo'smīti manoblādo jalasnānam paraṁ matam | cin nirmalā tanmayam hi jagad asmi tathāvidbah || 89 ||
ity āsthā jalasaucena śuddhisnānam tathoditam |

"Bathing is considered to be (a process of) purification that takes place by means of this understanding (*pratipatti*), (whether) suffering or happy (indeed) in every experience (*pratipatti*). The mental delight that "I am Śiva" is considered to be the highest (kind of) bathing with water. "Consciousness is pure. The universe is of that nature (and) I am (also) like that." This is (my firm) conviction (that has come about) by purification with (this) water. Purifying bathing is spoken of this way."²⁶

Abhinavagupta also describes a supreme bath in the fourth chapter of his *Tantrāloka*:

viśvam etat svasamvittirasānirbharitam rasāt || 4-115 ||
āviśya śuddho nikhilam tarpayed adbhvamaṇḍalam |

"Powerfully entering the [the waters that are the totality of] this universe that is [now] overflowing with the essential flavor of his own awareness, that pure [Yogī thus] offers libations to the entire collection of universal paths [through this internal awareness]."²⁷

Śivānanda teaches in his *Subhagodayavāsanā* (the esoteric contemplation of Tripurasundarī):

cidrasācchāmṛtāmbhodhilaharīrasasīkaraṇiḥ |
ārdrīkṛtasamastāngo vidadhe snānam uttamam || 4 ||

"I perform the ultimate ritual bath in which my entire body is drenched in the drops of essence (*rasa*) from the waves of the ocean of pure nectar, the bliss of Consciousness."²⁸



²⁵ Translation by Singh 1979, 139.

²⁶ Translation by Dyczkowski, 2023, III, 145.

²⁷ Translation by Ben Williams.

²⁸ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 4:

Sandhyā Vandana

सा निशा सकललोकमोहनी वासरः स खलु सर्वबोधकः ।
सामरस्यमिह सन्धिरेतयोः श्रीपरैव ननु सान्ध्यदेवता ॥ ४ ॥

sā niśā sakalalokamohanī vāsarḥ sa khalu sarvabodhakaḥ ।
sāmarasyam iha sandhir etayoḥ śrīparaiva nanu sāndhyadevatā ॥ 4 ॥

Night bewilders all beings and day awakens everything. The twilight in which they meet, in this [nondual teaching], is the fusion [of Śiva and Śakti]. The Supreme Goddess herself is indeed the presiding deity of that twilight.

Notes:

Sandhyā is the junction point between two segments of a day, often understood to be the early morning (dawn), just as the day is beginning, or the early evening (twilight) just as the day begins to turn to night. There are, however, four *sandhyā* points in a day: morning, noon, evening, and midnight. Each of these points during a day is considered to be a highly auspicious time to perform *pūjā* and ritual worship such as *sandhyā vandana*. Deities are often described as being fond of, and associated with, a certain time of the day and Tripurasundarī is described in many sources as being connected to twilight—a highly charged moment associated with *śṛṅgāra rasa*, the aesthetic sentiment of beauty, love, desire, and auspiciousness.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda is undoubtedly building on the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa*, a text he was well acquainted with and cited five times in his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra*, including at verse 1.11 where he explicitly mentions the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* was written by his guru, Paramahaṃsa Puṇyānanda. The *Kāmakalāvīlāsa*'s seventeenth verse describes how each of the individual lunar days consist of the union of *prakāśa* (as day) and *vimarśa* (as night), a teaching clearly reflected in this verse of the *Cidvilāsastava*. The *sandhyā* imagery continues in the forty-eighth verse of the *Saundaryalaharī* which describes how the right eye of the goddess is the sun (which brings about the day), her left eye is the moon (which brings about the night), and her third eye is likened to a blossoming red lotus which brings about *sandhyā*, moving in between the day and night.

In a more yogic sense, the meeting point between the day and night also refers to the space between two breaths known as the in-going breath and out-going breath, a powerful meditation pervasively found throughout tantric traditions.

Amṛtānanda's verse may also build on his predecessor, Śivānanda, who teaches in his *Subhagodayavāsana*:

*aśeṣakarmānuṣṭhānayogyatāpratipādinīm |
sandhyām upāse śivayoḥ sāmaraśyapadam śivām || 5 ||*

"I worship the auspicious twilight, which prepares one to perform all rituals, as the state of fusion between Śiva and Śakti."²⁹

Concerning the teaching that the day is *prakāśa* and the night is *vimarśa*, Abhinavagupta teaches in the sixth chapter (6.77cd-78ab) of his *Tantrāloka*:

*sapāde dvyāṅgule tithyā aborātro vibhajyate || 77 ||
prakāśaviśramavaśat tāv eva hi dinakṣape |*

"A Day and Night is divided by a lunar day, which extends for two and a quarter fingers' space. (Thus) there are two - Day and Night - because (consciousness and the vital breath has two aspects. One is) Light (*prakāśa*) (corresponding to the Day) and (the other is) Rest (*viśrama*) (corresponding to the Night)."³⁰



²⁹ Translation by Ben Williams.

³⁰ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, IV, 303.

VERSE 5:

Sūrya Pūjā

स्वप्रकाशशिव एव भास्करस्तद्विमर्शविभवा मरीचयः ।

यैः स भासयति वेद्यमण्डलं तस्य पूजनमहन्तया मतिः ॥ ५ ॥

svaprakāśaśiva eva bhāskaras tadvimarśavibhavā marīcayaḥ ।
yaiḥ sa bhāsayati vedyamaṇḍalaṃ tasya pūjanam ahantayā matiḥ ॥ 5 ॥

The sun is Śiva who is self-luminous. The sunrays are the creative powers of his self-representation by means of which he makes the world of objectivity shine forth. Reflecting upon that self-luminous Śiva as one's own identity is the true ritual worship of the sun.

Notes:

The sun is a natural symbol for consciousness found within the Vedic, Purāṇic, and tantric traditions. Likely due to its self-effulgent and illuminating qualities, the sun has been the subject of extended contemplation, meditation, and worship throughout the Indian subcontinent, and the world. *Sūrya pūjā* is a ubiquitous element in tantric worship and in Śaiva traditions is often envisioned as worship of Śiva in the form of Mārtaṇḍa Bhairava.

The *Saurya sampradāya*, while not as vibrant as it once was, is the premier tradition of worshiping the sun as the supreme deity. Despite its waning popularity over the centuries, *Sūrya pūjā* survives in a number of forms within contemporary practice such as the *pañcāyatana* worship of five principal deities that worships Sūrya through a small crystal disk. *Sūrya pūjā* is also performed to the *dīpa* (lamp) that acts as a stand-in for the sun and its twelve *kalās*, an ancient conception based on the Vedic idea that there are twelve suns in a year, one for each month.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda envisions the sun as *prakāśa* (the supreme light of consciousness) and its rays as *vimarśa* (the creative feminine power of manifestation) who gives birth to the world of objectivity that shines with the power awareness. Building on the epistemology of the three luminaries described in verse two, Amṛtānanda continues in this verse to view the sun as the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) that 'lights up' the objective world (*prameya*) experienced by the subject (*pramātr*) represented as fire. Amṛtānanda contemplates the true worship of the sun as identifying one's own limited sense of self with the all encompassing, supreme, self-luminous sense of Self, known as Śiva.

The history of solar veneration, the language of light, fire, the Vedic sacrifice, and the sun of consciousness (*citsūrya*) has an extended history in Indic religious traditions, all of which are in the background of Amṛtānanda's verse.

The *Rgveda* (10.170) praises Sūrya as a ruler, destroyer of obstacles, the "highest light of lights," and addresses Sūrya as you "by whom all these worlds are supported here, you who accomplish

all work, who possess all that is proper for gods."³¹ The *Bṛhadāranyaka*, *Kaṭha*, *Chāndogya*, and several other *Upaniṣads* all speak of the sun as the supreme *yajña* (identified with OM) and many other aspects highlighting its importance as light and the inner sun as the light of the Self.

The fourth *ṣaṭka* of the *Jayadrathayāmalatantra* describes the goddess Kālī as the sun of consciousness (*cidarka*):

śṛṇuṣva kathayiṣyāmi rahasyam idam uttamam || 6 ||
puṣṭhibhūtaṃ mahākaulaṃ khecara 'vasthitam bhavet |
avkalpaṃ asaṃdigdhaṃ prapūrṇam ubhayojjitaṃ || 7 ||
cidarkkaṃ śekhārībhūtaṃ tasyāpo pratidīpikā |
kālikā sā pradīpā ca sadā kālīpradīpikā || 8 ||
tatrāntare tatra gatā tanre 'smin tantravat sadā |

"Listen. I will tell (you) this most excellent secret, which is prosperity, namely Mahākaula, that is located in (Śiva,) the Skyfarer. Free of thought constructs and doubt, completely full (and perfect), devoid of both (inner and outer), (it is the) Sun of Consciousness, which is the Summit, and Kālikā, who is the illuminating light of that also; she who is the Lamp, the eternal Lamp of Kālī. She is perpetually present there within it, like the Tantra within this Tantra."³²



³¹ Translation by Jamison and Brereton 2014, 1650.

³² Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, III, 401.

VERSE 6:

Yāgamaṅṭapa Pūjā

चिद्विलासमयभित्तिभावितं ज्ञानदीपविगलत्तमोगुणम् ।
आत्मतत्त्वमिह यागमण्डपं तस्य पूजनविधानमर्चनम् ॥ ६ ॥

**cidvilāsamayabhittibhāvitam jñānadīpavigalattamogūṇam ।
ātmatattvam iha yāgamaṅṭapam tasya pūjanavidhānam arcanam ॥ 6 ॥**

The ritual pavilion is the reality of the Self manifest as a canvas for the play of consciousness in which the quality of darkness melts away in the flame of knowledge. Veneration is the process of worshiping that [Self].

Notes:

The ritual pavilion, or as Amṛtānanda wrote, the '*yāgamaṅṭapa*' is the sacred site where ritual worship takes place. According to Amṛtānanda, this place of worship is the reality of the Self which becomes the canvas of experience. It is in this sacred temple that the play of consciousness (*cidvilāsa*) fully realizes itself when the darkness of ignorance is dispelled by the lamp of knowledge. In this verse, Amṛtānanda explains that true ritual worship happens at this sacred site and consists of venerating the supreme Self alone.

Amṛtānanda's contemplation on the sacred site of worship may build on the work of his predecessor, Śivānanda who teaches in his *Subhagodayavāsanā*:

*vihitapraṭiṣiddhātmaṅṭapapadapātanam ।
siddhiratnākaram kṣetram yajanasthānam āśraye ॥ 7 ॥*

"I take refuge in the ritual ground that is the place of worship, an ocean of powers in which [all] words and concepts comprising injunctions and prohibitions fall away."³³



³³ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 7:

Ātmarakṣā

भेदलक्षणविपक्षसङ्कटात्तारणं परमिहात्मरक्षणम् ।
संविदात्मकतया विमर्शनं बन्धनं भवति सर्वतो दिशाम् ॥ ७ ॥

**bhedalakṣaṇavipakṣasaṅkaṭāt tāraṇaṃ param ihātmarakṣaṇam ।
saṃvidātmakatayā vimarśanaṃ bandhanaṃ bhavati sarvato diśām ॥ 7 ॥**

The highest rite of self-protection here is liberating yourself from the dire straights of dualistic views. Ritually binding all directions is contemplating them as permeated by consciousness.

Notes:

Ātmarakṣā is the ritual protection and guarding of oneself from disturbing elements, troublesome spirits, and other impediments to practice. Invoking protection (*rakṣā*) is a standard procedure in many types of ritual worship. In this verse, Amṛtānanda envisions the highest form of such protection to consist of the complete liberation from the dangers of dualistic thinking that reinforce egoism, difference, and separation from the divine.

Digbandha is an element of *ātmarakṣā* that ritually binds the directions with a series of mantras and *mudrās*. The practice of *digbandha* creates a mantric "force field" around the practitioner, protecting them from potential disturbances that may enter from the various directions. Amṛtānanda's supreme contemplation on *digbandha* teaches that pure consciousness permeates and pervades all the directions and protects the practitioner through the awesome realization that supreme nonduality encompasses everything.



VERSE 8:

Vedikā Pūjā

वेदिका हृदयपद्मकर्णिका चिन्मयी वसति तत्र देवता ।

यो हि तद्यजनकर्मकर्मठस्तस्य पाशभिदुरः स भैरवः ॥ ८ ॥

vedikā hṛdayapadmakarṇikā cinmayī vasati tatra devatā |

yo hi tadyajanakarmakarmaṭhas tasya pāśabhiduraḥ sa bhairavaḥ || 8 ||

The ritual altar is the throne of the heart lotus. The deity that is consciousness dwells there. Bhairava destroys the limitations of the one who is devoted to the worship of that [deity of consciousness].

Notes:

The *vedikā* (ritual altar) supports the deity, their throne, and other ritual instruments such as the bell, offering bowls, and lamps. Amṛtānanda contemplates the supreme ritual altar to be the lotus in the center of the heart where the deity, who is none other than consciousness, is ever established. Bhairava, who is envisioned in this verse as a *kṣetrapāla* (protector of a sacred site) destroys the limitations and the bonds of those who worship the deity (as pure consciousness).



VERSE 9:

Vighna Nirākaraṇa

विश्वभेदविभवा विकल्पधीलक्षणा भवति विघ्नसन्ततिः ।
निर्विकल्पनिजधामविश्रमस्तन्निराकरणमत्र कीर्तितम् ॥ ९ ॥

**viśvabhedavibhavā vikalpadhīlakṣaṇā bhavati vighnasantatiḥ ।
nirvikalpanijadhāmaśramas tannirākaraṇam atra kīrtitam ॥ 9 ॥**

The multitude of obstacles, whose powers [generate] the duality of the universe, have conceptual cognition as their defining feature. The rite of dispelling those [obstacles] is understood in this [view] as reposing in the innate luminosity of non-conceptual awareness.

Notes:

Dispelling the obstacles and disturbances that may interfere with the ritual worship is a critical part of ritual worship and builds on the *ātmarakṣā* and *digbandha* rites described in verse seven. In this verse, Amṛtānanda understands the true *vighnas* (difficulties and obstacles that disturb the worship) to be the various differentiated thoughts (*vikalpas*) that form the basis of "conceptual cognition." *Vikalpas* give rise to the world of duality and Amṛtānanda in his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhr̥dayatantra* (1.68) mentions that *vikalpas* are mental constructs that are like a proliferating disease that continually expands and can be finally destroyed through the *Khecari mudrā*.³⁴

The ritual of dispelling the *vighnas* is often performed with a combination of mantras and *mudrās*, and in its highest form is understood by Amṛtānanda to consist in resting, or reposing, in the light of non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) awareness.

Amṛtānanda's contemplation on the removal of obstacles may build on Śivānanda's *Subhagodaya* which teaches:

*pārṣṇighātakarāśphoṭasamudañcitavaktrakaiḥ ।
tālātrayam atho dadyāt saśabdaṃ sampradāyataḥ ॥ 19 ॥*

"He should make an audible sound three times in accordance with tradition by stamping the ground with his left heel, clapping his hands and casting an upward glance."³⁵

³⁴ See verse thirty-eight.

³⁵ Translation by Ben Williams.

Śivānanda further taught the following inner contemplation in his *Subhagodayavāsanā*:

*pātālādiṣu lokeṣu ye vighnā bhedalakṣaṇāḥ |
dadāmi tālatritayaṃ tannirākṛtisatphalam || 23 ||*

“I clap three times with the beneficial goal of dispelling those obstacles that can be characterized as duality of the worlds beginning with the nether regions.”³⁶

Another great *Śrīvidyācārya*, Vidyānanda (thirteenth century C.E.), wrote in his *Jñānadīpavimarsinī*:

*pārṣṇyāghātatrayera bhaumāns tālatrayeṅāntarikṣagān tigmadrṣṭyāvalokanena
divyān vighnān utsārya maṇḍapāntaḥ praviśya vāstupuruṣāya nama iti vāstupuruṣaṃ
maṇḍapamadhye sampūjya maṇḍapasyāṣṭadikṣu diṅmātaro vaśīnyādyā vakṣyamāṇamantraibḥ sampūjyāḥ*

"First scattering the obstacles that are of the earth with three strikes of the heel [of the left foot], the obstacles that move in the sky with three claps, and the divine obstacles by casting a powerful glance, then entering into the pavilion and worshiping the Vāstupuruṣa with [the words] “salutations to the Vāstupuruṣa,” the Mothers of the directions beginning with Vaśinī should be worshiped with mantras that will be taught below.”³⁷



³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

VERSE 10:

Āsana Dhyāna

यत्र निर्विषयबोधलक्षणः स्वात्मशम्भुरवतिष्ठते ऽनिशम् ।

तत्त्वजालकमिदं शिवावधि क्षमामुखं सकलमासनं मतम् ॥ १० ॥

**yatra nirviṣayabodhalakṣaṇaḥ svātmaśambhur avatiṣṭhate ‘niśam |
tattvajālakam idam śivāvadhi kṣamāmukhaṃ sakalam āsanaṃ matam ॥ 10 ॥**

The “seat” of the practitioner should be understood as that entire collection of reality levels, from earth to Śiva, upon which the deity of the innate Self whose nature is pure awareness is ever established.

Notes:

The worship and purification of the seat (*āsana*) upon which the practitioner sits is an essential element in ritual worship, known as *āsanaṣṭajā*. In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the *āsana* of the practitioner to be composed of the thirty-six *tattvas* (principles of reality), ranging from *śivatattva* to *prthvītattva* (see appendix one) and upon which the deity, who is none other than pure awareness, is always established. The idea that the deity (as supreme consciousness) is beyond the *tattvas*, and even sits on a throne of thirty-six *tattvas*, is a well-known teaching in Kaula tantra and one that Amṛtānanda will revisit in verses nineteen, twenty-three, and thirty.

The first half of this verse provides evidence that Amṛtānanda wrote the *Cidvilāsastava* before his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra*, as he cites this verse in his commentary on verse 2.38 where he describes how the fullness of consciousness is obtained by those who practiced *kulācāra*, or the Kaula method of worship.



VERSE II:

Karāsuddhi

आत्मतत्त्वगतयोरशुद्धयोरत्र कर्मकरणात्मनोर्द्वयोः ।

शुद्धतत्त्वलयभावनामयी शुद्धिरात्मकरयोः परा मता ॥ ११ ॥

ātmatattvagatayor aśuddhayor atra karmakaraṇātmanor dvayoḥ ।

śuddhatattvalayabhāvanāmayī śuddhir ātmakarayoḥ parā matā ॥ 11 ॥

In this [teaching], the ultimate ritual purification of the hands is understood as visualizing the two impure realities present in the Self—“action and the [five] faculties [of action]”—dissolving into the pure reality [that is their source].

Notes:

Karāsuddhi is the ritual purification of the practitioner's hands and is a standard preliminary step in many prevalent forms of ritual worship. In this verse, Amṛtānanda understands the ritual purification of the two hands as a deep contemplation on the purification of two categories within the thirty-six *tattvas*: the five faculties of knowledge, known as the *jñānendriyas* and the five faculties of action, known as the *karmendriyas*. Amṛtānanda teaches that the supreme form of *karāsuddhi* is dissolving these two sets of *tattvas* into the pure reality of the Self.

Five *jñānendriya* (faculties of knowledge)

<i>śrota</i>	ears
<i>tvac</i>	skin
<i>cakṣus</i>	eyes
<i>rasana</i>	tongue (taste)
<i>grahana</i>	nose

Five *karmendriya* (faculties of action)

<i>vāc</i>	tongue (speech)
<i>pāṇi</i>	hands
<i>pada</i>	feet
<i>pāyu</i>	anus
<i>upasthā</i>	sex organ

Amṛtānanda's contemplation likely builds on his predecessor Śivānanda, who teaches in his *Subhagodayavāsanā*:

kāraṇātmaparāmrṣṭakāryabhūtāṅgulisthitim ।

karomi cinmayīm śuddhim karayoḥ pariśodhinīm ॥ 24 ॥

"I perform the purification of the hands which is a cleansing of awareness in which the fingers are the [universe as an] effect of the cause that is awareness of the Self."³⁸

³⁸ Translation by Ben Williams.

The *Yoginīhrdayatantra* teaches the purification of the hands in the following verse:

karmendriyāṇām vaimalyāt karaśuddhikarī smṛtā || 3.125 ||

"The performing of the purification of the hands is traditionally understood as the purity of the faculties of action."³⁹

Amṛtānanda's *Dīpikā* commentary on this verse further explains, and even cites this particular verse of the *Cidvilāsastava*:

*ātmatattvasyāśuddhatvāt karmendriyāṇām ātmatattvāntaḥpātītīvāt karayoś ca karmendriyatvād
aśuddhayoḥ kāryakaraṇātmanoḥ karayoḥ kāryayoḥ svakāraṇe śuddhatattve śivādvaitalayaabhāvanā
kara-śuddhiḥ tatkarīyam* |

"This is the action of that purification of the hands: it is the non-dual Śaiva meditation of dissolving the two impure hands, which are effects and the faculties of action into the pure reality that is their cause. The principle of the individual Self is impure: this is because the two hands are faculties of action, and faculties of action are included in the reality that is the individual self."⁴⁰



³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

VERSE 12:

Prāṇāyāma

वेद्यसंविद इदंस्फुरात्मनो वेत्संविदि विलापनामयी ।

वृत्तिरद्वयविमर्शविग्रहा प्राणसंयतिरुदीरितोत्तमा ॥ १२ ॥

vedyaśaṃvidā idamśphurātmano vetśaṃvidi vilāpanāmayī |

vṛttir advayavimarśavigrahā prāṇasaṃyatir udīritottamā || 12 ||

The highest form of breath control is taught as an awareness that embodies a non-dual realization that dissolves the object of consciousness flashing forth as “this” into the consciousness of the [supreme] subject.

Notes:

Prāṇāyāma is a well-known practice that helps regulate the life force (*prāṇa*) inside one's body and often consists of specific counts of alternate nostril, and or other forms of regulated breathing techniques. *Prāṇāyāma* practices are performed before the formal ritual worship commences and are used to purify and divinize the body and mind through the control of the breath and *prāṇa*.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda describes the supreme form of *prāṇāyāma* as consisting of a powerful nondual realization that dissolves the limited sense of awareness—and its object-bound perceptions that see the world and its objects as separate—into pure consciousness.



VERSE 13:

Navāsana & Ṣaḍaṅganyāsa

आसनानि नवचक्रसंविदामुद्भवस्थितिलयास्त्रिशस्त्रिशः ।

अङ्गषट्करचना षडध्वनामंशतावगतिरात्मसंविदः ॥ १३ ॥

āsanāni navacakrasaṁvidām udbhavasthityāsa triśastriśaḥ |
aṅgaṣaṭkaracanaḥ ṣaḍadhvanām aṁśatāvagatir ātmasaṁvidah ॥ 13 ॥

The seats [of the Goddesses of the Śrīcakra] are the arising, sustaining, and dissolution of the cognitions of the nine circuits [of the Śrīcakra], three by three. The performance of [installing the Goddess's body] in six parts of the [practitioner's] body is understanding the six courses [of the entire world] as aspects of one's own Consciousness.

Notes:

The contemplation of various ascending seats, or thrones, is an important part of Śrīvidyā practice and falls under a category of rites known as *āsana nyāsa*. This part of the worship prepares the practitioner to worship the goddess and consists of mantrically installing⁴¹ various thrones at different locations within the body and the Śrīcakra. Since Amṛtānanda doesn't specifically list the number of thrones in this verse, it remains a little ambiguous as to which specific practice he is referring to. However, based on the fact that he does mention the *udbhava* (rising), *sthiti* (sustaining), and *laya* (dissolution) of the Śrīcakra as a three by three grouping relating to the nine *cakras*, it seems likely he is referring to the ninefold worship known as *navāsana nyāsa* and the nine Vidyā goddesses of the Śrīcakra.

Each of the nine circuits of the Śrīcakra are presided over by a Cakreśvarī (goddess of a *cakra*) and a Vidyā (goddess) as follows:

Nine Vidyās	Nine Cakreśvarīs	Nine Circuits
Karāśuddhikarī	Tripurā	Trailokyamohana
Ātmarakṣikā	Tripureśī	Sarvāsāparipūraṇa
Ātmāsanagatā	Tripurasundarī	Sarvasaṁkṣobhakāraka
Cakrāsanagatā	Tripuravāsini	Sarvasaubhāgyakāraka
Sarvamantrāsanasthitā	Tripuraśrī	Sarvārthasādhaka
Sādhyasiddhāsana	Tripuramālinī	Sarvarakṣākara
Mūrtividyā	Tripurasiddhi	Sarvarogahara
Āvāhinī	Tripurāmbikā	Sarvasiddhimaya
Bhairavī	Mahātripurasundarī	Sarvānandamaya

⁴¹ See verse fifteen.

In the second half of the verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates another set of mantric installations, this time the worship of the six limbs of the goddess known as *ṣaḍaṅganyāsa*. Amṛtānanda teaches that just as the six limbs of the goddess constitute her single supreme body, so does the *ṣaḍadbvan* (the six-fold path) of Śaivism constitute a single supreme consciousness. The *ṣaḍadbvan* is a foundational Śaiva doctrine related to cosmology, *dīkṣā*, purification, and practice.⁴²

Ṣaḍaṅganyāsa

limb	region	mantra
<i>hṛdaya</i>	heart	<i>hṛdayāya namaḥ</i>
<i>śīras</i>	head	<i>śīrase svābhā</i>
<i>śikhā</i>	topknot	<i>śikhāyai vaṣaṭ</i>
<i>kavaca</i>	arms	<i>kavacāya huṃ</i>
<i>netra</i>	eyes	<i>netratrayāya vaṣaṭ</i>
<i>astra</i>	weapon	<i>astrāya phaṭ</i>

Ṣaḍadbvan

vācaka: *śabda:* subjective reality

supreme: *varṇa:* the totality of phonemes

subtle: *mantra:* individual letters-words

gross: *pada:* words-sentences

vācya: *artha:* objective reality

supreme: *kalā:* the forces of reality

subtle: *tattva:* the principles of reality

gross: *bhuvana:* the various worlds

Amṛtānanda quotes this verse from the *Cidvilāsastava* in his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra* (2.4) where he describes the six paths of Śaivism to be aspects of consciousness.

Similar teachings on the installation of four seats (*caturāsananyāsa*) are taught by Śivānanda in his *Subhagodaya*:

caturbbhir etair manubhiḥ kuryād āsanakalpanām |
yaṣṭuś cakrasya mantrāṅgāṃ devatāṅgāṃ sapuṣpakaiḥ || 22 ||

⁴² For a brief and accessible explanation of the *ṣaḍadbvan* see Lakshmanjoo 2015, II-13.

“With these four [manu-s] one should prepare the thrones [for himself] as ritual officiant, for the Cakra, for the mantras, and for the deities.”⁴³

Śivānanda teaches about the inner contemplation of *ṣaḍaṅganyāsa* in his *Subhagodayavāsanā*:

*sarvajñatvādiśaktīnām satīnām ātmani prabhau |
unmajjanam bhāvayāmi ṣaḍaṅgavidhiyogataḥ || 26 ||*

"From engaging in the ritual [installation of mantras in] the six parts of the body, I visualize the powers of omniscience, etc. being immersed in the Self that is Lord Śiva."⁴⁴

Relating the six-fold path to Śiva and Śakti, Maheśvarānanda teaches in his *Mahārthamañjarī*:

*yad adhvānām ca ṣatkam tatra prakāśārthalakṣaṇam ardham |
vimarśaśabdasvabhāvam ardham iti śivasya yāmalollāsah ||*

"There are six courses, half of which are characterized by objectivity and conscious light; the other half are in the nature of the Word and awareness. This is how Śiva shines forth and unfolds in the form of a couple."⁴⁵



⁴³ Translation by Ben Williams.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Translation by Padoux 1990, 336, fn. 14.

VERSE 14:

Kāmakalā Dhyāna

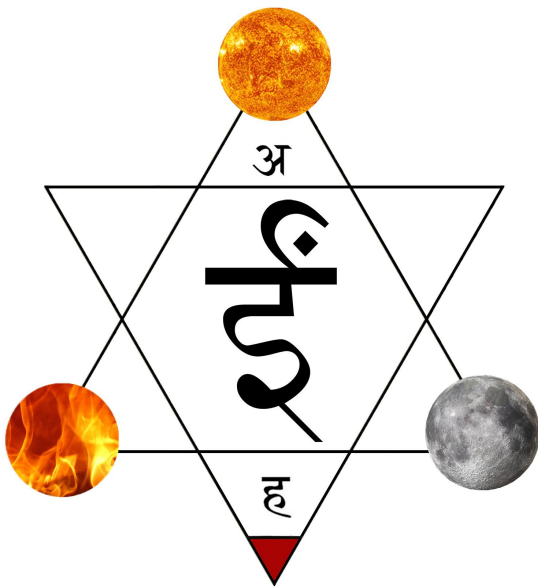
काम ऊर्ध्वगतबिन्दुराननं भानुरेष तदधोगतौ स्तनौ ।
चित्रभानुशशिनावुभौ कला योनिरत्र सपरार्धकुण्डली ॥ १४ ॥

kāma ūrdhvagatabindur ānanam bhānur eṣa tad adhogatau stanau |
citrabhānuśaśināv ubhau kalā yonir atra saparārdhakunḍalī ॥ 14 ॥

Desire (*kāma*), [which in the *kāmakalā* diagram] is the upper *bindu* that is the face [of the Goddess], is the sun. The active [dividing] power (*kalā*) is the two breasts below that [upper *bindu*] which correspond to both fire and the moon. Here the *yoni* is the lower half of *kunḍalinī* [in the form of the phoneme HA].

Notes:

Meditation upon the *kāmakalā* is one of the central—and defining—practices of Śrīvidyā. The *kāmakalā* is considered to be one of the most secretive (*rahasya*) aspects of Śrīvidyā and is interpreted in various ways according to *ācāra* (mode of worship) and *saṃpradāya bheda* (lineage-specific differences). The *kāmakalā* portrays the inseparable unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, iconographically represented by the sun, and encodes how their interaction expands and eventually bursts their union apart, emitting (*visarga*) two *bindus*: fire and moon. The dynamic interaction between these three *bindus*, variously interpreted as *icchā*, *jñāna*, *kriyā*; *prameya*, *pramāṇa*, *pramātr*; *vāgbhava*, *kāmarāja*, *śakti*; fire, sun, and moon, etc., gives rise to bliss (*ānanda*), the thirty-six *tattvas*, and the objective world.



Amṛtānanda's guru, Puṇyānanda, wrote the definitive treatise on the *kāmakalā*, entitled the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa*. In this seminal work on the Śrīcakra, Puṇyānanda describes (in verses six and seven) *kāma* as the desire for the complete union of Śiva and Śakti, known as *mahābindu*, and *kalā* as the expansion and manifestation of this unity into the world of duality, represented as the expansion of *mahābindu* into two aspects: a red *bindu* and a white *bindu*, known as Śakti and Śiva. The *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* is filled with esoteric *jñāna*, metaphysics, and Śrīvidyā doctrine. Meditations upon the *kāmakalā* figure prominently in Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā*, as well as stand-alone contemplations such as found in the *Gandharvatantra* where the central *bīja* of the

kāmakalā is meditated upon as ascending from the *mūlādhāra* to the *brahmarandhra*.⁴⁶ In essence, the *kāmakalā* is the dynamic manifestation, and outpouring, of the energy of consciousness (*cicchakti*).

Some of the more common ways of understanding *kāmakalā* include:

- The triadic core, and essence, of the Śrīcakra.
- The sacred union of Śiva and Śakti.
- A meditation on the body of the Tripurasundari as it relates to her *mūlamantra*.
- Meditation upon how consciousness, as *mahābindu*, emerges and manifests into infinite forms.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda, perhaps keeping with its secretive nature, doesn't suggest any particular meaning, or contemplation on the *kāmakalā*—which is rather striking because this is one of the few verses in the *Cidvilāsastava* which lacks an explicit meditation on how ritual action and knowledge lead directly to supreme consciousness. Instead, Amṛtānanda offers a description of its traditional image consisting of a *ṣaṭkōṇa* (hexagram) of two triangles superimposed over each other: one facing upward and one facing downward. Amṛtānanda continues to describe the *kāmakalā* as both the body of the goddess and the three principal *bindus* as the three luminaries (*dhāmatraya*) in the following manner:

1. upper *bindu*: depicted as the sun of consciousness and the face of the goddess, associated with the primordial *akṣara* 'A' denoting the beginning, origin, and void state of pure consciousness before manifestation.
2. fire and moon: depicted as the two breasts of the goddess, the active dividing part of the diagram and the expansion of *mahābindu* into Śiva (white *bindu*) and Śakti (red *bindu*).
3. lower triangle: the *yoni* (womb) of the goddess which invokes creation and bliss. The *yoni* is represented by the "half of *kuṇḍalinī*, understood to be the *akṣara* 'HA.' When taken in conjunction with the primordial 'A,' their combination completes the linguistic meditation spanning from A to HA, thereby encompassing both the totality of the *akṣaras* in the Sanskrit syllabary. A to HA is also a coded reference to AHAM, the supreme reflective awareness of the great "I," developed in the Pratyabhijñā school of nondual Śaivism.⁴⁷

The *Kāmakalāvilāsa* teaches:

sitaṣaṇabinduyugalaṃ viviktaśivaśaktisaṅkucaprasaram |
vāgarthasrṣṭibetuḥ parasparānupraviṣṭavispaṣtam || 6 ||
bindur abhānkārātmā ravir etanmithunasamarasākārah |
kāmaḥ kamaṇīyatayā kalā ca dahanenduvigrahau bindū || 7 ||

⁴⁶ Padoux 2013, 68.

⁴⁷ Dyczkowski 2004, 29-49.

"The two Bindus, white and red, are "Śiva and Śakti, Who, in their secret mutual enjoyment, are now expanding and now contracting. They are the Cause of the creation of Word (Vāk) and Meaning (Artha), now entering and now separating from one another. Bindu which is ahaṅkāra (Ahaṅkarātmā) is the Sun which is the union of these two (white and red bindus). The Sun is Kāma, which is so called because of its desirableness; and Kalā is the two Bindus which are Moon and Fire."⁴⁸

Śivānanda also describes an inner contemplation on the *kāmakalā* in his *Subhagodayavāsanā*:

viśvabhedalayaprāyāṃ mahāsaṃvittanūṃ nijāṃ |
bhāvayāmi mahākāmakalādhyānena nityadā || 59 ||

"By meditating upon the illustrious *kāmakalā*, I continually realize the innate nature of that vast awareness that coincides with the dissolution of the universe of duality."⁴⁹

Dr. Ben Williams further clarifies the *kāmakalā* meditation upon Tripurasundarī, and the central role of ĪṂ, as follows:

"Another important Śākta scripture, the earliest to focus upon the Goddess Tripurasundarī in a tradition subsequently named Śrīvidyā, is the *Vāmakeśvarīmata*. Tripurasundarī is introduced at the outset of this text through twelve benedictions that herald her as *mātrkā*. This alphabet goddess is exalted as "the thread on which the three-worlds are strung." Further developing this cosmological reference, she is then described as taking the visual form of an inverted triangle, which is the shape of the grapheme used for the vowel E, envisioned as the source from which all worlds emanate. This phoneme, and its corresponding shape in the script, comes to symbolize the downward triangle at the center of the *śrīcakra* (Padoux 1990, 265), the tradition's central deity-enthroning diagram. Within that triangle is a dot, termed the *mahābindu*, which comes to be understood as containing three *bindus* within it, comprising a subtle *kāmakalā cakra*. This figure is formed by the seed mantra ĪṂ. In early post-Gupta scripts, the grapheme for Ī is three dots, which thus serves as the visual representation of this theologically and symbolically laden image of the goddess (Khanna 1986, 122–123)."⁵⁰



⁴⁸ Translation by Woodroffe, 1922, 13.

⁴⁹ Translation by Ben Williams.

⁵⁰ Williams 2022.

VERSE 15

Nyāsa

एवमात्मनि चतुष्कलामये सर्वतत्त्वसमवायलक्षणे ।
न्यासमाहुरिह वैखरीतिवाग्वृत्तितः समविशेषभावनम् ॥ १५ ॥

**evam ātmani catuṣkalāmaye sarvatattvasamavāyalakṣaṇe |
nyāsam āhur iha vaikharītivāgvṛttitaḥ samaviśeṣabhāvanam || 15 ||**

In the same way, here we teach the installation [of mantras on the body] based on the activity of speech that is “articulated” to be the universal and distinct contemplation of the Self identified with the collection of all the principles of reality and endowed with four aspects.

Notes:

Nyāsa (the installation of mantras) is one of the most important elements in any tantric practice and is pervasively found throughout nearly all tantric traditions. The practice of *nyāsa* is empowered through *bhāvanā*, *mudrā*, and mantric speech and uses the power of awareness to mentally 'place' or 'install' *akṣaras* (phonemes) and mantras onto (and within) various locations of the body and ritual objects. The purpose of *nyāsa* is to divinize, empower, and along with other purifying rites such as *bhūtaśuddhi*, ultimately create a new mantric body for the practitioner, following the famous tantric declaration that one must, "become a *devatā* to worship a *devatā*."⁵¹

Traditional *nyāsa* practices minimally include a *nyāsa* of the hands (*karanyāsa*) and of six portions of the body (*śaḍaṅganyāsa*). More intricate practices include both external (*babir*) as well as internal (*antar*) placements of mantras, as well as entire collections of *akṣaras* (phonemes) such as in the famous *mātrkānyāsa* (installing all the phonemes from A to KṢA). *Nyāsa*, being inextricably connected to language, is cosmogonic by nature and follows sequences of cosmic emanation (*sr̥ṣṭi*), stabilization (*sthitī*), and dissolution (*sambhāra*).

In this verse, Amṛtānanda builds on the four aspects of the *kāmakalā*, mentioned in the previous verse, and shares a profound meditation on the supreme form of *nyāsa*. Amṛtānanda teaches that *nyāsa* consists of both distinct (*viśeṣa*) and universal (*sāmanya*) aspects (building on the distinct and universal aspects of language) and aims at identifying the limited self with the supreme Self, through four groupings of the foundational thirty-six *tattvas* known as *ātmatattva*, *vidyātattva*, *śivatattva*, and *sarvatattva*.⁵² The four aspects mentioned in this verse may also refer to four sets of *nyāsa* practices, although understood in this way it remains somewhat unclear as to precisely which, "collection of all the principles of reality" Amṛtānanda would be referring to. It does, however, seem clear that Amṛtānanda is suggesting that just as *nyāsa* uses language to place and

⁵¹ *devo bhūtvā devaṃ yajet*. See Padoux 2013, 99.

⁵² See notes to verse twenty-four.

intimately fuse its individual constituent elements and mantras onto the body, so individualized and limited awareness is also united through contemplation (*bhāvanā*) with supreme Śiva.

Professor André Padoux summarizes Abhinavagupta's thoughts on the inner mechanics and efficacy of *nyāsa*, as found in chapter fifteen of his *Tantrāloka*, as follows:

"It is interesting to note that at this point Abhinavagupta thought it useful to approach the problematic of *nyāsa*. He notes in effect (śl. 268–269) that it is paradoxical that an empirical method such as the placings can produce a result of a transcendent order: the transformation of a man into a god. But this is, he says, because *nyāsas* are operations of an interior, spiritual order: that which one thinks, for good or bad, that one becomes. Whoever therefore thinks intensely (*bhāvayati*) 'I am Śiva and nothing other' becomes Him (śl. 269–270). 'He creates for himself there an unwavering certainty, an awareness in the depth of the heart, associated with a thought without duality which, itself, generates a flood of thoughts bound to duality [but all] orientated toward the identity [of the empirical subject] with Śiva'. One thus comes to destroy all belief of another (mundane) kind and to have only the unshakeable conviction that our nature is pure, eternal and divine. The spiritual character of the activity of *nyāsa* cannot be better underlined."⁵³

The *Kulārṇavatāntra* teaches a standard tantric etymological account of *nyāsa* as follows:

nyāyopārjītavittānāmaṅgeṣu viniveśanāt |
sarvarakṣākarāddevi nyāsa ity abhidhīyate || 17.56 ||

"Because it places in the limbs the treasures acquired rightly (*nyāyopārjīta*), because it protects all (*sarvarakṣākarāt*), it is called *nyāsa*."⁵⁴

Amṛtānanda's verse is also similar to teachings from Śivānanda, who teaches in his *Subhagodaya*:

amṛtībhūtadeho 'sau devyātmā sādhakottamaḥ |
nyāsam dehasyāsanārhaṃ vidadhīta vidhānataḥ || 20 ||

"This best of adept whose nature is the Goddess, his body transformed into nectar, should properly perform *nyāsa* of the body in order to make his body fit to be the throne [of the Goddess]."⁵⁵



⁵³ Padoux 2011, 61.

⁵⁴ Translation by Rai 1999, 254.

⁵⁵ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 16:

Vāgdevatānyāsa

पूरुषत्वसमवाप्तिहेतुपुर्यष्टकारव्यनिजसूक्ष्मवर्षणः ।
चित्पदे लयविधानमष्टवाग्देवतान्यसनमिष्टमुत्तमम् ॥ १६ ॥

pūruṣatvasamavāptihetupuryaṣṭakākhyanijasūkṣmavarṣmaṇaḥ |
citpade layavidhānam aṣṭavāgdevatānyasanam iṣṭam uttamam || 16 ||

The higher form of the mantric installation of the eight speech goddesses (Vāgdevatās) is prescribed as the practice of dissolving one’s own subtle body called the “fortress of the eight,” which perpetuates individuality, into the field of consciousness.

Notes:

The worship of the eight Vāgdevatās (Vāśinī, Kāmeśvarī, Modinī, Vimalā, Aruṇā, Jayinī, Sarveśvarī, and Kaulinī) is a specialized aspect of Śrīvidyā that is not found, to the same degree, in other Kaula and tantric lineages. Śrīvidyā’s relationship with the eight Vāgdevatās can be seen in a number of important ways including within the *Vāgdevatānyāsa* that Amṛtānanda contemplates in this verse.

It is said that the Vāgdevatās (at the request of Lalitā Mahātripurasundarī) composed her *sahasranāma*, a collection of a thousand of her most sacred and secret names. The Vāgdevatās are also worshiped within the Śrīcakra at the highly exalted position of the seventh *āvaraṇa* known as the *Sarvarogahara cakra*, the remover of all disease. This *cakra* is presided over by Tripurāsiddhā,⁵⁶ who is known as the controller of the *rahasya* (secret) *yoginīs* that populate the Śrīcakra at this level. The *mudrā* used to express this *āvaraṇa* is known as the *Sarvakbecarī mudrā*, which is performed simultaneously with the recitation of the *Kbecarī bīja*, both of which denote a state of completely free, and nondual, consciousness.⁵⁷

The Vāgdevatās are also considered to be forms of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, knowledge, and the arts. Each of the Vāgdevatās have their own individual *bīja* mantras, which are given in the first chapter of the *Nityāśodaśikārṇavatāntra* (1.65-78), and their own *gāyatrī* mantras which are given in the *Śrīvidyārṇavatāntra*. More detailed information about their iconography and other elements such as their *yantras* are not readily available, if they exist at all.

The Vāgdevatās, being the goddesses of speech (*vāc*), each preside over a Sanskrit *varga* (class of syllables) within the Sanskrit syllabary as follows:

⁵⁶ See notes to verse thirteen.

⁵⁷ See verse thirty-eight.

- **Vāsinī** rules over the "a" varga: *a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, r, ṛ, l, ḷ, e, ai, o, au, am, aḥ*
- **Kāmeśvarī** rules over the "ka" varga: *ka, kha, ga, gha, ṅa*
- **Modinī** rules over the "ca" varga: *ca, cha, ja, jha, ṅa*
- **Vimalā** rules over the "ṭa" varga: *ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṅa*
- **Aruṇā** rules over the "ta" varga: *ta, tha, da, dha, na*
- **Jayinī** rules over the "pa" varga: *pa, pha, ba, bha, ma*
- **Sarveśvarī** rules over the "ya" varga: *ya, ra, la, va*
- **Kaulinī** rules over the "śa" varga: *śa, ṣa, sa, ha, kṣa*

Taken as a whole, these eight goddesses preside over the entirety of the Sanskrit *akṣaras*.

As mentioned above, the Vāgdevatās are worshiped in the seventh *āvaraṇa* of the Śrīcakra which hosts eight triangles and forms the *puryaṣṭaka*, also known as the "fortress of eight," a critical concept in Śaivism that is sometimes referred to as, "the subtle body." The Vāgdevatās, as goddesses of the subtler (secret and unseen) aspects language, issue forth from the *puryaṣṭaka* of the goddess. The *puryaṣṭaka* is comprised of eight elements that vary significantly between texts and traditions.

The fortieth verse of the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* teaches that the *aṣṭakoṇa* (eight triangles), inhabited by Vāsinī and the rest, is the *puryaṣṭaka* of the goddess and consists of the *cakra*, the self, and pure consciousness.⁵⁸ Naṭānandanātha, in his commentary on this verse of the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* cites a verse attributed to the *Svacchandatantra* that teaches the eight elements of the *puryaṣṭaka* are, "*citi, citta, caitanya, indriya karma, jīva, kalā, and śarīra*."⁵⁹ Amṛtānanda's *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra* (3.131) teaches that the *puryaṣṭaka* consists of *citi, citta, caitanya, cetanādvayakarma, jīva, kalā, and śarīra*. Śivānanda, in seventeenth verse of his *Subhagodayavāsana*, records the opinion of his guru and teaches they are related to consciousness, bliss, *nirvāṇa*, and other elements. Bhāskaraṛāya, in his *Setubandha* commentary on the *Nityāṣoḍaśīkārṇavatāntra*, teaches the eight elements are the *karmendriyas, jñānendriyas, manas, the prāṇas, the elements vijyat* etc., *kāma, karma, and tamas*.⁶⁰ Through the lens of the twenty-first verse of the *Bhāvanopaniṣad*, the Vāgdevatās are connected to the sensations of cold, heat, pleasure, pain, desire, and the three *guṇas (sattva, rajas, and tamas)*.⁶¹ As these texts and *ācāryas* highlight, the *puryaṣṭaka* is a highly debated concept in Śrīvidyā, let alone Śaivism.

The *puryaṣṭaka* provides a framework for one to experience the world, but it also gives contracted consciousness, as the individualized and limited soul (*jīvātma*), a form to hold onto.

⁵⁸ Woodroffe 1922, 60.

⁵⁹ Woodroffe 1922, 61.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See Mira, 1976, 19.

In this way, the *puryaṣṭaka* can bind pure nondual consciousness to the ego, mind, and the senses — the very method by which individualized consciousness stays engrossed in *samsāra*, the cycles of birth and death. Śaivism teaches that the *puryaṣṭaka* travels with the individual soul like a swan flying from lake to lake as it transmigrates through *samsāra*, holding all of the past actions, tendencies, preferences, and karma that will accompany the individual soul into whatever incarnation they take up next in their journey. In this sense, attachment to the "fortress of eight" is the very cause of spiritual bondage and the cycle of rebirth. Accordingly, destroying attachment to the *puryaṣṭaka* is equivalent to ending *samsāra* and fully identifying with supreme consciousness. This realization, and letting go, allows consciousness masquerading as the individual soul to no longer see the *puryaṣṭaka* as a burden, or a heavy weight, but rather as a vehicle that one only temporarily travels in and which has no real bearing on one's true identity. Amṛtānanda understands the supreme form of *Vāgdevatānyāsa* to consist of dissolving one's *puryaṣṭaka*, that consists of eight elements, into pure consciousness.

Amṛtānanda's contemplation on the supreme nature of the *Vāgdevatānyāsa* has a close parallel with Śivānanda's teachings in the *Subhagodayavāsana*:

mātrkāvargasamyuktavaśīnyādyāṣṭakasmṛteḥ |
vimṛśāmi mahābantām pariṣṭācidātmikām || 27 ||

"I become aware of that profound awareness of "I" that is all-encompassing consciousness from remembering the set of eight [Goddesses] beginning with Vaśīnī who are connected to the [eight] classes of the syllabary."⁶²

Further note: Becoming aware of *abantā*, also means becoming aware of [the mantra, or source of potency of all mantras] AHAM, which is the form of subjectivity that encompasses all the phonemes, from A to HA. Thus contemplating the eight *vargas* in this way, makes space for, *ṣṭāṣṭakavimarsama*. On AHAM, which Abhinavagupta teaches right after the phonematic emanation, see *Tantrāloka* 3.200cd-208ab.



⁶² Translation and further note by Ben Williams.

VERSE 17:

Catuṣpīṭhanyāsa

अन्तरङ्गकरणान्युपाधयः स्वप्रकाशनभसो ऽत्र सङ्गमात् ।

पीठभावमुपयान्ति तानि तन्त्र्यासकर्म परधाम्नि हृल्लयः ॥ १७ ॥

**antaraṅgakarāṇāny upādhayaḥ svaprakāśanabhaso 'tra saṅkramāt |
pīṭhabhāvam upayānti tāni tannyāsakarma paradhāmnī hṛllayaḥ || 17 ||**

The [four] centers of the yogic body are the limiting factors of the sky of self-luminous awareness. They transform into the [four] power sites (*pīṭha*) located [in the body] in that order. The rite of installing those [four inner power sites] is dissolving the Heart into supreme radiance.

Notes:

Kaula tantra developed a number of important contributions to Indic religious and tantric traditions, including a highly specialized conceptual vocabulary capable of intimately describing various states of awareness and practice. Despite the generally poor reception that Kaula tantra received over the last centuries as a debaucherous pseudo-religion that indulges in intoxication, and other socially unacceptable practices, in truth, the advanced *jñāna* taught in many Kaula texts rivals even the most elevated teachings from the *Upaniṣads* and other profound sources of knowledge of the Self.

One of Kaula tantra's specialties is a particularly detailed understanding of *kunḍalinī śakti*, the subtle creative life-force energy of Śiva that manifests reality and is embodied in a latent "seed" form within the human body. *Kunḍalinī* travels through various centers known as *cakras* (wheels) and *ādhāras* (locations) both within and around the body and are variously described in tantric and yogic traditions. Central to Kaula teachings on tantric yoga and *kunḍalinī* are four immersions, or inner Kaula yogic states of consciousness known as: *pinḍastha*, *padastha*, *rūpastha*, and *rūpātīta*. This fourfold classification is taught in a number of texts including the *Kulapañcāśikā*, *Mālinīvijayottaratantra*, *Manthānabhairavatantra*, *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, *Śāradātilakatantra*, and *Yoginīhrdayatantra*, among others. The specificities of what these four terms mean varies significantly through time, and between the texts and traditions that teach them, but are generally related to levels of immersion in consciousness, states of awareness, and aspects of *kunḍalinī* practice.⁶³

Professor André Padoux skillfully elucidated how Amṛtānanda understood *pinḍa*, *pada*, *rūpa*, and *rūpātīta* according to his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra* (1.41) as follows:

⁶³ I am grateful to Somadeva Vasudeva for outlining historical processes in the Kaula understanding of these four terms in a talk, "The Kaula Yoga of the Mālinīvijayottara tantra" that he gave in 2022. I only hope he continues his masterful work on Kaula yoga in the near future.

"The three terms "word" (*pada*), "form" (*rūpa*), and "beyond the form" (*rūpātīta*)—together, usually with *piṇḍa* rather than *kaṇḍa*—are the names of four centers of the yogic body. According to the *Dīpikā*, "word" refers to the *hamsa*, which we may understand here as the inner breath of the heart. The "form" (*rūpa*) would be the *bindu*, on the forehead, on the so-called *ājñā* center. "Beyond the form" (*rūpātīta*) refers to the *brahmarandhra*."⁶⁴

In the first part of this verse (of the *Cidvilāsastava*), Amṛtānanda teaches that supreme, self-luminous, consciousness is not experienced due to four internal locations (along the spine) that block the flow of *kuṇḍalinī*. Concerning these four impediments, the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra* further teaches:

piṇḍarūpapadagranthibhedanād vighnabhedanam |
guhyaḥṛṇmukhamūrdhasu vidyānyāsenā sundarī || 3.91 ||

"Since they are shared out among the [centers named] *piṇḍa*, *rūpa*, *pada*, and *granthi*, the [internal] obstacles [are destroyed] by the imposition of the *vidyā* on the secret place, the heart, the face, and the head, O Beautiful One!"⁶⁵

In his *Dīpikā* commentary on this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that the four impediments are the same four Kaula states mentioned in first chapter of the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra* and that they exist at the same four locations (*ādhāra* [foundation], *hṛdaya* [heart], *bhrūmadhya* [point between the eyebrows], and *brahmarandhra* [cranial aperture]). Amṛtānanda also explains why *pada* and *rūpa* are reversed from the more standard ordering, why *rūpātīta* is glossed as *granthi*, and the method by which these obstructers are to be neutralized with a *nyāsa* of four special *bīja* mantras. Although not explicitly mentioned, it seems clear that Amṛtānanda is referencing these four Kaula states, understood as aspects of *kuṇḍalinī* practice at centers within the body, in this verse of the *Cidvilāsastava*.

In the second part of the verse, Amṛtānanda builds on teachings from the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra* and explains how *piṇḍa*, *pada*, *rūpa*, and *rūpātīta* transform into the four principal Kaula *pīṭhas* known as Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇagiri, Jālandhara, and Oḍḍiyāṇa. The *Yoginīhṛdayatantra* teaches:

bhāsanād viśvarūpasya svarūpe bāhyato 'pi ca |
etās catasrah śaktyas tu kā pū jā o iti kramāt || 1.41 ||
pīṭhāḥ kande pade rūpe rūpātīte kramāt sthitaḥ |

"While manifesting everything that exists in essence then externally, these four energies [produce] KĀ PŪ JĀ O, in that order. These *pīṭhās* are located respectively in the bulb, the word, the form, and beyond all form."⁶⁶

The fourfold Kaula yoga was understood by Amṛtānanda as a practice relating to the ascent of *kuṇḍalinī* through four locations within the body as follows:

⁶⁴ Padoux 2013, 40.

⁶⁵ Translation by Padoux 2013, 117.

⁶⁶ Translation by Padoux 2013, 39.

Kaula term	Meaning	Location	<i>Pīṭha</i>
<i>piṇḍa</i>	<i>kunḍalinī śakti</i>	<i>mūlādhāra</i>	Kāmarūpa
<i>pada</i>	<i>haṃsa mantra</i>	<i>hṛdaya</i>	Pūrṇagiri
<i>rūpa</i>	<i>bindu</i>	<i>bhrūmadhya</i>	Jālandhara
<i>rūpātīta</i>	supreme consciousness	<i>brahmarandhra</i>	Oḍḍiyāṇa

The sacred *śakti pīṭhas* play an incredibly important part in *Śākta tantra*, as they relate to the story of how the various parts of Sātī's body were scattered all over the Indic subcontinent after she self-immolated in protest of her husband (Lord Śiva) not being invited to her father's *yajña*. At each spot where a part of her body fell to the earth, a *śakti pīṭha*, or sacred center of divine energy associated with the goddess emerged. The *śakti pīṭhas* are immortalized with special temples at each location throughout the subcontinent and are powerful places of divine energy and worship. In line with a general development in Kaula tantra towards the interiorization of practice, *śakti pīṭhas* were also understood to exist as inner sites within the body, as well as projected onto a *maṇḍala* to worship, alleviating the need to physically go on pilgrimage. The culmination of this interiority of practice is known as the *pīṭha nyāsa*, one of the six foundational *nyāsa* practices used in the Śrīvidyā tradition, where all of the *śakti pīṭhas* are envisioned and mantrically installed on the body.

Of the numerous *śakti pīṭhas*, Kāmarūpa, Pūrṇagiri, Jālandhara, and Oḍḍiyāṇa stand out as especially connected with the transmission of Kaula teachings through the ages. These four sacred *pīṭhas* are extensively described in various Kaula tantras and gain special significance within the Kubjikā and Śrīvidyā traditions. In Śrīvidyā, the four *pīṭhas* (along with their respective gurus) are envisioned at the three corners of the innermost triangle of the Śrīcakra, with the fourth *pīṭha* placed in the center of the triangle at the *bindu*. These *pīṭhas* constitute an important part in the ritual worship, as well as the *gurumaṇḍala*, of Tripurasundarī.

Closing the verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that these four Kaula states transform into the four principal Kaula *pīṭhas* and that the supreme form of ritually installing these four *pīṭhas*, known within the Śrīvidyā tradition as the *catuspīṭha nyāsa*, consists of "dissolving the Heart into supreme radiance."

The exact correlations between the four Kaula states and the four *pīṭhas* are not given in the *Cidvilāsastava*, but are inferred here from the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra*, as well as the *catuspīṭha nyāsa* as taught in early Śrīvidyā ritual manuals, and practiced within several contemporary Śrīvidyā lineages with the following correlations:

Kaula State	<i>Cakra</i>	<i>Dhāma</i>	<i>Pīṭha</i>	<i>Śakti</i>	<i>Siddha</i>
<i>piṇḍa</i>	<i>mūlādhāra</i>	agni	Kāmāgiri	<i>icchā</i>	Mitreśānātha
<i>pada</i>	<i>anāhata</i>	sūrya	Pūrṇagiri	<i>jñāna</i>	Ṣaṣṭhīśānātha
<i>rūpa</i>	<i>bhrūmadhya</i>	soma	Jālandhara	<i>kriyā</i>	Uḍḍīśānātha
<i>rūpātīta</i>	<i>brahmarandhra</i>	brahma	Oḍḍiyāṇa	<i>parabrahmātma</i>	Caryānātha

In this verse, Amṛtānanda builds on a large corpus of teachings on the four Kaula yogic states, the four *piṭhas*, *nyāsa*, and the supreme transmission (*śāmbhava-krama*) of grace.

The second chapter of the *Mālinīvijayottara-tantra* teaches how the four Kaula states are directly linked to the four classic *avasthās*:

bhūyo'pyāsā-mavasthānām samjñābbedah prakāśyate |
piṇḍasthaḥ sarvatobhadro jāgrannāma dvayam matam || 36 ||

dvi-samjñam svapnamicchanti pada-stham vyāptirityapi |
rūpastham tu mahāvvyāptiḥ suṣuptasyāpi taddvayam || 37 ||

pracayam rūpātītam ca samyak turyamudāhṛtam |
mahāpracayamicchanti turyātītam vicakṣaṇāḥ || 38 ||

pṛthaktattvaprabhedena bhedo'yaṁ samudāhṛtaḥ |
sarvāṅyeva hi tattvāni pañcāitāni yathā śṛṇu || 39 ||

"Furthermore, the different technical appellations of these states are revealed.

'Corporeal' (*piṇḍastha*) and 'Everyway Propitious' (*sarvatobhadra*) are considered to be the two (other) names of the waking state. They consider the dream state to have two names: Abiding in Place (*padastha*) as well as Pervasion (*vyāpti*). There also two (terms) for the state of deep sleep: Abiding in Form (*rūpāstha*) and the Great Pervasion (*mahāvvyāpti*). The Fourth State is technically called 'Accumulation' (*pracaya*) and Beyond Form (*rūpātīta*). The discerning (*vicakṣaṇa*) (i.e. *jñānin*) consider (the state) Beyond the Fourth to be the Great Accumulation (*mahāpracaya*). Thus is taught how this (five-fold) differentiation recurs in each division of the reality principles (*tattva*)."⁶⁷

Kaula State	<i>Avasthā</i>	
<i>piṇḍa</i>	<i>jāgrat</i>	the waking state
<i>pada</i>	<i>svapna</i>	the dreaming state
<i>rūpa</i>	<i>suṣupti</i>	the deep sleep, dreamless state
<i>rūpātīta</i>	<i>turya</i>	the fourth state, the supreme level

Similar to Amṛtānanda's understanding of the four Kaula states envisioned as centers along the spine, the twenty-fifth chapter of the *Śāradātīlikatantra* also teaches how they are related to the practice of *kuṇḍalinī* practice:

piṇḍam bhavet kuṇḍalinī śivātmā padaṁ tu haṁsaḥ sakalāntarātmā |
rūpaṁ bhaved bindur anantakāntir atītarūpaṁ śivasāmarasyam || 25.62 ||

"The "solid mass" (*piṇḍa*) is doubtlessly the *kuṇḍalinī*, equivalent to Śiva; the "position" (*pada*), on the other hand, is doubtlessly the *haṁsaḥ*, the inner Self of all. The "form" (*rūpa*) is doubtlessly the *bindu* of infinite lustre; the blissful union (*sāmarasya*) with Śiva is "form transcended" (*atītarūpa*)."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 VI, 441.

⁶⁸ Translation by Bühnemann 2011, 231.

The nineteenth chapter of the *Kumārikākhaṇḍaḥ* of the *Manthānabhairavatantra* teaches foundational knowledge about the nature of the four Kaula states in relation to practice:

piṇḍasthaṃ ca padasthaṃ ca rūpasthaṃ rūpavarjitam |
nirañjanapadāvasthaṃ tadā mukta mahēśvara || 6 ||
śabdabrahma bhavet piṇḍam padam bijākṣaram smṛtam |
rūpam ca maṇḍalam yoga rūpātītam ca bhairava || 7 ||
nirañjana piṇḍasthaṃ ca rūpasthaṃ rūpavarjitam |
nirañjanapade jñeyāstadādhobhve praśasyate || 8 ||

"(In this way the adept realises the following states, namely) Established in the Body (*piṇḍastha*), Established in the Part (*padastha*), Established in Form (*rūpastha*), and Devoid of Form. Then (he attains) the state of the Stainless (*nirañjana*) which, O Great Lord, is free." The Body (*piṇḍa*) is the Word 'Brahman' (*śabdabrahman*). The Plane is said to be the letter of the seed-syllable (*mantras*). O Bhairava, Form is the Maṇḍala and Beyond Form is Yoga. It is taught that the Stainless, Established in the Body, Established in Form and Devoid of Form are to be known, (arranged) above and below, within the Plane of the Stainless."⁶⁹

The forty-fourth chapter of the *Kumārikākhaṇḍaḥ* continues that the four Kaula states manifest in the world as the four principal Kaula *śakti pīṭhas*, a direct parallel to Amṛtānanda's understanding in the *Cidvilāsastava* (although the order of their exact correlations does differ slightly, as is normal between the Śrīvidyā and Kubjikā traditions):

rūpātītam tathā rūpam padam piṇḍamanukramāt |
piṇḍam kuṇḍalinī śaktiḥ padam haṃsaḥ prakīrtitaḥ || 5 ||
rūpam bindumayam proktaṃ rūpātītam anāmayam |
tatra pīṭhacatuṣkaṃ tu saṃjātam tu kulecchayā || 6 ||
rūpātītam tu kāmākhyam rūpam pūrṇagirirmahān |
padam jālandharākhyam tu piṇḍamoḍam prakīrtitam || 7 ||
kā pū jā o catuṣka tu mūlakaulakramāgatam |

"(This descent takes place in the following stages): Beyond Form (*Rūpātīta*), Form (*Rūpa*), Word (*Pada*), and Body (*Piṇḍa*), in due order. The Body is the energy Kuṇḍalinī. Word (*pada*) is said to be the Gander. Form is said to be the Drop and Beyond Form is the reality free of all defects (*anāmaya*). The four sacred seats have arisen there by the will of Kula. Beyond Form is Kāmākhyā. Form is the great Pūrṇagiri. Word is said to be Jālandhara, while the Body is said to be Oḍḍa. The group of four, KĀ, PŪ, JĀ, and O has come (into the world) through the root Kaula transmission."⁷⁰

Concerning how these four states were a critical part of Kaula knowledge, another Kubjikā tantra, the *Ṣaṭṣahasrasāmbhitā* teaches:

⁶⁹ Translation by Dyczkowski 2009, Text and Translation Vol III, 42-43.

⁷⁰ Translation by Dyczkowski 2009, Text and Translation Vol IV, 317.

athavā cittavedham tu yah karoti gurus tu sah ||
kulagranthe subhāṣābhīr aprabuddham prabodhayet |
piṇḍastham ca padastham ca kāyadravyagatam kramam ||
param sūkṣmam tathā sthūlam yah kathet tu gurus tu sah |
dvijādisvapacāntasya īdṛśī na vicāraṇā ||
atha vipro guruḥ prokto yasyāsti cedṛśī kriyā | 20.9-12 |

"Again, the one who pierces the mind (*cittavedha*) (with the energy of grace) is a (true) teacher. He should awaken the unawakened to the Kula scripture (*grantha*) by means of good languages (*subhāṣā*). The one who can explain the (yogic states known as) 'Established in the Body' (*piṇḍastha*), 'Established on the Plane' (*padastha*) and the procedure (*krama*) related to (the ritual offering) of bodily substances - what is supreme, subtle and gross - is a (true) teacher. (Caste is) no consideration, (whatever he be), starting from a Brahmin to an outcaste. Indeed, the teacher is one whose action (*kriyā*) (ritual and yogic) is such is said to be a Brahmin (*vipra* - regardless of his caste)."⁷¹



⁷¹ Translation by Dyczkowski 2009, Introduction Vol I, 492-3.

VERSE 18:

Arghyaśodhana & Pātrasādhana

तत्त्वधामयुगमातृकात्मकत्रिभिर्भेदनियतेषु वस्तुषु ।

पानपात्रपरमामृतत्रयं तुर्यविश्रमणमर्घ्यशोधनम् ॥ १८ ॥

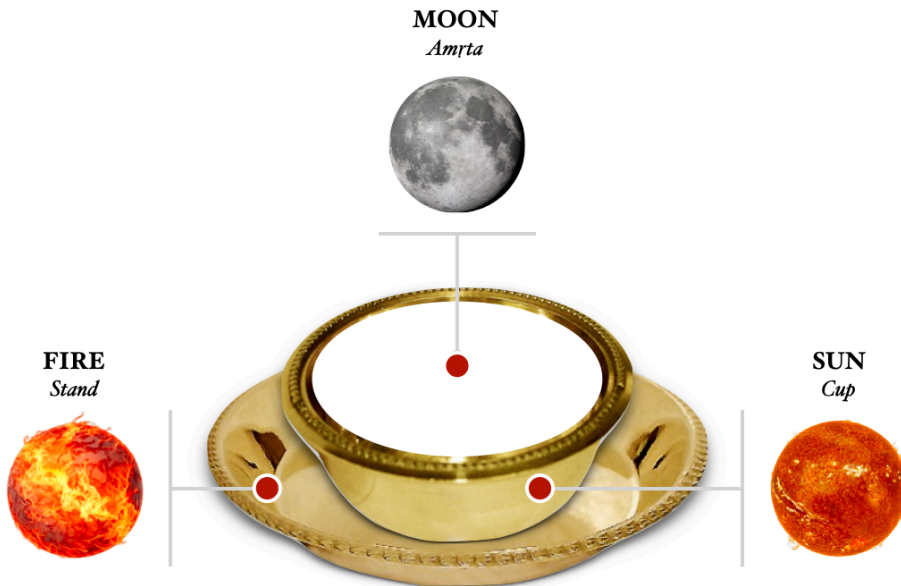
tattvadhāmayugamātrkātmakatritribhedaniyateṣu vastuṣu ।

pānapātraparamāmṛtatrayaṃ turyaviśramaṇam arghyaśodhanam ॥ 18 ॥

The triad of the ‘act of drinking’, the ‘vessel’, and ‘supreme nectar’ is the purification of the ritual libation (*arghya*), which is [ultimately] when the objects encompassed by the nine divisions [of the Śrīcakra]—comprising the reality levels (36), the (three) luminaries (3), the ages (4), and the phonemes (50)—[all] come to abide in the fourth state.

Notes:

Offering *arghya* (libation), especially as it relates to purification (*śodhana*) and propitiation (*tarpana*), is one of the most important tantric practices. Within Śrīvidyā, extensive ritual sequences for offering libation, generally known as *pātrasādhana*, are performed in the Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā*. *Pātrasādhana* consists of invoking, creating, and offering the very cosmos (in all of its parts and powers) to the goddess in the form of *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality. The three critical elements in this offering consist of a sacred cup (*pātra*), the nectar (*amṛta*) within the cup, and the act of offering and consuming the *amṛta*. These three elements constitute the basis of *pātrasādhana* and are correlated with the three luminaries in this way:



In this verse, Amṛtānanda relates the practice of offering (and consuming) the supreme nectar within the ritual vessel (*pātra*) to an immersion of the objective world into the fourth state of consciousness, known as *turya*.⁷² Amṛtānanda closes the verse by revealing several deeper aspects of how the Śrīcakra relates to the thirty-six *tattvas*, the three luminaries of fire, sun and moon, the four *yugas* (*kali*, *dvāpara*, *tretā*, and *satya*), and the fifty Sanskrit *akṣaras* (phonemes).

Vidyānanda teaches in his *Jñānadīpavimarsinī* the following inner contemplation of offering *arghya*:

*ābhyāntarārghyaśodhanam yathā svaśiraḥkapālam evādhāram kalāṣoḍaśakalitam
pūrṇendubimbam evārghyam tadadhahśaktitejasā vidrutam kṛtvā tenābhyantarasthā devatās tarpayet*

"The inner purification of the ritual libation is as follows: The skull of one's own head is the vessel (*ādhāra*). First making the *arghya* [in the form of] the full moon adorned with sixteen phases flow with the radiance of divine power downward from [that vessel of one's own head], then propitiate the inner deities with that [libation]."⁷³

Vidyānanda then cites the *Kramastotra*:⁷⁴

*taduktam kramastotre
cinmṛgāṅkadhaḥvalacyutāmṛtasrāvasambhrtamabārghyapātrataḥ |
tarpanam vitatam asti yat sadā yattanoh paramam asti tām numah || 1 ||*

That is taught in the *Kramastotra*:

"We bow to that reality (*tanu*) from which the libation is ever[-flowing], extending out from the great *arghya* vessel filled with white streams of nectar radiating from the moon that is Consciousness."⁷⁵

and closes his contemplation on offering *arghya* with another citation from the *Udayākarapaddhati*:

āntarārghyapānapaddhatividhir udayākarapaddhatyām ukto yathā

"The inner ritual of drinking the *arghya* is taught accordingly in the *Udayākarapaddhati*:"⁷⁶

*yan māṃ kuṇḍalinīm sphūrjatsomasūryanibandhanāt |
bhidantī brahmaṇo granthiṃ gacchantī madhyavartmanā ||
chidantī pāsajālāni jvalantī svena tejasā |
viśantī pūrṇapīṭham sā drāvayantī tv amāṃ kalām ||
śrāvayantī sudhāpūram plāvayantī carācaram |*

⁷² This all-pervasive state of conscious awareness is described extensively in the *Upaniṣads*. See notes to verse twenty-four.

⁷³ Translation by Ben Williams.

⁷⁴ The *Kramastotra* cited here is not that of Abhinavagupta, or Erakanātha.

⁷⁵ Translation by Ben Williams.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

tenāmr̥tena divyena tarpayed devatām parām ||

"From the fusion of the sun and moon, *kuṇḍalinī* bursts forth, piercing the knot of Brahmā. Moving through the central channel, dissolving the collection of limitations, blazing with innate luster, she enters the [inner] [*śakti*]*pīṭha*, Pūrṇa[giri].⁷⁷ Making the *amākalā* flow, she rushes with a deluge of nectar and inundates the universe of sentient beings and insentient objects. Make refreshing oblations to the supreme Goddess with that divine nectar!"⁷⁸



⁷⁷ Pūrṇagiri *pīṭha* corresponds to the heart. See notes to verse seventeen.

⁷⁸ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 19:

Śrīcakra Dhyāna

मेदिनीप्रमुखमाशिवं मतं तत्त्वचक्रमिह चक्रमुत्तमम् ।

स्वस्वभावसमवायभासिनी देवता भवति सांविदी कला ॥ १९ ॥

medinīpramukham āśivaṃ mataṃ tattvacakram iha cakram uttamam |
svasvabhāvasamavāyabhāsinī devatā bhavati sāṃvidī kalā || 19 ||

The great wheel of all the reality levels, from earth to Śiva, is understood here as the supreme [Śrī]cakra. The central deity [of that *cakra*], radiantly manifesting as united with one's inherent nature, is the dynamism of consciousness.

Notes:

The Śrīcakra is the geometric form of the goddess Tripurasundarī that complements her *mūlamantra* (principal mantra). The Śrīcakra consists of nine *āvāraṇas* (lit. coverings) that span an outer enclosure that resembles the walls of a kingdom and proceeds inwards through two sets of lotus petals leading to a series of five major downward facing '*śakti* triangles' and four upward facing '*śiva* triangles,' thereby creating forty-four triangles. The innermost portion of the Śrīcakra is a central triangle which hosts a single point, known as *bindu*, where Tripurasundarī resides in her highest form.

The Śrīcakra is the initiatory *maṇḍala* of the Śrīvidyā tradition and is worshiped as the goddess in a variety of methods, ranging from simple offerings to more comprehensive rituals such as the Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā*. This complex form of ritual worship takes place in three parts and worships the entirety of the Śrīcakra, Tripurasundarī, and all her principal attendant goddesses.

While the Śrīcakra properly belongs to the Śrīvidyā tradition, it has since transcended the confines of the tradition and become a widespread religious icon. Its ubiquitous presence has transversed several Indic religions, has become something of a catch-all emblem for charismatic and self-proclaimed gurus, and can even be found in new-age religious groups with no connection to any Indic religions or dharma. Interpretations of the Śrīcakra range from a good luck charm that brings prosperity, to the *yantra* of Lakṣmī, and are as divergent as the people who claim to understand (and are usually quick to explain) what they perceive to be its deeper meaning. Indeed, the mere sight of the Śrīcakra can agitate one's mind as much as it can reorganize its thoughts into tranquility.

In a deeper sense, the Śrīcakra is a diagrammatic embodiment of the flow of consciousness. It portrays how consciousness expands through the sequential unfolding of awareness, solidifying into reality, objectivity, the cosmos, and the human body. One of the primary roadmaps to understanding how this expansion takes place are the thirty-six *tattvas*. In their standard tantric conception, the *tattvas* span thirty-six principles ranging from the solidity of the earth element,

known as *pr̥thvītattva*, to the supreme transcendent principle of consciousness, known as *śivatattva*. In this verse, Amṛtānanda understands the Śrīcakra as the supreme cakra of all reality that encompasses all thirty-six *tattvas*.

There are multiple ways in which each of the thirty-six *tattvas* correspond to the various *āvāraṇas* and petals of Śrīcakra, but perhaps the most well known is from the *Paramānandantra* which links the *tattvas* to the Śrīcakra as follows:⁷⁹

<i>Tattvas</i>	Śrīcakra
<i>śiva-śakti</i>	<i>bindu</i>
<i>sadāśiva, īśvara, śuddhavidyā</i>	<i>trikoṇa</i>
<i>māyā, kalā, vidyā, rāga, kāla niyati, puruṣa, prakṛti</i>	<i>aṣṭakoṇa</i>
<i>vāc, pāṇi, pāda, pāyu, upasthā śrotra, tvāk, cakṣus, rasana, ghrāna</i>	<i>antardaśāra</i>
<i>śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa, gandha</i>	<i>bahirdaśāra</i>
<i>buddhi, abhikāra, manas ākāśa and vāyu</i>	<i>caturdaśāra</i>
<i>agni</i>	<i>aṣṭadala</i>
<i>jala</i>	<i>ṣoḍaśadala</i>
<i>pr̥thvī</i>	<i>caturāśra</i>

In the second half of this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that the central deity of the Śrīcakra is actually consciousness itself, a doctrine found throughout Kaula tantra. As an initiate in Śrīvidyā, Amṛtānanda obviously understands the central deity of the Śrīcakra to be the supreme goddess, Tripurasundarī, but he is usually quick to equate her to pure consciousness. In his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginībr̥dayatantra* (1.41), Amṛtānanda describes Tripurasundarī as *paracitkalā*, "the supreme dynamism of consciousness."

The Śrīcakra is often considered to be the 'body,' or the form of the goddess, as well the throne upon which Tripurasundarī sits. The first chapter of the *Yoginībr̥dayatantra* teaches:

*tacchaktipañcakam sṛṣṭyā layenāgnicatuṣṭayam |
pañcaśakticaturvahnisaṃyogāc cakrasambhavaḥ || 8 ||
etac cakrāvātāraṃ tu kathayāmi tavānaghe |
yadā sā paramā śaktiḥ svecchayā viśvarūpiṇī || 9 ||*

⁷⁹ Following Kutticad 2020, 102-3.

spburattām ātmanah paśyet tadā cakrasya sambhavaḥ |

"This [*cakra* includes] five energies directed toward emanation (*śṛṣṭyā*), and four fires turned toward resorption (*layena*). The *cakra* is [therefore] produced by the conjunction of five energies and four fires. I will tell you, O perfect One, the descent [on earth] of your *cakra*. When She, the Supreme Power, [becoming] by her own free will embodied as all that exists (*viśvarūpiṇī*), perceives herself as flashing forth, the *cakra* then appears."⁸⁰

Helping to eliminate confusion about the Śrīcakra's form and the body of the goddess, Professor André Padoux offers the following clarifying distinctions:

"The expression we translate as "embodied as the *śrīcakra*" is *śrīcakravapuṣā*, having the *śrīcakra* as body (*vapuh*). This last word means form, figure, beauty, beautiful appearance, or a form one discovers in meditation, rather than a concrete body. It is therefore sometimes translated as essence, cosmic, beautiful form or presence. The *śrīcakra* is in effect viewed as a cosmic embodiment of the Goddess, not as a concrete body or form."⁸¹



⁸⁰ Translation by Padoux 2013, 26-27.

⁸¹ Padoux 2013, 170 fn. 33.

VERSE 20:

Āvāhana

आन्तरस्य निजसंविदात्मनो मातुरक्षकरणाध्वना बहिः ।
मेयसंविदि समर्पणं तदावाहनं समरसत्त्वलक्षणम् ॥ २० ॥

āntarasya nijasaṃvidātmano mātur akṣakaraṇādhwanaḥ bahiḥ ।
meyasaṃvidi samarpaṇaṃ tad āvāhanaṃ samarasatvalakṣaṇam ॥ 20 ॥

Casting outwardly the perceiver—the inner nature of consciousness—into object-awareness through the pathway of perception is the [true] ritual of summoning (*āvāhana*) of the deity. That [invocation of the deity] is [thus] identified as a [non-dual] fusion.

Notes:

Consciousness is ever perfect, pure, full, and free. Its innate luminosity never dims, or is lessened to any degree. However, awareness of this primordial purity of consciousness does waver depending on how much its power of awareness (that ideates into individuality) identifies with objectivity, *māyā*, and differentiation—rather than the pure subjectivity of its true nature. The process of how consciousness becomes aware of itself, and expands in ever new forms, is intimately described in Amṛtānanda's guru's work, the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa*.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the nondual meaning of *āvāhana*, the invocation of the deity—a critical step in any ritual worship. The rite of *āvāhana* includes summoning and inviting the deity, often envisioned as residing within the heart of the practitioner, to be present in the *mūrti* (statue), *maṇḍala* (sacred geometric form), or other medium of worship. A standard *āvāhana* includes mantras, *mudrās* (gestures), *bhāvanā* (creative contemplation) and inner yogic practices that often culminate in the offering of a flower.

Amṛtānanda suggests that the true form of *āvāhana* is the process of how consciousness becomes identified with objectivity through "casting," or projecting itself by its own power of awareness through pathways of perception onto objects and experiencing them as such. Just as *āvāhana* invites the deity to be present for the worship, so consciousness identifies with an object and experiences it through the solidification of its innate energies. Amṛtānanda understands the supreme form of *āvāhana* as the blissful union (*samarasatva*) of the subject and object in every act of perception, cognition, and moment of awareness.

Amṛtānanda teaches that the invocation of the divine happens wherever one puts their attention and awareness in the objective world. When this mode of supreme *āvāhana* is realized, the objects of consciousness are revealed to be grounded in nothing but the pure subjectivity of consciousness alone, and the two are fused in a blissful union experienced as the dynamism of consciousness.

Amṛtānanda's deep contemplation on *āvāhana* is similar to Somānanda's contemplation on *dhyāna*, taught in the seventh chapter of his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*:

dhyānam nāmātra yat sarvaṃ sarvākāreṇa lakṣyate |
bhāvanācakṣuṣā sādḥvi sā cintā sarvadarśinī || 78 ||
yena yenendriyenārtho grhyate tatra tatra sā |
śivatā lakṣitā satyā tad dhyānam apo varṇyate || 79 ||
yasyām yasyām pratītau tu śivo'smīti manogamaḥ |
yasyām tathaiiva cintāyām tad dhyānam api jalpitaṃ || 80 ||

"Here (what is meant by) *dhyāna* is that everything is viewed with the eye of contemplation (*bhāvanā*) as being omniform; wise (indeed) is that contemplation (*cintā*) that sees all things (78). By whatever organ of sense an entity is perceived, there in each place Śiva's state is perceived as (truly) existing--that too is described as being *dhyāna* (79). In whatever perception (the notion) comes to mind that "I am Śiva", that too is said to be visualization, that (occurs) in that very way within that thought (*cintā*) (80)."⁸²

Also similar in meaning is Śivānanda's contemplation on *āvāhana*, taught in his *Subhagodayāvāsana* as follows:

jñānakriyāsatattvena mantramudrākrameṇa tu |
āvāhayāmi hṛdayād bahiḥ samvitkalām nijām || 35 ||

"By means of the mantra and the ritual gesture, which are in essence cognition and action, I invoke (*āvāhayāmi*) the innate dynamism of Awareness [to manifest] outwardly from the heart."⁸³



⁸² Dyczkowski 2023 III, 143.

⁸³ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 21:

Pañcopacāra Pūjā

पञ्चधैव यदिदं प्रपञ्चितं पञ्चधानुभवशाश्वतोदयम् ।
तत्सुसंहरणमौपचारिकं कर्म निर्मलनिजात्मसंविदि ॥ २१ ॥

pañcadhaiva yad idaṃ prapañcitaṃ pañcadhānubhavaśāśvatodayam |
tatsusamharaṇam aupacārikaṃ karma nirmalanijātmasaṃvidi || 21 ||

This world, unfolding in a five-fold process, is the constant arising of the five [sensory] experiences. The auspicious reabsorption of that world of experience into pure, innate consciousness of the Self [here constitutes] the [five] services of ritual worship.

Notes:

In Śaivism, reality unfolds through a five-fold process known as *pañcakṛtya* (five acts) constituted by *sṛṣṭi* (emanation), *sthiti* (preservation), *sambhāra* (dissolution), *tirodhāna* (concealing), and *anugraha* (revealing). The *Lalitāsahasranāma* (274) teaches that Tripurasundarī is “*pañcakṛtyaparāyaṇa*” the one performs, and is devoted to, these five actions. Bhāskararāya mentions in his *Saubhāgyabhāskara* commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāma* that the meaning of this name can be found in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*⁸⁴—yet another instance where *Śrīvidyācāryas* point to the works of *Śaivācāryas* from Kashmir to illuminate Śrīvidyā. The five acts are correlated with the five faces of Sadāśiva, as well as the five elements, as follows:⁸⁵

Face of Sadāśiva	Action	Direction	Element
Sadyojāta	<i>sṛṣṭi</i>	west	<i>prthvī</i> (earth)
Vāmadeva	<i>sthiti</i>	north	<i>jala</i> (water)
Aghora	<i>sambhāra</i>	south	<i>agni</i> (fire)
Tatpuruṣa	<i>tirodhāna</i>	east	<i>vāyu</i> (air)
Īśāna	<i>anugraha</i>	upper	<i>ākāśa</i> (space)

The physical world is comprised of five elements, known as the *pañcamahābhūtas*, 'the five great elements' (earth, water, fire, air, and space). The experience of the *mahābhūtas* is felt through five subtler elements, known as the *tanmātras*, or more commonly, the five senses (smell, taste, sight, touch, and sound). These five sensations are experienced and known through faculties of action (*karmendriya*), faculties of knowledge (*jñānendriya*), and so on through the *tattvas* until one reaches the supreme, pure, undifferentiated consciousness known as *śivatattva*. In this verse, Amṛtānanda highlights an important doctrine in nondual Śaivism that teaches how each of the

⁸⁴ *etadarthaḥ pratyabhijñāhṛdaye draṣṭavyaḥ.*

⁸⁵ As taught in the *Kālotaratantra*, cited by Dyczkowski 2023 VIII, 12, fn. 24.

thirty-six *tattvas* emanate from the ones that proceed it, thereby creating a flow of emanation from subtle to dense.

The most foundational, and standard, type of ritual worship is known as *pañcopacāra pūjā*. This worship consists of offering five types of *upacāras* (items or services) to the deity, usually consisting of sandalwood, flowers, incense, a lamp, and food. The basic idea is that these items are related to the five senses and so by performing the ritual worship one is engaging and utilizing all of their senses in service of the divine. In a deeper sense, *pañcopacāra pūjā* is offering not only the practitioner's own senses, but the elements of creation in the form of *pañcamahābhūtas* back to the deity—a deeply moving and devotional contemplation that is widely taught across lineages and traditions.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches an even more nuanced understanding in that the withdrawal and "auspicious reabsorption," or the regressive contemplation (*saṃhāra krama*), beginning with *pṛthvītattva* and ending with *śivatattva*, is the true form of the *pañcopacāra pūjā*. The idea is that the withdrawal and dissolution of the five great elements into the subtle elements that precede it, and then into the faculties of action and knowledge that precede the subtle elements—and so forth, dissolves the differentiation, duality, and objectivity of the *tattvas* away until only pure consciousness remains.

This contemplative worship focused on dissolution is a subtle form of yoga that is a speciality of Kaula practice. Although not mentioned here, the practice is often aided by the recitation of specific mantras that link the thirty-six *tattvas* to the Sanskrit *akṣaras* (phonemes) and include visualizations of melting, fusing, and ultimately transcending the *tattvas*.



VERSE 22:

Nityākalādevī Arcana

यस्तु पञ्चदशधा प्रकल्प्यते काल एष शशिभानुसंक्रमात् ।
तस्य शाश्वतपदे लयक्रिया नित्यवासरकलार्चनं मतम् ॥ २२ ॥

**yas tu pañcadaśadhā prakalpyate kāla eṣa śaśibhānusamkramāt |
tasya śāśvatapade layakriyā nityavāsarakalārcanaṃ matam ॥ 22 ॥**

Time, based upon the transits of the moon and sun, is conceived as having fifteen divisions. Ritual adoration of those [fifteen] divisions of the *Nityā* [Goddesses] that govern the day is the practice of dissolving Time into the eternal.

Notes:

Many Indic religious traditions specialize in sophisticated knowledge of time, mathematics, and minutely accurate astronomical calculations. The contemplative aspects of this knowledge are heightened in tantric *sādhana* where intricate visualization and meditation practices are spoken of in terms of time, astrology, and cosmic world orders. Such practices often focus on the interconnections between consciousness, perception, time, and the breath, and aim at going beyond time into a state of timelessness within the present moment.

Time is not at all experienced in the same way, by those who perceive it, and yet "earthly time" is based upon standard celestial movements which give birth to sunrises, sunsets, days, weeks, months, and years. In this sense, time is an astronomical phenomenon related to life on earth and should not be confused with *kālatattva*, the principle of time. In the standard conception of time that Amṛtānanda is referring to (based on the first part of the verse where he relates it to the transits of the sun and moon), time is described within the frame of an individual lunar day known as a *tithi*. It takes fifteen such lunar days, divided into two phases consisting of fifteen waxing (bright *śukla pakṣa*) days and fifteen waning (dark *kṛṣṇa pakṣa*) days to complete one lunar month spanning the dark moon of *amāvāsyā* to the full moon of *pūrṇimā*. Tripurasundarī, like many Kaula goddesses, is associated with the moon and is often described with lunar imagery. The seventh verse of the *Saundaryalaharī* describes her face as shining like a full moon in autumn and many other verses and sources speak of her radiance and beauty in terms of the brilliance of the full moon.

The ritual worship of Tripurasundarī includes the veneration of fifteen attendant goddesses who govern these fifteen lunar days, known as the *Nityākalā devīs*. These goddesses are also considered to be emanations of Tripurasundarī and are spoken of as limbs (*aṅgas*) that help to constitute her complete form—just as Bhāskararāya teaches in his *Saubhāgyabhāskara*

commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāma*.⁸⁶ The worship of the *Nityākalā devīs* is an important aspect of Śrīvidyā and plays a prominent role in Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* where they are often worshiped along the inner *trikoṇa* (triangle) of the Śrīcakra. The *Nityākalā devīs* are also correlated with Tripurasundarī's *mūlamantra* (principal mantra), known as the *Pañcadaśākṣarī*—one syllable for each goddess.

In addition to being aspects of the supreme goddess, these goddesses are also known as a special type of *yoginī* called *Nityā yoginīs* and are described in sources such as the *Tantrarāja* and *Jñānārṇavatāntras*, *Śrīvidyārṇavatāntra*, *Tantrasārasaṃgraha*, and the unpublished *Nityākaulatantra*, among other Kaula and tantric texts. *Nityā yoginīs* are described as alluring, powerful, and sensual goddesses who usually attend to a supreme goddess such as Tripurabhairavī or Tripurasundarī—who is considered to be the greatest *Nityā*, as her name in the famous *Khaḍgamālāmantra* suggests "*Mahānityā*." This complete form of Tripurasundarī is known as Ṣoḍaśī, the sixteenth and final *Nityādevī* who is connected to the invisible sixteenth *kalā* of the moon and who embodies transcendence, nectar, and fullness. Accordingly, an extra syllable (and sometimes even a group of syllables) is added to Tripurasundarī's *mūlamantra* to make it complete, building on the ancient Vedic idea that sixteen is the most perfect and full number. The *Nityākalā devīs*, including Tripurasundarī as the sixteenth '*Mahānityā*' are also correlated with the sixteen Sanskrit vowels (A to H).

The *Nityākalā devīs*, as goddesses of time, are eternal and their permanent nature is correlated to the expanding qualities of the *pañcamahābhūtas* (five great elements) which also total fifteen—although the exact correlations between the *Nityākalā devīs* and the *bhūtas* are not specifically mentioned. Nondual Śaiva doctrine teaches that each *tattva* emanates from the one before it, thereby encompassing it and gaining qualities and weight as consciousness expands—a teaching highlighted in the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* (verse cited below). Just as the *tanmātras* pervade the *bhūtas*, so the *Nityākalā devīs* pervade Tripurasundarī as portions (*aṅgas*) of her body and *mūlamantra*.

<i>Pañcamahābhūta</i>	<i>Tanmātra</i> Qualities
<i>ākāśa</i>	<i>śabda</i>
<i>vāyu</i>	<i>śabda, sparśa</i>
<i>agni</i>	<i>śabda, sparśa, rūpa</i>
<i>jala</i>	<i>śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa</i>
<i>ṛthvī</i>	<i>śabda, sparśa, rūpa, rasa, gandha</i>

In the second half of the verse, Amṛtānanda explains the contemplative worship of these goddesses as dissolving the particular, contingent, and changing aspects of time (embodied as the *Nityākalā devīs*) into the eternal and changeless plane of the supreme Goddess, or offering the 'micro' part into the 'macro' whole—a master trope in tantric ritual. Such contemplative

⁸⁶ See commentary on verse 136 (*nāma* 391): *ādyāyā lalitāyāḥ syur anyāḥ pañcadaśāṅgagāḥ | lalitāṅgitvarūpeṇa sarvāsām ātmavīgrahā*. See Pañśīkar 1927, 103.

yogic practices aim at devouring time (the agent of differentiation) through recognizing its correlations and expansions occurring within a single breath.

A closer look at the *Nityākalā devī* worship reveals the inseparable union of Śiva and Śakti embodied in everything from the highest principle of reality, to a single lunar day (Śiva [day] and Śakti [night]).⁸⁷ Extended *sādhana* increases inner awareness and reveals the desire of consciousness to expand towards and create new forms of completeness empowered by micro-movements of *śṛṣṭi* (expansion) and *sambhāra* (contraction). This vibratory pulse (*spanda*) of consciousness, awareness, and mantra energizes movement in consciousness (*icchā*) and propels awareness as knowledge (*jñāna*) into action (*kriyā*).

The *Lalitāsahasranāma* (name 610) teaches:

pratīpan mukhyarākāntatithimaṇḍalapūjitā |

"[Tripurasundarī is] worshiped on the sequential lunar days [1-15] and is worshiped by their respective goddesses known as the *Nityākalā devīs*."⁸⁸

The *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* teaches about of the nature of the *Nityākalā devīs* and the *Pañcadaśākṣarī* as follows:

śabdasparsau rūpaṃ rasagandhau ceti bhūtasūkṣmāni |
vyāpakamādyam vyāpyam tūttaramevam krameṇa pañcadaśa || 15 ||
pañcadaśākṣararūpā nityā caiṣā hi bhautikābhimatā |
nityāśābdādiguṇa prabhedā bhinnāstathānāyā vyāptāḥ || 16 ||
nityāstithyākārāḥ tithayaśśivaśakti samarasākārāḥ |
divasaniśāmayyastāḥ śrīvarṇāste'pi tadvayīrūpāḥ || 17 ||

"Sound, touch, form, taste, smell these are the subtle bhūtas. (Of these) each is the producer (*vyāpaka*), and thus taking them all in their order there are fifteen properties (*guṇas*). The Nityā (Tripurā) who is (the mantra) of fifteen letters is known as She appears in the bhūtas (*bhautikā'bhimatā*). She is surrounded by fifteen Nityās who are distinguished by the different properties (*guṇas*) of sound and so forth (*śābdādi-guṇa-prabhedā bhinnāḥ*). The fifteen Nityās represent the (fifteen) lunar days (*tithyākārāḥ*). The lunar days again are the union (Samarasa) of Śiva and Śakti. They consist of days and nights. They are the letters in the Mantra and have the double nature of Prakāśa and Vimarśa."⁸⁹

Śivānanda explains the worship of the individual lunar days, as the *Nityākalā devīs* in his *Subhagodayavāsanā*:

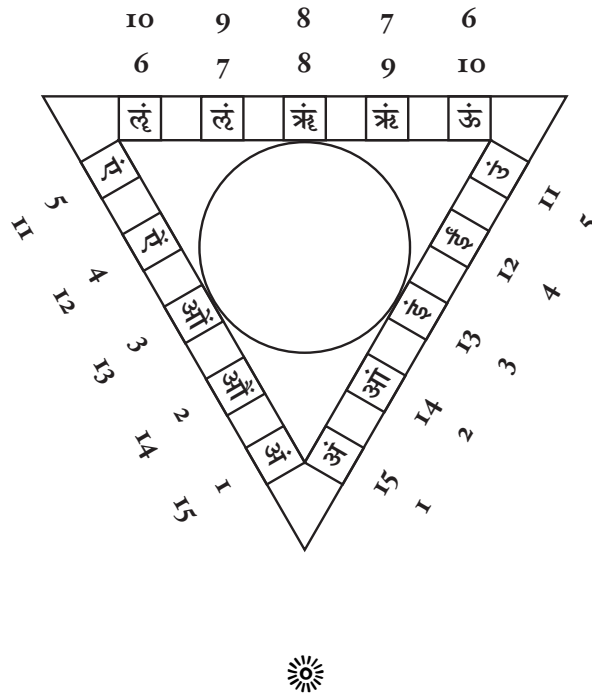
khamvāyurjyotirabbhūmiśābdādiguṇābheditāḥ |
daśapañcatayā vyāptā vyāpikāḥ pūjayāmy aham || 41 ||

⁸⁷ See verse four.

⁸⁸ Translation by Brian Campbell.

⁸⁹ Translation by Woodroffe 1922, 27.

"I worship the pervaded and pervading [Goddesses] as the fifteen [*Nityās*] based on the different properties of sound [touch, form, taste, and smell] that correspond to space, air, fire, water, and earth."⁹⁰



⁹⁰ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 23:

Śrīcakra Pūjā

बाह्यचक्रसुषगा मरीचयस्तत्त्वजाललसदात्मसंविदः ।

तत्समर्चनमतीव चिन्मयानारव्यधाम्नि विलयक्रमक्रिया ॥ २३ ॥

bāhyacakrasuṣagā marīcayas tattvajālasadātmasamvidah |

tatsamarcanam atīva cinmayānākhyadhāmnī vilayakramakriyā || 23 ||

One's innate consciousness, shimmering as the entire collection of principles, shines with rays that beautifully light up the tangible Śrīcakra. The [true] worship of that [*maṇḍala*] is the Krama practice of dissolving in sequence [those sensory rays] into the luminous abode of the Nameless, which is nothing but consciousness.

Notes:

The first teaching of the *Śivasūtra* proclaims, *caitanyam ātmā*: the Self is consciousness. One of the primary ways of understanding how the Self, as consciousness, experiences and comes to know itself in ever increasing (and blissful) perfection is the thirty-six *tattvas*. Building on verse nineteen, which taught how the Śrīcakra is made up of the thirty-six *tattvas*, Amṛtānanda now envisions how pure consciousness, "shimmering" as the play of these *tattvas*, beautifully lights up the external (visible) Śrīcakra with individual rays (*marīcī*) of light.

Amṛtānanda's contemplation builds on a long standing Indic metaphor of consciousness being described as a supreme sun, and its powers of awareness as individual rays of sunlight.⁹¹ This teaching is established within the Śrīvidyā tradition in a number of places such as the *Kāmakalāvilāsa* and put into practice within the *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* where a secret litany of mantras, entitled the *Rāsmīmālā*, are said to emanate like individual rays of light from the goddess Tripurasundarī. The *Saundaryalaharī* (verse fourteen) also describes how the now standard six *cakras* are filled with various numbers of individual rays as follows:

“In earth (*mūlādhāra*) fifty-six, fifty-two in water (*maṇipūra*), in fire (*svādhīṣṭhāna*) sixty-two, fifty-four in air (*anāhata*), in ether (*viśuddhi*) seventy-two, and in mind (*ājñā*) sixty-four—these [360] are the rays; above them [in the *sahasrāra*] is the pair of your lotus feet.”⁹²

When all these individual rays are combined, they equal three hundred and sixty, corresponding to the number of days in the traditional Indic year and the degrees in a circle. Śrīvidyā, and related Kaula traditions such as the Kubjikā lineage, teach intimate details about how this type of *sādhana* is performed. One of Amṛtānanda's disciples, Umākānta, even wrote an entire

⁹¹ See verse five.

⁹² Translation by Brown 1958, 52.

treatise on this specialized form of practice entitled the *Ṣaḍanvayaśāmbhavakrama*, but it unfortunately remains unpublished.

In the second half of this verse, Amṛtānanda envisions how Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* is a meditation on dissolution following the sequential dissolving of the individual rays of the *tattvas* into the nameless state (*anākhyā*) of pure luminous consciousness. This type of worship, from diversity to pure nondual consciousness, is known as *sambhāra krama*. The inclusion of *anākhyā* in this verse is a nod that Amṛtānanda is also referencing the highly influential Kālikrama tradition, which developed the concept of *anākhyā* to its greatest extent.⁹³

Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* has three procedural sequences (*krama*) which organize the flow of the worship:

- *sambhāra krama*: Worship begins at the the outermost level of the Śrīcakra and proceeds inward, following a path of the dissolution (*sambhāra*) of diversity experienced in the objective world to the singularity of the *bindu* and the pure subjectivity of consciousness.
- *sthitī krama*: This rarer form of worship has multiple starting points, including at the middle *āvaraṇa* of Śrīcakra. In some texts, such as the *Śrīvidyārṇavatāntra*, this sequence is recommended for "householder" practitioners — although this is likely an interpolation since this "tantra" isn't a tantra at all, but a mantric compendium written by a *sannyāsīn*. So-called "householder" practitioners are, in fact, less restricted in Kaula tantra and modes of worship than *sannyāsīns*.
- *sr̥ṣṭī krama*: Worship starts with pure non-dual consciousness at the *bindu* of the Śrīcakra and proceeds outwards towards the first layer, known as *bhūpura*, gathering diversity and expanding (*sr̥ṣṭī*) along the way.



⁹³ See notes to verse twenty-four and thirty-five.

VERSE 24:

Bali

यच्चतुर्विधमिदं विभासते तत्त्वरूपममृतान्तराकृति ।

तस्य पञ्चमपदे लयक्रिया संमतं बलिचतुष्टयं तथा ॥ २४ ॥

**yac caturvidham idaṃ vibhāsate tattvarūpam amṛtāntarākṛti |
tasya pañcamapade layakriyā saṃmatam balicatuṣṭayaṃ tathā ॥ 24 ॥**

This fourfold set of *tattvas*, whose inner aspect is nectar, shines forth. The set of four *bali* oblations should be understood as the practice of dissolving that [four-fold set of *tattvas*] into the reality of the fifth.

Notes:

In Śaivism, the thirty-six *tattvas* are classified into three groupings known as *ātmatattva*, *vidyātattva*, and *śivatattva*. These three sets function less as a way to organize reality and more as a shortcut to ritually purifying all of the thirty-six *tattvas* during preliminary rites such as *ācamana*, sipping water infused with mantras before the worship begins. A common way of performing this part of the *pūjā* is as follows:

ātmatattvaṃ śodbhayāmi svābhā
vidyātattvaṃ śodbhayāmi svābhā
śivatattvaṃ śodbhayāmi svābhā
sarvatattvaṃ śodbhayāmi svābhā

The inclusion of *sarvatattva* as a fourth grouping is understood to be the summation, or aggregate of all thirty-six *tattvas* and would be identified as Paramaśiva—the thirty-seventh *tattva*. The exact correspondences between each of the *tattvas*, varies significantly through texts and traditions, but can generally be organized as follows:

ātmatattva: *prthvī, jala, tejas, vāyu, ākāśa, gandha, rasa, rūpa, sparśa, śabda, upasthā, pāyu, pāda, pāṇi, vāc, ghrāṇa, rasana, cakṣus, tvac, śrotra, manas, abhāṅkāra, buddhi, prakṛti, puruṣa, niyati, kāla, rāga, vidyā, kalā, māyā*

vidyātattva: *śuddhavidyā, īśvara, sadāśiva, śakti*

śivatattva: *śiva*

sarvatattva: *paramaśiva*

The *Yogakhaṇḍa* of the *Manthānabhairavatantra* correlates these three *tattva* groupings with the *dhāmatraya*, or three luminaries known as the fire, sun and moon.⁹⁴

The fourth chapter of the *Rauravasūtrasaṅgraha* teaches:

śivaśaktikalāḥ sarvā etāḥ sarvajñabhāṣitāḥ |
yogamokṣasukhaisvāryadhanavīryapradāḥ śubhāḥ || 45 ||
vidyātattvam idaṃ puṃsām tṛtīyaṃ sārvaśaktikam |
śivatattvaavidhānajño jñātṛvā siddhyati netaraḥ || 46 ||
śivātmaavidyātattvāni trīṇy etāny anupūrvāśaḥ |
viditṛvā sādhabaḥ kṣipraṃ mantrasiddhim avāpnuyāt || 47 ||

"All these powers of Śiva and Śakti are taught by the omniscient one. They are auspicious, and they bestow Yoga, liberation, happiness, lordship, wealth, and potency. The *Vidyātattva* for all desires is the third. Those who know the practice of the Śivatattva are perfected by knowing it, no one else. These are the three: the *Śiva*, *Ātma*, and *Vidyā tattvas*, in order. By knowing them, an adept perfects the mantra immediately."⁹⁵

Aghoraśivācārya, the famous twelfth century C.E. Śaiva Saiddhāntika *ācārya* of Cidambaram taught the *ācamanaavidhiḥ* in his influential *Kriyākramadyotikā* (dated to 1157 C.E) in this way:

om hām ātmatattvāya svadhā
om hīm vidyātattvāya svadhā
om hūm śivatattvāya svadhā

In this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that the inner nature (*antarākṛti*) of all the *tattvas*, organized by the four groups explored above, consists of *amṛta*. In the second half of the verse, Amṛtānanda relates the four sets of *tattvas* to the four types of *bali*, the sacrificial offerings often performed in tantric rituals.

There are several types of *bali* rites, largely based on the complexity of the worship. In general, *bali* is often offered to the primary deity being worshiped through an intermediary deity, such as is described in the *Bhāvanopanīṣad*, "Kurukullā is the *balidevatā* of the mother."⁹⁶ While Amṛtānanda does not name the four *bali* offerings specifically, the key to this verse can be found in the nineteenth chapter of the *Gandharvatantra*, which describes four *bali* offerings that are to be performed to four *devatās* (Baṭuka, Yoginī, Kṣetrapāla, and Gaṇeśa) at the four entrances to the Śrīcakra.

Amṛtānanda closes his contemplation on the four sets of *tattvas* and the four *bali* offerings by envisioning them dissolving into the supreme reality of the fifth, just as the four *bali* sacrifices are offered unto the deity and the *tattvas* dissolve into pure consciousness. While Amṛtānanda does not specify what the fifth is, he is likely referring to the fifth stage in the Kālikrama

⁹⁴ *candrāgnir avibhedana vidyā ātmā śivas tridhā*. See Dyczkowski 2009, Introduction Vol 1, 453, fn. 4.

⁹⁵ Translation by Ben Williams.

⁹⁶ *kurukullā balidevatā mātā* | See Mira 1976, 9.

conception of manifestation, known as *bhāsā* (pure illumination). It is also possible that he might be referring to the fifth state of consciousness, known as *turyātīta*. Regardless which "fifth" he is referring to, it should be understood to mean the highest reality of supreme consciousness, a persistent theme throughout the *Cidvilāsastava*, and one that Amṛtānanda will specifically revisit in verses thirty-five and thirty-seven.

Five modes of perception-cosmogony, as taught in certain texts of the Kālīkrama:

- 1) *sr̥ṣṭi*: emanation
- 2) *sthiti*: sustenance
- 3) *saṁbhāra*: withdrawal
- 4) *anākhyā*: the nameless
- 5) *bhāsā*: pure radiant illumination

Five states of consciousness:

- 1) *jāgrat*: the waking state
- 2) *svapna*: the dreaming state
- 3) *susupti*: the deep sleep, dreamless state
- 4) *turya*: the fourth state, a supreme level expounded in the *Upaniṣads* as supreme consciousness.
- 5) *turyātīta*: the "beyond the fourth state."



VERSE 25:

Ārati

पञ्चधा प्रसरतश्चिदात्मनो ह्यान्तरस्य बहिरिन्द्रियाध्वना ।

सामरस्यमिह संविदात्मनारात्रिकं परमिदं समीरितम् ॥ २५ ॥

**pañcadhā prasarataś cidātmano hy āntarasya bahirindriyādhvanā |
sāmarasyam iha samvidātmanārātrikaṃ param idaṃ samīritam ॥ 25 ॥**

The ultimate [form of ritually] waving the flame [before the deity] is taught here as the union of the individual self, flowing outwardly through the fivefold channels of the sense faculties, with the nature of pure Consciousness.

Notes:

The flame is one of the most iconic items offered in any standard ritual worship and often consists in offering a lamp that holds five small flames, fueled by cotton wicks soaked in *ghee* (clarified butter). This type of five-flamed lamp is known as a *pañcapradīpa* and is pervasively found throughout Indic religious traditions that perform *pūjā*. The ritual waving of a flame before the deity is likely based on an ancient Vedic practice of offering a flame to remove negativities (and the maleficent effects of planets) and was eventually instituted into temple and *pūjā* culture.⁹⁷ The practice of offering a flame is commonly known as *ārati*, likely because the lamp offering was traditionally performed during the evening twilight hours to illuminate the deity before the days of electricity and hence took on the name *ārātrika*, as used in this verse. In this sense, showing the lamp to the various portions of the deity revealed their form and provided *darsana*, the sacred gaze of the deity.⁹⁸ The *ārati* ceremony has since been implemented into the three standard times of *pūjā* following the three *sandhyās* (see verse four), and performed during sponsored worship and special occasions.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the supreme form of offering *ārati* as the complete (and blissful) union of the individual self (as the lamp) experiencing the world through the five senses (of the five flames of the lamp), with pure consciousness.



⁹⁷ See Geslani 2018, 95.

⁹⁸ See verse thirty-four.

VERSE 26:

Mantrajapa

वाक् सहैव मनसा निवर्तते प्राप्यनिष्कलनिरञ्जनाद्यतः ।
तत्र निर्मनसि शब्दवर्जिते धाम्नि विश्रमणामुत्तमो जपः ॥ २६ ॥

**vāk sahaiva manasā nivartate prāpyaniṣkalanirañjanād yataḥ |
tatra nirmanasi śabdavarjite dhāmnī viśramaṇam uttamo japaḥ || 26 ||**

There is an undivided and pristine reality that should be realized, from which speech, together with the mind, turn away. The repetition of the mantra, in its ultimate form, is bringing [speech and the mind] to rest in that luminous reality that transcends the mind and conventional language.

Notes:

Mantra *japa* is the single most important aspect of any tantric *sādhana*. In the beginning and intermediate stages of practice, *japa* is practiced as the repeated pronunciation of a mantra hundreds of thousands, if not millions of times. In this mode of practice, *japa* follows the well-known threefold classification of how mantras are to be recited:

- *vācika*: spoken aloud
- *upāśū*: whispered
- *mānasika*: mentally intoned

Clarifying the deeper aspects, and fruits, of these three modes of recitation, the great *Śaivācārya* of Kashmir, Kṣemarāja (eleventh century C.E.) offers this commentary on the *Svacchandatantra*'s (2.146-147ab) classification of these levels:

*mānaso madhyamāyām vāci upāśūśabdau tu sūkṣmasthūlaprayatnāyām vaikharyām |
trayasyāsyā bhogaheturvam anyatrāpy uktaṁ madhyamo bhogamokṣākhyā upāśūḥ siddhidāyakaḥ |
vāciko bhūtaviṣajit saśabdaś cābhicārikaḥ ||*

"The mental (repetition of Mantra) takes place at the middle (level of) Speech, whereas (the forms of repetition that are) whispered and aloud take place at the level of corporeal (speech), which is subtle and gross, respectively. These three are the cause of worldly benefits. It is said elsewhere also: "The Middle (Speech) is called enjoyment (*bhoga*) and liberation. The whispered one bestows accomplishments. The Loud (repetition of Mantra), that conquers ghosts and poison, is magical (*abhicārika*)."⁹⁹

In this verse, Amṛtānanda takes *japa* a step further than recitation and suggests the supreme form of *japa* is a state of complete rest (*viśrāma*) in the pure luminous consciousness of the Self.

⁹⁹ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 V, 32, fn. 74.

As Amṛtānanda previously described in the first verse, consciousness is *svaprakāśa* (self luminous) and so when he describes mantra *japa* as a form of rest into pure luminosity, it is that "pristine reality," beyond speech and the mind, that he is referring to.

The practice of Amṛtānanda's supreme mantra *japa* consists in quieting the mental activities and fluctuations of the mind by allowing them to rest in pure consciousness. Critical to understanding this verse is that "speech, together with the mind" refers to the entire inner discourse of differentiated thoughts (*vikalpa*), that are often described as a kind of continuous mental chatter (*saṃjalpa*). In Śaiva tantra, language doesn't simply refer to the common mode of communication that humans think and speak in, but to a more expansive definition grounded in consciousness and encompassing four levels.

Amṛtānanda built on the teachings of his *guru-parampara*, and the brilliance of the fifth century C.E. Sanskrit grammarian, Bhartṛhari, and understood speech and language as *vāc*, the creative feminine power of language. By the time of Amṛtānanda, *Vāc* was understood to have four levels encompassing the transcendent level of *parā*, to the everyday level of spoken language known as *vaikharī*.¹⁰⁰ These four levels of language can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. *parā* - The supreme nondual dynamism of consciousness — the power of consciousness to signify, comprehend, and create awareness, meaning, differentiation, and reality.
2. *paśyantī* - The pure "seeing" or visionary level of language that is beyond the split between subject and object. *Paśyantī* is immediate apprehension before the division between *śabda* and *artha*, or a sound-unit and its meaning.
3. *madhyamā* - The "middle" level of language that is fully dependent upon duality and a split between a subject and an object. *Madhyamā* is unarticulated, silent, and the "mental" aspect of language that humans think in, but do not speak aloud.
4. *vaikharī* - The audible level of language that is articulated and spoken aloud, the level of language that humans generally communicate in, chant mantras in, and is commonly known as language.

Amṛtānanda's contemplation of the supreme form of mantra *japa* builds upon a large corpus of Śaiva teachings on the deeper aspects of mantric practice, inaugurated in a foundational revelation of nondual Śaivism, the *Śivasūtra*. Vasugupta, the recipient of the divinely revealed *sūtra*, recorded:

[the following centered text of *Śivasūtra* and Kṣemarāja's commentary is from Ben Williams' and Mrinal Kaul's forthcoming publication and translation of the same]

¹⁰⁰ Although Bhartṛhari only explicitly mentions three levels of language, several scholars have argued there is a fourth level implied in his concept of *śabdabrahman*, see Aklujkar 1970, 67-70. The idea that language exists in four parts, of which only one is audible to humans, stretches back to the *R̥gveda* (1.164, 10.71, 10.125) and is developed as *parā*, *paśyantī*, *madhyamā*, and *vaikharī* as early as the *Kāṭīkūlakramasadbhāva* (2.73, 2.89).

cittaṃ mantraḥ || 2.1 ||

Mind is mantra.

In the *Śivasūtravimarśinī*, Kṣemarāja comments on this aphorism in this way:

**cetyate vimṛśyate anena paraṃ tattvam iti cittaṃ
pūrṇasphurattāsatattvaprāsādapraṇavādivimarśarūpaṃ saṃvedanam |**

The mind is that by which ultimate reality is cognized, i.e. brought into awareness. That is a cognition whose nature is an awareness of Prāsāda, OM, and other [mantras] that have the nature of an all-encompassing vibration.

**tad eva mantryate guptam antar abhedena vimṛśyate parameśvararūpaṃ aneneti kṛtvā
mantraḥ |**

Mantra is that by which this very nature of ultimate reality is considered secretly, i.e., brought into awareness as internally undifferentiated.

**ata eva ca parasphurattātmakamananadharmatā
bhedamayasaṃsāraprasāmanātmakatrāṇadharmatā cāsya nirucyate |**

And for this reason, there is the etymological analysis of this [mantra] as having the property of “thinking” [man] which is really the supreme pulsation [of consciousness] and the property of “protecting” [tra] consisting of dispelling cyclical existence based in duality.

**atha ca mantradevatāvimarśaparātvena prāptatatsāmarasyam ārādhakacittam eva mantro
na tu vicitravarnasamghaṭṭanāmātrakam |**

Furthermore, it is simply the mind of the devotee, in virtue of being intent upon an awareness of the mantra deity—being fused with that [deity]—that is the mantra. It is not the case that the mantra is a mere conglomerate of various phonemes.

**yad uktaṃ śrīmatsarvajñānottare
uccāryamāṇā ye mantraṇā na mantraṃś cāpi tān viduḥ |
mohitā devagandharvā mithyājñānena gārvitāḥ || iti**

Since it is taught in the revered *Sarvajñānottara*:

Gods and Gandharvas, deluded and proud because of their false knowledge, do not fully grasp those mantras that are to be enunciated.

{...}

**[tatraiva saṃpraliyante śāntarūpā nirañjanāḥ |
sahārādhikacittena tena te śivadharmiṇaḥ ||
iti bhaṅgyā pratipāditam**

This is set forth by implication in *Spandakārika*

[Those immaculate mantras, whose nature is quiescent,] are aspects of Śiva.

[They completely dissolve into that sky of one’s own nature] along with the mind of the devotee.

The teaching that deeper awareness and contemplation of mantra can actually go beyond its syllabic construction is also found in tantras such as the *Vijñānabhairavatantra*, which proclaims a similar teaching:

*bhūyo bhūyaḥ pare bhāve bhāvanā bhāvyaḥ hi yā |
japaḥ so'tra svayaṃ nādo mantrātmā japyā īdṛśaḥ || 145 ||*

“Repeated (continuous) contemplation (*bhāvanā*) of the supreme state is the (real) repetition of Mantra (*japa*) here (in this tradition). The Sound (*nāda*) which (resounds spontaneously) by itself is Mantra (in the highest sense). Such is that which is to be recited.”¹⁰¹

Somānanda, the founder of the influential Pratyabhijñā school of nondual Śaivism, teaches in the seventh chapter of his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*:

*aniruddho japo'sty eva sarvāvasthāsv asau japaḥ |
nānakāraiḥ sadā kurvann adayan sarvavastugaḥ || 85 ||
abhyāsenāsmi so'py atra japaḥ parama ucyate |
saṃkalpāñ janayann asmi sthitaḥ śabdān ato mukhe || 86 ||
so hi nāmajapo jñeyaḥ satyādis trividho hi saḥ |
na me bandho na me mokṣas tau malatvena saṃsthitau || 87 ||*

“Uninterrupted repetition of mantra (*japa*) is that repetition that (persists) in all states, doing it constantly in many forms and arising present in all things (85). The supreme (form of) the repetition of mantra (is attained) by the practice ‘I am here and so is He.’ ‘I abide (here) generating intentions and thus (also) words in (my) mouth’ (86). That should be known to be the repetition of (Śiva’s) name and as truth (*satya*) etc.; it is of three kinds, namely (the notion that) ‘I am not bound’, ‘I am not liberated’ and ‘those two (bondage and liberation) are the impurities (of ignorance that sullies the soul)’ (87).”¹⁰²

One generation later, and within the same Pratyabhijñā lineage, the brilliant *ācārya*, Utpaladeva, echoed the importance of *japa* in the third song of his *Śivastotrāvalī*:

*matparam nāsti tatrāpi jāpako 'smi tadaikyataḥ |
tattvena japa ityakṣamālayā disasi kvacit || 17 ||*

“Higher than Me there is nothing, yet even then I practice *japa*. This shows that *japa* is but concentration on absolute oneness. Thus you instruct your devotees, as well as the whole world through your *akṣamālā*. In essence this is what constitutes *japa*.”¹⁰³

Two generations later, and still within the same Pratyabhijñā lineage, Abhinavagupta teaches in the first chapter of his *Tantrāloka*:

¹⁰¹ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 III, 297-8, fn. 781.

¹⁰² Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, III, 144, fn. 359.

¹⁰³ Translation by Rhodes-Bailly 1987, 41.

tatsvarūpaṃ japaḥ prokto bhāvābhāvapadacyutaḥ || 1.89 ||

"The repeated recitation of Mantra that is free of the polarities of Being and Nonbeing, is said to be His own nature."¹⁰⁴

Abhinavagupta further explains in the fourth chapter that for the accomplished practitioner, mantra *japa* is automatic:

*akṛtimaitad dhrdayārūḍho yat kiñcid ācaret |
prāṇyād vā mṛśate vāpi sa sarvo 'sya japo mataḥ || 4.194 ||*

"Whatever one who is established in this uncreated Heart does or (however) he breathes or reflects, is all considered to be his repetition of Mantra (*japa*)."¹⁰⁵

Later, in the twenty-ninth chapter, Abhinavagupta presents the teachings of his Trika Kaula guru, Śambhunātha, and clarifies a subtle point about how mantra *japa* is to be practiced as the subtle resonance of mantra:

*japaḥ sañjalpavṛttis ca nādāmarśasvarūpiṇī |
tadāmṛṣṭasya cidvahnau layo homaḥ prakīrtitaḥ || 29.93 ||*

"Quietly or audible repetition [of the mantra] is, in its true nature, [simply] awareness of [the mantra's] innate resonance. Oblation is revealed [in this tradition as] the dissolution of the one who is aware of that [resonance] in the fire of consciousness."¹⁰⁶

Abhinavagupta revisits mantra *japa* in several other places in his works including within his *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarsinī* where he expounds how the supreme practice of mantra *japa* is similar to an instantaneous realization:

*namu yadi śabdāvartanam japas tadavicchinne kālabhedam asṛṣati paravāgrūpe katham
japavyavahāraḥ | āvartanasya hi vicchidya vicchidya yadudīranam tad eva rūpam | parāvasthāyām iti
sakṛdvibhātatavat sakṛdāvartanam eva tatra japa iti yāvad āvartanavyavahāraś ca tatrodāyamātre |
sakṛcchabdena tu ekavāravācinā sadārthaparyāyeṇa vā vicchedaśaṅkā nivāritā yathoktam prāk
svarasoditā iti |*

"Surely, if the repetition of Mantra is a continuous round of words, how can the activity of repetition of Mantra take place within the nature of Supreme Speech which, being undivided, is not affected by temporal division? The utterance of a round (of sounds) takes place by separating (one sound from another) repeatedly, and that itself is its nature (*rūpa*). In the supreme state, the repetition takes place once (atemporally) like a single flash (*sakṛdvibhātatava*), and repetition of Mantra is like a continuously repeated action there when it has just arisen. The word 'once', that

¹⁰⁴ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, I, 239.

¹⁰⁵ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, III, 297.

¹⁰⁶ Translation by Ben Williams.

denotes (something that takes) place a single time or one that is synonymous with 'always', removes the doubt that there is a break. As was said before, '(Speech) arises spontaneously'.¹⁰⁷

Within the early Śrīvidyā tradition, Śivānanda teaches in his *Subhagodaya*:

*tato mauni viśuddhātmā hṛdā vidyām prasannadhīḥ |
ababirmānaso yogī yāgabūmiṃ attho viśet || 8 ||*

“Thereafter in silence, the self purified, the intellect tranquil, the mind not engrossed in any outward thought, the yogin should enter the place for worship while contemplating the mantra in his heart.”¹⁰⁸

Śivānanda further contemplates mantra *japa* in the *Subhagodayāvāsānā*:

*vimṛśāmi mahāntām saṃvitsrotamahānadīm |
janīpālanadharmeṇa jāpenāntarmukhātmanā || 56 ||*

“I contemplate that supreme “I”, a great river of all streams of Awareness, through inward-focused Japa that has the characteristic of both creation and sustenance.”¹⁰⁹

Some two hundred years later, our author, Amṛtānanda, teaches in his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhṛdayatantra*:

*saṃyamendriyasaṃcāraṃ proccarennādamāntaram |
eṣa eva japaḥ prokto na tu bāhyajapo japaḥ ||*

“Subduing the movement of the *indriyas* [senses], produce the internal resonance of the mantra. This is taught as [the real] *japa*; external *japa* is not *japa*.”¹¹⁰

Approximately four hundred years later, the prolific Śrīvidyācārya, Bhaskararāya Makhin, cited Amṛtānanda's commentary in his own *Setubandha* commentary on the *Nityāṣoḍaśīkārṇavatāntra*, thereby solidifying the importance of this verse through the centuries and generations.

Swami Lakshmanjoo Maharaj, the last living master of what he described as, "Kashmir Śaivism" taught and explained the deeper aspects of mantra *japa* as it is practiced according to his tradition as follows:

"In *Āṇavopāya* [the Individual Means] you must be aware [of the centre] between two breaths Move in and out with awareness. (True repeated) recitation (of Mantra) is [the practice of] observing one object and then another object [mindfully]. These are the beads of the rosary of this *japa* [repeated recitation of Mantra]. *Śakti* is the *sūtra* [thread] that threads through the beads. The thread is the reality of the beads. It is away from *bhāva* [Being] and *abhāva* [Nonbeing] (one bead and another bead). Observe this universe through every sensation of

¹⁰⁷ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, I, 240 fn. 711.

¹⁰⁸ Translation by Ben Williams.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Translation by Brian Campbell.

sound and taste etc. This is *Śāktopāya* [Empowered Means]. This is real *japa*. The {repetition of Mantra} (called) *pañcalakṣa* [*japa*] literally of 500,000 repetitions] [actually consists of mindfulness of the] five points of awareness ranging from *śṛṣṭi* [emanation through to persistence, withdrawal, obscuration up] to *anugraha* [grace]. *Lakṣa* means centre of awareness. It does not mean {the number} 100,000."¹¹¹



¹¹¹ As cited in Dyczkowski 2023, I, 237-8, fn. 706.

VERSE 27:

Darpaṇa

बिम्बितं स्फुरति यत्र संविदो रूपमान्तरमिदन्तया बहिः ।
विश्वमेतदखिलं चराचरं दर्पणं हृदयदर्पणं परम् ॥ २७ ॥

**bimbitaṃ sphurati yatra saṃvido rūpaṃ āntaram idantayā bahiḥ ।
viśvam etad akhilaṃ carācaram darpaṇaṃ hṛdayadarpaṇaṃ param ॥ 27 ॥**

The mirror [ritually presented to the Goddess] is the mirror of the Heart. In that [true mirror of the Heart] this entire universe of sentient beings and inanimate objects is reflected. [Although this mirror of the heart] is the innermost nature of consciousness, it radiantly manifests outwardly as the objective world.

Notes:

Offering a mirror to the deity is an ancient and deeply symbolic act permeated with philosophical and magical overtones. While not an offering in standard forms of ritual, such as the *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā* (sixteen offerings), the mirror is commonly used in extended and specialized forms of worship—including during the *catuṣṣaṣṭi upacāra pūjā* (sixty-four offerings) performed within the *Lalitākrama*¹¹² of Śrīvidyā *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* and during *prāṇapratīṣṭhā* (the life-giving consecration ceremony of a *mūrti* or statue of a deity). Mirrors are also used in *pūjā* as accessories to help perform specific rituals such as *abhiṣeka* (bathing the deity) when the actual *mūrti* cannot be bathed. In this case, a mirror is set up and the deity's reflection within the mirror is bathed in its place.

In its most basic sense, the mirror is offered so the deity can see themselves and all of the fine attire, gifts, and jewelry they've been given in the previous steps of the worship. Like many items offered in *pūjā*, the presentation of the mirror is based upon royal services given to the king, and later, the honored guest. Mirrors are considered to be an auspicious item and have a long literary, religious, and cultural history in ancient India extending back to the *Atharvaveda Pariśiṣṭas*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and many other sources. In Vedic rituals performed for the welfare of the king, it is described that looking directly into a mirror helped eliminate negativities and "bad luck." In specialized forms of tantric *sādhana*, mirrors can even act as a substratum to invoke deities for worship. Mirrors are also used as catoptromancy devices for divination, scrying, and other forms or "mirror magic" prevalent in South Asia and the world over.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda understands the offering of the mirror as a deep contemplation on the nature of consciousness, within which reality is reflected, and out of which the entirety of the world of objectivity is experienced.

¹¹² *aiṃ hrīm śrīm lalitāyai darpaṇam kalpayāmi namaḥ*

Debates on mirrors, reflections, and the nature reality has a long history in Indic religious discourses, including within Nyāya, Buddhism, Mīmāṃsā, and Śaivism—particularly within Pratyabhijñā, the Śaiva nondual school of "recognition," a highly influential development of nondual Śaivism championed by Utpaladeva of tenth century C.E. Kashmir.¹¹³

The immediate background to more comprehensively understanding Amṛtānanda's verse on the mirror involves a brief overview of three main schools of thought concerning the nature, appearance, and reality of cosmic manifestation.

1. *pariṇāmavāda* - The doctrine of transformation that views the world as a real transformation of brahman, held by several foundation commentaries on the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*¹¹⁴ and early exponents of Vedānta.
2. *vivartavāda* - The doctrine that the world is illusory, a mistaken appearance, or an 'unreal' transformation of brahman. This view was championed by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya and many of his followers.
3. *pratibimbavāda* or *ābhāsavāda* - The doctrine of reflection that views consciousness as projecting, onto itself, its own reality. *Ābhāsavāda* explains how Paramaśiva, due to his pure innate freedom *svātantrya śakti*, projects the multiplicity of the manifested world by becoming the mirror in which reality is experienced.

Light, reflection, mirroring, and counterparts are key concepts in nondual Śaivism and Amṛtānanda plays with these established doctrines in his own verse on the mirror of consciousness. Amṛtānanda builds on the highly developed understanding of Śaiva tantra expounded by the nondual Śaiva Kashmir *ācāryas* that embraced aspects of the *pratibimbavāda* doctrine, therefore giving ontological validity to reflections in a mirror, while making the qualification that reflections in a mirror are still just that—bound to a mirror and do not have independent realities in and of themselves. Jayaratha clarifies in his commentary on *Tantrāloka* (3.15) that those who mistake their face in the mirror for the real thing, "lack intelligence, such as children (and fools)."¹¹⁵

The mirror is, in many ways, a profound way to speak about the reflective power of consciousness, but the *Śaivācāryas* of Kashmir were also quick to point out that unlike a mirror, consciousness actively participates in its own reflection. Their point was that consciousness is dynamic and, unlike a common mirror that only reflects a pre-existing reality, or an object that is in close proximity to its reflective surface, consciousness can even reflect something which appears to be other than itself. In this sense, consciousness is able to see itself in innumerable forms.

¹¹³ See Torella and Bäumer, 2016.

¹¹⁴ See Aciri 2021, 547.

¹¹⁵ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, II, 81.

Inaugurating the nondual Śaiva understanding that consciousness is more than simply a reflection, Utpaladeva teaches:

*svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarsam vidur anyathā |
prakāśo 'rthoparakto 'pi sphaṭikādījadopamaḥ ||*

"[The wise know] that the nature of manifestation is a realization (*vimarsā*); otherwise the manifesting [consciousness] (*prakāśa*), while assuming the appearance of objects, would be similar to an insentient entity such as a piece of crystal."¹¹⁶

Two generations later, and building on the brilliance of his Pratyabhijñā *guru parampara*, Abhinavagupta systematized the teachings on the mirror of consciousness, the nature of reflection, and what differentiates a 'lifeless' mirror that simply reflects images from the dynamic power of consciousness:

*ittham viśvam idaṃ nāthe bhairavīyacidambare |
pratibimbam alaṃ svacche na khalv anyaprasādataḥ || 65 ||
ananyāpekṣitā yāsya viśvātmatvaṃ prati prabhoh |
tām parām pratibhām devīm samgirante hy anuttarām || 66 ||*

"So this universe is a reflection in the Lord, in the perfectly reflective void of Bhairava's consciousness, [and arises] under the influence of nothing outside [that consciousness]. This ability of the Lord to embody himself as the universe without drawing on anything outside [his own nature] is the supreme goddess that [our masters] call 'creativity' (*pratibhām*), 'the feminine ultimate' (*anuttarām*)."¹¹⁷

Summarizing the main point about the active participation of the mirror of consciousness as compared to a mere reflection, Abhinavagupta, in his *Tantrasāra*, succinctly clarifies:

*antarvibhāti sakalaṃ jagadātmanīha yadvad vicitraracanā makurāntarāle |
bodhaḥ paraṃ nijavimarśarasānuvṛtṭyā viśvaṃ parāmṛśati no makuras tathā tu ||*

"The entire world shines here within the Self, just as a complex creation appears in a single mirror. However, Awareness articulates & touches the universe [of its experience] in accordance with the flavor (*rasa*) of its own self-awareness—no mirror can do that."¹¹⁸

Tantric teachings on the doctrine of reflection and the mirror of consciousness continued to develop within the Śrīvidyā tradition, building on the genius of the Pratyabhijñā doctrine, but spoken of in the context of its own deity-specific revelation of Tripurasundarī.

The *Yoginīhrdayatantra* teaches:

*cidātmabhittau viśvasya prakāśāmarśane yadā |
karoti svecchayā pūrṇavicikīrṣāsamanvitā || 1.56 ||*

¹¹⁶ Translation by Ratié 2021, 94, fn. 280.

¹¹⁷ Translation by Sanderson 2005, 98.

¹¹⁸ Translation by Wallis 2019.

"When [the supreme radiance] is endowed with desire to completely transform by her own will, she creates manifestation and contemplation of the universe on the screen of the self, which is consciousness."¹¹⁹

The *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* describes Tripurasundarī as:

*sā jayati śaktirādyā nijasukhamayanirupamākārā |
bhāvīcarācarabījaṃ śivarūpavimarśanirmalādarśaḥ || 2 ||*

"She, the Primordial Shakti who excels all and who in Her own true nature is eternal limitless Bliss, is the seed (Bīja, that is, source or cause) of all moving and motionless things which are to be, and is the pure mirror in which Śiva experiences Himself."¹²⁰

Solidifying the importance of the doctrine of reflection and the teaching of the mirror within Śrīvidyā, the *Jñānakhaṇḍa* of the *Tripurārahasya* teaches:

*svato na bhāsate kvāpi bhāsate ca cidāśrayāt |
ato jagat syādādarśapratibimbāsusaṃmitam || 11.61 ||
citirvicitrā'nyabhāvairuparaktāpi bhāsini |
svarūpādapracyuṭaiṅvādarsāvalleśato'pi hi || 11.62 ||
darpaṇapratibimbānāṃ darpaṇānanyatā yathā |
cidātmāpratibimbānāṃ cidātmānanyatā tathā || 11.63 ||
darpaṇe pratibimbo hi bimbabeturnirūpitaḥ |
citiḥ svātantryabetuḥ syāt pratibimbo hi jāgataḥ || 11.64 ||*

"The world does not shine (or manifest) by itself anywhere. It manifests on account of dependence on Consciousness. Therefore, the world must be very much like the reflection in a mirror. The wonderful Consciousness, like a mirror, is endowed with reflection quite without deviating from its own natural state even a little, though coloured by other natures (or objects reflected by it). As there is no difference from the mirror for reflections in a mirror, so, there is no difference from the Consciousness that is the Self for reflections in the Consciousness that is the Self. It is seen that the reflection in a mirror has an object as its cause. The reflection of the world in Pure Consciousness should indeed have the freedom of Will (of Pure Consciousness) as its cause."¹²¹



¹¹⁹ Translation by Golovkova 2019, 113.

¹²⁰ Translation by Woodroffe 1922, 5.

¹²¹ Translation by Sāmvid 2000, 179-180.

VERSE 28:

Chatra

छादयन्निखलमात्मसंविदा त्रायते त्रिविधतापसंकटात् ।
यच्चिदम्बरगतं शिवात्मकं छत्रमत्र कमलं सुधामलम् ॥ २८ ॥

**chādayan nikhalam ātmasaṃvidā trāyate trividhatāpasamkaṭāt |
yac cidambaragataṃ śivātmakaṃ chatram atra kamalaṃ sudhāmalam || 28 ||**

In this [perspective], the ritual parasol, a lotus as pure as nectar, is the reality of Śiva that spans the sky of Consciousness. Providing shelter [*cha*] with the awareness of the Self, it protects [*tra*] all beings [like an umbrella offering shade] from the perils of the three types of suffering.

Notes:

Offering the *chatra* (the umbrella- parasol) is a traditional gift that shades and protects the recipient from the sun. The *chatra* has deep symbolic ties to royal power and is considered to be an offering for the most-honored and important guests. The *chatra* usually has a thin handle and extends much higher than a contemporary "umbrella" and is made with very fine fabric, ornately decorated with embellishments and fine weaving, and is an offering that symbolizes protection and opulence. Vāmana is usually depicted carrying a *chatra* and it is also associated with the Vedic deity, Varuṇa.

Like the mirror, the *chatra* is not an offering prevalent in standard forms of worship, but is included in the *Lalitākrama* of Śrīcakra *Navāvaraṇa pūjā*,¹²² and in many contemporary *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* manuals (likely following Nedimindi Subramania Iyer's highly influential publication, 'Śrīvidyā Saparyā Paddhati') where it actually precedes the offering of the mirror, even though in the *Cidvilāsastava* the mirror is treated first.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the nature of the *chatra* as a great and expansive lotus of self-awareness that encompasses the entire sky of consciousness, and protects the aspirant from the scorching sun of the three types of suffering, taught in the *Vidyēśvarasambhitā* (18.101-106) of the *Śivapurāṇa* to be related to:¹²³

- *ādhyātmika* - suffering in one's own body, such as sickness.
- *ādhibhautika* - suffering caused from the outside world and extraneous sources, such as a tree falling in nature.
- *ādhidaivika* - unavoidable suffering such as unfavorable influences from the *navagrahas* (nine planets), karmic repercussions, and "fate."



¹²² *aiṃ brīm śrīm lalitāyai chatram kalpayāmi namaḥ.*

¹²³ Shastri 1950, 126-127.

VERSE 29:

Cāmara

पञ्चधा स्फुरणमेव संविदश्चामरं विविधचारुचङ्कमम् ।

विश्वदृग्लयविचित्रनिर्मितः स्वेक्षणक्षणभवो भवस्तवः ॥ २९ ॥

**pañcadhā sphuraṇam eva saṃvidaś cāmaraṃ vividhacārucaṅkramam |
viśvadr̥glayavicitrānirmitaḥ svekṣaṇakṣaṇabhavo bhavastavaḥ || 29 ||**

The royal whisk, which has diverse and lovely waving motions, is the shimmering of innate awareness through the five [senses]. The song of praise offered to Śiva is when momentary acts of [devotional] seeing, beautifully fashioned, [all] dissolve into an all-encompassing vision [of reality].

Notes:

The offering of the *cāmara* (the royal whisk) is an ancient Vedic ritual that signifies sovereignty, regality, and honor. The *cāmara* is usually decorated along its handle and at its end are tightly wound the long white tail hairs of a yak, or a horse. The *cāmara* was traditionally used to keep flies away, as well as a method to provide relief from the heat in hot climates. The ritual offering and waving of the *cāmara* includes stylized waving movements that "fan" the deity with soft flowing patterns that culminate in stylized circling and spinning motions. In standard forms of worship, the *cāmara* is usually offered during the *ārati* ceremony,¹²⁴ which includes offering a number of items to the deity while singing devotional songs and playing music. Similar to the offering of the *darpaṇa*¹²⁵ and the *chatra*,¹²⁶ the *cāmara* is also offered in the *Lalitākrama* of *Navāvaraṇa pūjā*.¹²⁷

In this verse, Amṛtānanda interprets the supreme form of offering the *cāmara* as "the shimmering of innate awareness," or the dance of consciousness that plays in the world of objectivity through the five senses. In the second half of the verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the devotional songs of praise that would normally accompany the offering amidst the hustle and bustle of ritual activities, as the experience of a momentary glance (*darśana*) of the deity, which dissolves the entire ritual into an all encompassing and universal vision of pure undifferentiated consciousness.



¹²⁴ See verse twenty-five.

¹²⁵ See verse twenty-seven.

¹²⁶ See verse twenty-eight.

¹²⁷ *aiṃ hrīm śrīm lalitāyai cāmarayugalaṃ kalpayāmi namaḥ*

VERSE 30:

Ātmanivedana

एषणात्रयमयस्य वर्ष्मणस्तत्त्वसंचयमयस्य संविदि ।

धाम्नि तत्त्वसमतीतसत्त्वके स्वात्मनः खलु निवेदनं मतम् ॥ ३० ॥

eṣaṇātrayamayasya varṣmaṇas tattvasaṃcayamayasya saṃvidi |
dhāmnī tattvasamatītasattvake svātmanaḥ khalu nivedanaṃ matam || 30 ||

Offering oneself should be understood as surrendering the “body,” which encompasses the collection of the reality levels with its threefold desires, into pure consciousness, that reality whose existence completely transcends all levels of reality.

Notes:

The offering of one's self, known as *ātmanivedana*, is one of the more contemplative offerings in *pūjā* and is often synchronized with offering *pradakṣiṇā* (circumambulation) and *namaskāra* (salutations) as culminating steps in many contemporary forms of ritual worship. *Ātmanivedana* is a key concept and practice within the Bhakti-Vedānta traditions and is highlighted by the sage, Nārada, in his *Bhaktisūtra*, as the ninth form of *bhakti*.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda understands *ātmanivedana* to consist of offering "the body" which is constituted by the thirty-six *tattvas*, along with the three *eṣaṇās* (innate desires) into pure consciousness—which exist beyond *tattvas* and desires. According to the *Carakasambhitā* (*Sūtrasthāna* 11.3), these are the three *eṣaṇās*:

- *prāṇaiṣaṇā*: the pursuit and desire of life
- *dhanaṣaṇā*: the pursuit and desire of wealth
- *paralokaiṣaṇā*: the pursuit and desire for the next world, or heaven.

The term *eṣaṇā* also appears in the twenty-ninth name (*eṣaṇārahitāḍṛtā*) of the *Lalitātrīsati* which suggests Tripurasundarī is worshiped by those who are free of desires. Amṛtānanda's supreme contemplation of *ātmanivedana* also subtly hints at the practice of sequentially offering (and transcending) all the *tattvas* to "that reality whose existence completely transcends all levels of reality," who is none other than Tripurasundarī, the thirty-seventh *tattva*.



VERSE 31:

Guruprasāda

स्वप्रकाशवपुषा गुरुः शिवो यः प्रसीदति पदार्थमस्तके ।

तत्प्रसादमिह तत्त्वशोधनं प्राप्य मोदमुपयाति भावुकः ॥ ३१ ॥

svaprakāśavapuṣā guruḥ śivo yaḥ prasīdati padārthamastake |

tatprasādam iha tattvaśodhanaṃ prāpya modam upayāti bhāvukaḥ || 31 ||

The Guru is Śiva who offers blessings in the form of the innate light of Consciousness upon the head of all beings. The initiate who receives that blessing of such a [Guru], which purifies all levels of reality, is filled with delight.

Notes:

Śiva is the supreme guru who blesses the entirety of manifestation and all living beings with the grace of consciousness and its awesome power (*vimarśaśakti*) to be aware of itself. The guru who initiates the disciple is the vehicle for the grace of Śiva and the disciple who receives the blessing to recognize their own innate light of consciousness is said to be truly blessed. Amṛtānanda teaches that such a realization purifies all the *tattvas* and fills the aspirant with delight.



VERSE 32:

Homa & Pavitra

पाशजालकमिदं परं पशोर्नाशकारणमतो मतं हविः ।

तत्त्वतो निजगुरोर्निरीक्षणात्प्राप्यते तदमलं पवित्रम् ॥ ३२ ॥

**pāśajālakam idaṃ paraṃ paśor nāśakāraṇam ato mataṃ haviḥ |
tattvato nijaguror nirīkṣaṇāt prāpyate tad amalaṃ pavitraṃ || 32 ||**

A bound individual is ensnared by an array of limitations. For this reason, the oblation to the fire (*haviḥ*) is understood [here] as bringing about their dissolution. That immaculate purifying offering (*pavitra*) is truly realized by the glance of one's own Guru.

Notes:

The Vedic sacrificial fire ritual, known as *yajña*, is one of the most enduring forms of ritual worship in the Indic religious universe and is continually highlighted within the Vedic, and connected, religious traditions. In its most common tantric form, the fire ritual is centered on constructing a mantric body of the deity through invoking their various aspects and powers, as well as their attendant deities, into a sacred fire which either embodies, or acts as an intermediary to, the deity being principally worshiped. Items and substances such as *ghee* and uncooked rice are offered into the fire along with mantras often ending in *svāhā*. This all-important ritual takes on a number of forms throughout the millennia, including simplified versions called *homa* that continue to be popular methods of deity worship in and of themselves.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates *homa* as part of the larger worship of the deity, and suggests the true *homa* fire is the offering and burning of all the limitations that bind an individual. In the second half of the verse, Amṛtānanda explains how the powerful glance of one's guru is similar to the purifying effects of *kuśa* grass, also known as *pavitra*, commonly used in *homa* to purify substances (such as *ghee*) before being offered into the fire.

Amṛtānanda's supreme contemplation on the fire ritual builds on a large corpus of Śaiva teachings on the deeper meaning of *homa*, perhaps inaugurated with the foundational *Vijñānabhairavatantra* that teaches:

*mahāsūnyālaye vahnau bhūtākṣaviṣayādikam |
bhūyate manasā sārḍham sa homas cetanā sruvā || 149 ||*

"When in the fire of Supreme Reality in which even the highest void is dissolved, the five elements, the senses, the objects of the senses along with the mind (whose characteristic is dichotomizing thought-constructs) are poured, with *cetanā* as the ladle, then that is the real *homa*."¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Translation by Singh 1979, 137.

Building on the *Vijñānabbhairavatantra*, Somānanda teaches in the seventh chapter of his *Śivadr̥ṣṭi*:

sarvabhāvāḥ śivākārā antarbhūtāḥ śivānale || 90 ||
so'haṃ śivaḥ sutrpto'smi homa ity uditāḥ paraḥ |
atrākāre na yan me' sti tad ākārāntare 'sti me || 91 ||
tasmād asmi nirākāṅkṣas tr̥ptyānyo homa īdr̥śaḥ |

"All things are forms of Śiva and they are within Śiva's fire. I am He--Śiva who is well content!" This is said to be the supreme offering to the fire (*homa*) (90cd-91ab). What is not mine in (this) form here, is mine in (some) other form. Thus, because of the contentment (I feel), I am devoid of craving. Such is the offering to the fire (91cd-92ab)."¹²⁹

In the fourth chapter of his *Tantrasāra*, Abhinavagupta teaches:

sarveṣāṃ paramēśvara eva sthitiḥ nānyat vyatiriktam asti iti vikalparūḍhisiddhaye paramēśvara eva sarvabhāvārpanaṃ yāgaḥ . [...] sarve bhāvāḥ paramēśvaratejomayā iti rūḍhavigalpaprap̥tyai paramēśasamvidanalatejasi samastabhāvagrāsa-rasikatābbhimate tattejomātrāvāśeṣatvasahasamastabhāvavilāpanaṃ homaḥ

"Ritual offerings to the deity (*yāgaḥ*) is [mentally] offering all things into Supreme Śiva in order to perfect the mental conviction that all things ultimately abide in Śiva and that nothing exists independent of That...Ritual oblation to the fire (*homaḥ*) [in its higher form] is dissolving of all that exists into the radiant fire of Consciousness of Supreme Śiva until all that remains is that radiance. [This fire of Consciousness] is understood as the aesthetic rapture of devouring all things. That [*homaḥ*] is practiced in order to realize the deep conviction that everything is one with the light of Śiva."¹³⁰

From within the Śrīvidyā tradition, there are several examples of the deeper meaning of *homa*, such as this verse from the third chapter (3.107) of the *Yoginīhr̥dayatantra*:

ahantedantayor aikyam unmanyāṃ sruci kalpitam |
mathanodrekasambhūtaṃ vasturūpaṃ mahāhaviḥ || 107 ||
hutvā hutvā svayam caivam sahajānandavirahaḥ ||

"Conceiving the unity of I-ness and objectivity as being in the ladle *sruc*, which is *umnanī*, what is born there through the intensity of the rubbing is the great oblation. Pouring and pouring himself the oblation, [the adept] becomes spontaneous bliss."¹³¹

Professor André Padoux clarifies this verse in his translation of the *Yoginīhr̥dayatantra*:

"The ladle *sruc* is one of the two ladles used since Vedic times for offering the ritual oblation in the fire, the *homa*. This ladle, in the present case, is not a material object. It is the "transmental" (*unmanī*), the highest plane of consciousness. It is on this level that the oblation

¹²⁹ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, III, 145, fn. 359.

¹³⁰ Translation by Ben Williams.

¹³¹ Translation by Padoux 2013, 123-4.

takes place; it consists of pouring (in spirit) all the aspects of the cosmic manifestation in the central (both human and divine) void of consciousness. This is why a "spontaneous" (that is, uncaused) bliss arises in the officiating adept. The *Dīpikā* says: "Having poured again and again the full oblation (both human and divine) of clarified butter, which in reality is the total fusion of the objectivity and the I-ness (*abhāntā*) born from the rubbing of the *araṇis* of the mantra, [one reaches] the supreme fulgurating bliss. Such is the internal oblation."¹³²

Concerning the esoteric contemplation of *homa*, Śivānanda teaches in his *Subhagodayavāsana*:

prakāśaikaghane dhāmnī vikalpaprasarādikān |
nikṣipāmy arcanadvārā vahnāv iva ghṛtābutīḥ || 37 ||

"As an offering, I cast the outward flow of conceptual thoughts into the radiance of the one undifferentiated light of consciousness, just like liquid offerings of ghee into fire."¹³³



¹³² Translation by Padoux 2013, 123-4.

¹³³ Translation by Ben Williams.

VERSE 33:

Damanakārpaṇa

वेद्यराशिदमनेन विश्वतो निर्विकल्पमयवासनोल्बणम् ।

चित्तमेव दमनं शिवे ऽमुकस्यार्पणं दमनकार्पणं परम् ॥ ३३ ॥

vedyaráśīdamanena víśvato nirvikalpamayavāsanolbaṇam |

cittam eva damaṇam śive ‘mukasyārpaṇam damanakārpaṇam param || 33 ||

Through completely calming (*damaṇa*) the diverse multitude of objects of awareness, the mind itself, with its layers of mental tendencies free of conceptual distinctions, becomes tranquil in Śiva. Such a ritual offering of that [mind] is the supreme rite of the *damanaka* offering [in honor of Kāmadeva].

Notes:

The *damanaka* tree is associated with Kāmadeva and its flowers are offered in several types of special *pūjās*, used in Āyurvedic medicine, and are considered to be a potent aphrodisiac. On special occasions, such as *Kāmatrayodaśī*, and other festival days for Kāmadeva, he is worshiped with *damanaka* flowers. The worship of Kāmadeva is often performed with the aim to conceive children, repair relations between lovers, and other *kāmya* rituals for the satisfaction of desires. Several texts including the *Agnipurāṇa* and *Gāruḍapurāṇa* speak of special Kāmadeva *pūjās* and vows (*vrata*) undertaken by people who want to win his favor.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda contemplates the supreme form of the *damanakārpaṇa*—a specialized *pūjā* found within the Śrīvidyā tradition. The key to understanding how *damanaka* worship is a part of Śrīvidyā is found in the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Jñānārṇavatāntra*, which relates a story about a special boon given to Rati after her husband, Kāmadeva, was burned to ashes by Śiva. After hearing of her husband's death at the hands of Śiva, Rati began crying profusely and everywhere her tears fell, a *damanaka* plant sprouted. The flowers emitted such a sweet scent that Śiva decided to give Rati a boon to revive her dead husband. The chapter continues to describe how *damanakārpaṇa* is performed with a special set of mantras and a *maṇḍala* in honor of Kāmadeva and that it should be performed to ensure the efficacy of a practitioner's *sādhana* throughout the entire year.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that just as offering a *damanaka* leaf (born from mental anguish and turmoil) in the special *damanakārpaṇa* will create abundance and efficacy of one's *sādhana*, in a similar way, the calming of the mind (specifically its thought-forms known as *vikalpas*) will lead to tranquility in pure Śiva consciousness.



VERSE 34:

Dīkṣā

दीयते परशिवैक्यभावना क्षीयते सकलपापसंचयः ।

येन चिज्जलधिपारसेतुना दीक्षणं गुरुकटाक्षवीक्षणम् ॥ ३४ ॥

**dīyate paraśivaikyabhāvanā kṣīyate sakalapāpasamcayaḥ |
yena cijjaladhipāraresetunā dīkṣaṇam gurukaṭākṣavīkṣaṇam || 34 ||**

The rite of initiation, [which is ultimately nothing but the] sudden glance of the Guru, is a bridge over the ocean of Consciousness that bestows (*dīyate*) meditation on one's unity with Supreme Śiva and dissolves (*kṣīyate*) the entire mass of negativities.

Notes:

Dīkṣā (initiation) is the single most important aspect of any tantric tradition. *Dīkṣā* grants the practitioner the qualification (*adbikāra*) to perform tantric practice and recite the sacred mantra of the deity. Many tantras proclaim that without *dīkṣā*, an aspirant has no competency, or authority to perform *sādhana*. In addition to welcoming a practitioner into a closed, and often secret, community, tantric traditions also teach that *dīkṣā* is actually a direct "subtle" experience of the supreme grace (unity) of the deity and the aspirant—given through the initiatory power flowing through the guru.

Kaula tantra broke away from more mainstream and orthodox Śaiva traditions in several notable ways, but perhaps most importantly by allowing people from nearly all walks of life to receive *dīkṣā*. Historically, Śrīvidyā had a contested relationship with this issue with some lineages granting initiation to everyone and others reserving it only for brahmin males. The situation today remains vexed with proponents on both sides of the argument and very little common ground. This deeply unfortunate predicament is fostered by Śrīvidyā's continual reduction to an *upāsana paddhati*, rather than a vibrant Kaula *darśana*, at the hands of those who proclaim Śrīvidyā has no deeper *jñāna* and is only the ritual wing that complements the nondual doctrine of Advaita Vedānta.

Regardless, *tāntrika dīkṣā* solidifies the relationship between the aspirant, the guru, and the deity through a mystical bond empowered by grace of the deity and the guru lineage. The competency and authority to bestow such an initiation stems from a number of sources including the teacher's identification with the deity through ritual, pervasion by the deity through *āveśa* (trance-like possession), and sometimes simply permission from the *guru parampara*. In a traditional sense, receiving *dīkṣā* is much more than just an initiatory rite into a new religious tradition, but a transformative experience that, according to many traditions, actually guarantees spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*), whether in life or at the time of death.

The various types and modes of *dīkṣā* vary greatly according to the specific tantric tradition in question, as well as the caliber and desire of the guru and the disciple who is seeking initiation. In some of its most powerfully attested forms, *dīkṣā* happens quite informally through the direct gaze of an accomplished guru. In this way, the gaze of the guru is a powerful method of transferring awakened consciousness, destroying karma, imparting initiation, and transmitting knowledge in many Kaula lineages, perhaps best exemplified in the Kālīkrama tradition.

In this verse, Amṛtānanda offers his own deep contemplation on *dīkṣā*, building on conceptions where the gaze of the master plunges the student into a state of complete absorption in divine consciousness. Following a standard tantric etymological account of the meaning of *dīkṣā*, Amṛtānanda concludes his contemplation by reinforcing that *dīkṣā* grants liberation by destroying negativities, bestowing the experience of pure Śiva consciousness, and concludes that *dīkṣā*—in its highest form—is transmitted through the glance of the guru.

The fourth chapter of the *Jayadrathayāmalatantra*, a tantra of the Kālīkula tradition, teaches how initiation takes place through the powerful gaze of the guru:

evam tad īkṣiṇam kuryād ācāryo kramapāragah |
yasyevam dīkṣayet samyak sa mukto bhavabandhanāt || 4.89 ||
anyathā devadeveṣi tilājyānalayogatah |
puroktām vṛttim ālambya yasya yasyāvalokayet || 4.90 ||
taṃ taṃ nayati sāyojyaṃ vacas tv avitatham mama |

"The teacher who has mastered the Krama should gaze upon (his disciple) in this way. Whoever he initiates properly in this way is liberated from the bonds of phenomenal existence. Otherwise, O mistress of the gods, (if that does not take place in this way,) assuming the aforementioned state of mind, whoever he gazes upon, along with (making offerings to) the fire with sesame seed and clarified butter, he leads to a state of union (*sāyujya*) (with the deity). (This will surely be so;) my word is not false!"¹³⁴

The *Chummāsāṅketaprakāśa* describes the personal experience, and inner revelation, of an adept who received the direct gaze of a perfected guru as follows:

"Through the glory of his glance I collapsed on the ground like a felled tree and in a flash attained the incomparable state that is free of the external and internal faculties, inaccessible to the means of knowledge, free of defects, beyond the influence of time or its absence, beyond the lights [of the object, medium, and agent of cognition] yet pervading them, unlocated, neither sequential nor non-sequential, overflowing with the flooding rapture of the ultimate joy of the contactless, beyond bliss, beyond the means of immersion, free of the errors of 'is' and 'is not', free both of conceptual and non-conceptual awareness, with a nature that transcends [all levels of] cognition, free of the stain [even] of the latent impressions [of what it transcends]." ¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 III, 411-412.

¹³⁵ Translation by Sanderson 2007, 338.

In the thirteenth chapter of his *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta beautifully describes how the perfected guru removes the ignorance of his disciples through his glance alone:

pratibhācandrikāsāntadbhvāntas cācāryacandramāḥ || 132 ||
tamastāpau hanti dṛśam viśphāryānandanibharām |

"The moon-like teacher, whose (spiritual) darkness has been dispersed by the lunar rays (*candrikā*) of divine intuition (*pratibhā*), casting a glance full of bliss (at his disciples), removes the darkness (of their ignorance) and the heat (*tāpa*) (of their suffering)."¹³⁶

Abhinavagupta continues in the sixteenth chapter to relate how the gaze of the guru can even remove the thoughts of the disciple as follows:

yadā vijñānadīkṣāmtu kuryāc chiśyam tadā bhṛśam || 248 ||
tanmantrasaṅjalpabalāt paśyeda cāvikalpakāt |

"If (the teacher) is to perform an initiation based on consciousness (*vijñānadīkṣā*), (he) should gaze at the disciple intensely, until (the disciple attains) a state free of thought (*avikalpa*), by virtue of the might (*bala*) of the (inner) discourse (*saṅjalpaḥ*) of that (purifying) mantra."¹³⁷

Furthermore, in the fifteenth chapter, Abhinavagupta clarifies what makes a guru competent to bestow *dīkṣā*, according to his tradition:

tatrādau śivatāpattisvātantryāveśa eva yaḥ || 38 ||
sa eva hi guruḥ kāryas tato 'sau dīkṣaṇe kṣamaḥ |

"There (in that case), first of all, one should choose (as one's) teacher only one who is (profoundly) penetrated by the freedom that arises by (his) attainment of Śiva's state (which is oneness with it). (Only) then is he capable of initiating (others)."¹³⁸

Concerning the powerful gaze of the guru, the *Kulārṇavatantra* also teaches:

yathā dīptānalāḥ kāṣṭhaṃ śuṣkamārdrāñca nirdabhet |
tathā gurukaṭākṣastu śiśyapāpam dabhet kṣaṇāt || 14.114 ||

"Just as a blazing fire will completely burn wood whether it is dry or wet, in the same way, the guru's glance immediately destroys the demerits of the student."¹³⁹



¹³⁶ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, VII, 206.

¹³⁷ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 IX, 108.

¹³⁸ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023, VIII, 34.

¹³⁹ Translation by Brian Campbell.

VERSE 35:

Āmnāya Samaṣṭipūjā

अन्तरङ्गकरणात्मनां चतुःस्रोतसां विविधदेवताजुषाम् ।

पूजनं परमिहोन्मनीशिखामध्यवर्तिपरमात्मयोजनम् ॥ ३५ ॥

antaraṅgakaranaṭmanāṃ catuḥsrotasāṃ vividhadevatājuṣāṃ |

pūjanam param ihonmanīśikhāmadhyavartiparamātmayojanam || 35 ||

Here worship of the four [Kaula] streams devoted to various deities and consisting of inner elements and the Śākta pantheon, in its highest form, is uniting with the supreme Self that is present at the peak of the transmental state.

Notes:

Kaula tantra is a specific branch of tantric Śaivism centered on the worship of Śiva/ Śakti that requires a human guru to bestow upon the aspirant an initiation into its doctrines and practices. The Kaula revelation originated with the extra-Vedic visionary Śaiva ascetics of the cremation grounds and formed into early proto-Kaula tantric *mātr* and *yoginī* lineages organized by distinct clans (*kula*) based on the worship of the famous eight *mātr* goddesses (Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇi, Cāmuṇḍā, and Mahālakṣmī). Kaula tantra built on the focus of *kula* as clans, but also understood *kula* to mean the body, as well as the totality, thereby linking Śakti with the individual body and internal modes of practice.¹⁴⁰ In a broad sense, Kaula tantra interiorized and increased subtle awareness, and mystical reflections on consciousness, as the ultimate goal (and ground) of all spiritual practice.

There are several Kaula lineages and many non-Kaula traditions that even adopted select Kaula elements and influences over time. Of the many Kaula lineages, which actually span several Indic religions including Buddhism, four principal revelatory streams, known as *āmnāyas*, stand out as especially noteworthy. *Āmnāya* means a stream of teachings and usually consists of a principal deity, mantra, *maṇḍala*, and other aspects of worship. The four principal Kaula *āmnāyas* (despite their deity specific revelations) also share in a number of common features, doctrines, and practices. After all, the *āmnāyas* are all Kaula teachings located within a specialized (*viśeṣa*) corpus of tantric texts. The fourfold *āmnāya* classification seems to first appear in the *Cīñcīṇmatasārasamuccaya*, an unpublished text from the Kubjikā tradition which describes the four *āmnāyas* as follows:¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Sanderson 1988, 679.

¹⁴¹ Sanderson 1988, 680-690.

Transmission	Direction	Principal Deity and tradition
Uttarāmnāya	(North)	Kālikā, of the Kālikulakrama
Purvāmnāya	(East)	Parā, of the Trika
Paścimāmnāya	(West)	Kubjikā, of the Kaubjikā tradition
Dakṣiṇāmnāya	(South)	Kāmeśvarī/Tripurasundarī, of what will be known as Śrīvidyā

The fourfold *āmnāya* classification of Kaula lineages is based on an earlier understanding from Śaivism that organized teachings into five *srotas* (currents, or streams) spoken from the five heads of Sadāśiva as follows:¹⁴²

Direction	Face of Sadāśiva	Śāstra revealed
West	Sadyojāta	<i>Laukika</i>
North	Vāmadeva	<i>Vaidika</i>
South	Aghora	<i>Ādhyātmika</i>
East	Tatpuruṣa	<i>Atimārga</i>
Upper	Īśāna	<i>Mantramārga</i> —> <i>Śaivāgama</i>

Within these five revelatory streams of teachings, there was further classification, as Dr. Mark Dyczkowski has pointed out, "The Śaivāgamas are the Mantratantraśāstra manifested by Sadāśiva through Īśāna, his upper face. Insofar as each face is supposed to possess all five faces, the Mantratantra group is also divided into five."¹⁴³

Five fold division of the *Mantramārga*

Direction	Face of Sadāśiva	Āgama revealed
Upper	Īśāna	<i>Siddhāntāgama</i>
East	Tatpuruṣa	<i>Gāruḍatantra</i>
South	Aghora	<i>Bhairavatantra</i> —> <i>Kaulatantra</i>
North	Vāmadeva	<i>Vāmatantra</i>
West	Sadyojāta	<i>Bhūtantra</i>

While the Kaula revelation is often thought to be primarily located within the *Bhairavatantra* stream, Dr. Mark Dyczkowski provides the following further clarification:

"Kaula doctrine and practice is not confined exclusively to those Tantras which explicitly consider themselves to be Kaula: it is an important element of other Tantras as well—particularly those of the Vāma and Dakṣiṇasrotas with which the Kaulatantras are closely related. Kula doctrine originates in these two currents of scripture and so is said to flow from

¹⁴² Chart adapted from Dyczkowski 1988, 31.

¹⁴³ Quote and subsequent chart from Dyczkowski 1988, 32.

them and extend them at their furthest limit. At the same time, it is present in all the Śaiva scriptures, pervading them as their finest and most subtle element, like the perfume in flowers, taste in water or the life in the body."¹⁴⁴

From its earliest sources and *mūlasāstra*, the *Nityāṣoḍaśīkārṇavatāntra*, Śrīvidyā saw itself as embodying, and in some cases even transcending, the fourfold classification of the *āmnāyas*. The *Nityāṣoḍaśīkārṇavatāntra* teaches:

kāmapūrṇajakārākhyasrīpīṭhāntarnivāsinīm |
caturājñākośabbūtām naumi śrītripurām abam || 1.12 ||

"I worship Śrī Tripurā, residing in Kāmarūpa, Jālandhara, Pūrṇapīṭha, and Uḍḍiyāṇa (*śrīpīṭha*), who is the treasure-house of the four commands (*ājñās*, that is, teachings)."¹⁴⁵

Further clarifying that all four Kaula lineages are subsumed within Śrīvidyā, Amṛtānanda teaches in his *Saubhāgyasudhodaya*:

saiva mahāvīdyātāmātā caturanvayaikaviśrāntiḥ || 2.1 ||

"This same Mother, who is the Supreme Vidyā, is the single ground in which the Four Anvayas come to rest."¹⁴⁶

The *Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (1.2) speaks of five *āmnāyas*, with the understanding that Śrīvidyā is the "upper" tradition known as the *ūrdhvāmnāya*:

bhagavān paramaśivabhaṭṭārakaḥ saṃvinmayyā bhagavatyā bhairavyā svātmābbinnayā pṛṣṭaḥ
pañcabhir mukhaiḥ pañcāmnāyān paramārthasārabhūtān praṇināya tatrāyaṃ siddhāntaḥ

"Lord Paramaśiva, questioned by the Goddess Bhairavī, by the awareness that is his own self, promulgated through his five faces the five Āmnāyas as the very essence of ultimate truth. In these what follows is the definitive doctrine..."¹⁴⁷

The four *āmnāyas* are primarily understood within Śrīvidyā to exist as the four doorways into the Śrīcakra. Since many *saṃpradāyas* and schools of thought use *āmnāya* to refer to their own specific teachings, it can be confusing as to what "*āmnāya*" actually refers to in any given text, especially when attempting to apply a "one-size-fits-all" meaning. For example, teachings associated with the southern transmission, such as the Śāṅkarācārya *Śrīgerī Maṭha*, Aghora Śiva, and the worship of Kāmeśvarī, will all be known as *dakṣiṇāmnāya*.

In addition to being doorways into the Śrīcakra, Śrīvidyā also conceives the four *āmnāyas* as a way to organize the vast mantric pantheon it inherited from the earlier Kaula traditions within its own initiatory hierarchy. Understood in this way, the *āmnāyas* become six traditions,

¹⁴⁴ Dyczkowski 1988, 61.

¹⁴⁵ Translation by Golovkova 2020, 94.

¹⁴⁶ Translation by Sanderson 2014, 65, fn. 247.

¹⁴⁷ Translation by Sanderson 2014, 66.

following a later development in Kaula tantra that included an upper *āmnāya* spoken of in the *Kulārṇavatāntra* (see teachings below) as well as within Śrīvidyā (as explored above), and even a secret sixth "supreme" *āmnāya* known as the unsurpassable (*amutara*). The general idea is that mantras within Śrīvidyā emanate from Tripurasundarī through various revelatory streams (*āmnāya*) that are related to corresponding levels of initiation and practice. In this way, various levels of mantras are correlated with different *āmnāyas* based on the types of practices one is initiated into and the suitability of specialized mantras for practitioners within various initiatory levels.

Śrīvidyā practitioners performing *Navāvaraṇa pūjā* may also recognize the *āmnāya* classification as it is present (although in an encoded form) in the "*Āmnāya samaṣṭipūjā*," a part of many contemporary ritual manuals such as in Śrī Caitanyānandanātha's "Śrīcakra Pūjā Vidhi" where they are publicly mentioned with their Vedic correlations. Śrī Caitanyānandanātha teaches:

"The four amnayas - East, South, West and North are Ṛk, Yajus, Atharvaṇa and Sama Vedas. The ūrdhvāmnāya is the verbal content of the upaniṣads and the anuttarāmnāya their implied sense. Seven crore mantras are contained in these six āmnāyas. The purpose of āmnāya samaṣṭi pūjā is to emphasize that all these mantras only describe citśakti who is not different from Brahman."¹⁴⁸

The *Āmnāya samaṣṭipūjā* also reveals four Kaula goddesses, their *mūlavidyās*, and their associations with the four principal Kaula *pīṭhas* (Oḍḍiyāṇa, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri, and Kāmarūpa) that exist along the inner *trikoṇa* of the Śrīcakra. *Āmnāya samaṣṭipūjā* is an important part of venerating all of the four Kaula traditions and can traced back to some of the earliest Śrīvidyā ritual manuals currently available. Practiced in this way, the worship reinforces the essential teaching that all Kaula lineages, despite their apparent differences, deity specific revelations, and variant mantras, are actually one.

There is a possibility that Amṛtānanda might be referring to another set of teachings in this verse, since he uses the older *srotas* term¹⁴⁹ rather than *āmnāya*. However, Amṛtānanda was well aware of the four principal Kaula traditions, even if not in the same exact way as taught in the *Cīñcīṇmatasārasamuccaya*, or how they are understood today—over seven hundred years later. In his *Dīpikā* commentary on the *Yoginīhrdayatantra* (2.17) Amṛtānanda cites his own work, the *Saubhāgyasudhodaya*, that teaches esoteric knowledge about the inner nature of the principal mantra of Tripurasundarī (the *Pañcadaśākṣarī*) and how all four traditions contribute a syllable, or set of syllables, to its construction.

Despite the possible ambiguities present in this verse, it seems clear that Amṛtānanda is contemplating the supreme form of *Āmnāya samaṣṭipūjā*. Understood in this way, Amṛtānanda is teaching that the higher form of venerating the diverse currents of Kaula revelations as a single tradition is uniting the individual self with the supreme Self, identified, as all supreme (*parā*) Kaula goddesses of consciousness are, with *unmanī śakti* at the "peak of the transmental state."

¹⁴⁸ Caitanyānandanātha 2023, 449.

¹⁴⁹ Dyczkowski 2009 Introduction Vol II, 345.

Clarifying the four principal *āmnāyas*, and explicitly mentioning the superiority of the fifth *ūrdhvāmnāya*, the third chapter of the *Kulārṇavatāntra* teaches:

mama pañcamukhebhyaśca pañcāmnāyāḥ samudgatāḥ |
pūrvaśca paścimaścaiva dakṣiṇāścottarastathā |
ūrdhvāmnāyaśca pañcaite mokṣamārgāḥ prakīrtitāḥ || 7 ||

"I have produced the five *āmnāyas* (great traditions) from My Five Faces, viz. Purva (East)-*āmnāya*, Paścima (West)-*āmnāya*, Dakṣiṇa (South)-*āmnāya*, Uttara (North)-*āmnāya* and the *Ūrdhva* (Upwards of high facing)-*āmnāya*. These are the Five *Āmnāyas* and all the five are famous as the paths for Emancipation."¹⁵⁰

tasmāddeveśi jānīhi sāksānmokṣaikasādhanaṃ |
sarvāmnāyādhikaphalamūrdhvāmnāyaṃ parāt param || 19 ||

"O Deveśi! Know the *Ūrdhvāmnāya* as the direct single means for Emancipation yielding a greater Fruit than all others and better than the best of them."¹⁵¹



¹⁵⁰ Translation by Rai 1999, 39.

¹⁵¹ Translation by Rai 1999, 40.

VERSE 36:

Ṣaḍḍarśana Pūjana

पञ्चबोधकरणानि मानसं दर्शनानि विषयप्रदर्शनात् ।

दर्शनानि षडमूनि तानि तत्पूजनं भवति तल्लयश्चित्ति ॥ ३६ ॥

**pañcabodhakaraṇāni mānaśaṃ darśanāni viśayaṃpradarśanāt |
darśanāni ṣaḍ amūni tāni tatpūjanaṃ bhavati tallayaś citi ॥ 36 ॥**

The worship of the six traditions is when the mental perceptions of the five-fold senses arising from the perception of objects is dissolved into pure awareness.

Notes:

The worship and veneration of multiple traditions, as well as the particular (*viśeṣa*) and universal (*sāmānya*) aspects of the deity, is a critical aspect of tantric ritual. While not named explicitly, the six *darśanas* (lit. views, but also lineages) mentioned in this verse most likely refer to the Bauddha, Vedic, Śaiva, Saura, Vaiṣṇava, and Śākta traditions. The twelfth chapter of the *Śrīvidyārṇavatāntra* corroborates these six traditions (*ṣaḍḍarśana*) when giving their individual *gāyatri* mantras in the following verses:

atha ṣaḍḍarśanagāyatrīḥ brahmagāyatrī ṣaṣṭaiva ॥ nārāyaṇāya vidmāhe vāsudevāya dhīmahi tan no viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt | ādityāya vidmāhe mārtandāya dhīmahi tan naḥ sūryaḥ pracodayāt | śivagāyatrī tu prāgeva darśitā | mahāsiddhāya vidmāhe sarvajñāya dhīmahi tan no buddhaḥ pracodayāt | sarvasammohinīyai vidmāhe viśvajānanyai dhīmahi tan naḥ śaktiḥ pracodayāt | iti ṣaḍḍarśanagāyatrīḥ ॥

Vidyānanda, in the first chapter of his *Jñānadīpavimarsinī*, teaches the worship and installation of the six traditions as a meditation on the six *cakras* within the body and understood the six traditions to consist of the same six *darśanas* mentioned above:

atha cakram ṣaḍḍarśanātmakam jñātṛvā pūjayet | uktam hi bauddham brāhmaṃ tathā śaivaṃ sauram vaiṣṇavam eva ca | śāktam ṣaṣṭham tu vijñeyam cakram ṣaḍḍarśanātmakam ॥

The *Yogakhaṇḍa* of the *Manthānabhairavatantra* teaches a slightly different order of the six *darśanas* and links them with six principles as follows:¹⁵²

*buddhitattvam tu bauddhānām arbatānām guṇatrayam |
pradhānam vedavādīnām vaiṣṇavānām ca pauruṣam ॥
kālatattvam tu saurānām śaivānām ca param śivam |*

¹⁵² Dyczkowski 2009 Vol II, 339, fn. 1.

Buddhism	intellect
Jainsim	the three qualities of nature
Veda	fundamental nature
Vaiṣṇavism	<i>puruṣa</i>
Saura	time
Śaiva	supreme Śiva

It seems rather unlikely, but worth mentioning (due to its prevalence in contemporary forms of worship) that Amṛtānanda might also be referring to the *Pañcāyatana pūjā*, a popular form of worship in South India where five deities (Gaṇapati, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Sūrya, and the Devī), who represent five traditions, are venerated together through the bathing of five small stones—often with the addition of a spear, representing Murugan, to make six.

Regardless of which six traditions Amṛtānanda is referring to in this verse, it is clear that he envisions the higher form of worshiping them as dissolving the five senses, along with the mind, into pure consciousness.



VERSE 37:

Samaya vidyeśvarī Pūjā

जाग्रदादिसमयाश्चतुर्विधाश्चान्तरात्मपरमात्मविग्रहाः ।

पञ्चमे ऽत्र तदतीतचिद्धने धाम्नि तल्लयमतिस्तदर्चनम् ॥ ३७ ॥

jāgradādisamayās caturvidhās cāntarātmāparamātmavīgrahāḥ |

pañcame 'tra tad atītacidghane dhāmnī tallayamatis tadarcanam || 37 ||

The set of four initiatory pledges (*samaya*), which correspond to waking [and the other states], relate to the inner self and the supreme self. The worship of the *Samaya* deities is the awareness of those [four pledges / states] dissolving into the fifth, the undifferentiated light of transcendent consciousness.

Notes:

Kaula traditions are initiatory and often include certain precepts and vows undertaken by the aspirant known as *samaya*, a term which loses currency in mainstream Śaiva and Kaula traditions, but is retained in tantric Buddhism. In this verse, the four principal Kaula traditions, explored in verse thirty-five, are linked to the four principal *avasthās* (states of consciousness) found ubiquitously within Indic religious and philosophical traditions in this sequence:

1. *jāgrat*: the waking state
2. *svapna*: the dreaming state
3. *susupti*: the deep sleep, dreamless state
4. *turya*: the fourth state, a supreme level expounded in the *Upaniṣads* as supreme consciousness.

Amṛtānanda, following a long line of Kaula masters including Abhinavagupta, Kṣemarāja, and Maheśvarānanda, introduces (but without specifically naming it) the fifth state of consciousness:

5. *turyātīta*: the 'beyond the fourth' state, also known as *bhāsā* (pure illumination).

Each of the four principal Kaula goddesses of the four *āmnāyas* are also known as the *Samaya Vidyeśvarīs* (goddesses of the initiatory pledges)—although various Śrīvidyā lineages, and texts, differ slightly in their understanding of who these deities are.¹⁵³ In the second half of this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that the highest worship of these four goddesses consists of dissolving them into the pure "undifferentiated light of transcendent consciousness." This is directly in line with both verse twenty-two (which explored how microcosmic parts of a macrocosmic whole are offered into the supreme level of consciousness) and verse thirty-five (which explored worshipping parts of a tradition as a unified whole). In this verse, Amṛtānanda further reinforces

¹⁵³ On some of their textual variants see Sanderson 2014, 66-67.

how offering/dissolving a particular 'micro' part into a universal 'macro' whole is a major theme in Kaula ritual and contemplative practice.



VERSE 38:

Khecarī Mudrā

खे निरस्तनिखिलक्रियाक्रमे या चितिश्वरति शाश्वतोदया ।

सा शिवत्वसमवाप्तिकारिणी खेचरी निखिलखेदहारिणी ॥ ३८ ॥

**khe nirastanikhilakriyākrame yā citiś carati śāśvatodayā |
sā śivatvasamavāptikāriṇī khecarī nikhilakhedahāriṇī ॥ 38 ॥**

Consciousness, ever-arising, moves (*carati*) in the sky (*khe*) in which all sequences of action have ceased. She is thus Khecarī, who brings about the realization of the state of Śiva and removes all afflictions.

Notes:

Khecarī is a Kaula goddess primarily spoken of within the Krama and Krama-influenced tantric traditions, including Śrīvidyā. Often paired with a *bīja* mantra, known by the same name (*Khecarī bīja*) and a *mudrā* (*Khecarī mudrā*), this goddess has an extended history within Kaula tantra. Khecarī principally denotes a state of heightened nondual awareness where the adept moves freely within the empty sky of consciousness (*khecarā*). Understood in this way, Khecarī invokes flight and freedom of movement within the sky, often spoken of as consciousness. Accordingly, Khecarī is also equated with a bird goddess associated with Kālī and known by names such as Khageśvarī¹⁵⁴ and is linked to the swan (*haṃsa*)—a prevalent title of heightened awareness such as, the "supreme swan" (*paramahaṃsa*).

Building on the avian imagery of the goddess, it comes as no surprise that the form of the *Khecarī mudrā* used in ritual worship that Amṛtānanda teaches in his *Dīpikā* iconographically portrays the face of a bird.¹⁵⁵ Other forms of *Khecarī mudrā* are focused on invoking the union of Śiva and Śakti, entering the void, and in *haṭhayoga* traditions even inserting one's tongue into the nasal cavity. *Khecarī mudrā* is a particularly multifaceted *mudrā*, spanning four levels of meaning, all of which Abhinavagupta discusses in his *Tantrāloka*.¹⁵⁶ The movement and freedom associated with Khecarī is also used to describe Kaula goddesses such as Tripurasundarī, Kubjikā, Parā, and Kālikā who are identified with *unmanī śakti*, the "transmental" state.¹⁵⁷ In essence, Khecarī is described as the dynamic energy of the supreme void.

¹⁵⁴ See Slouber 2017, 48 and Dyczkowski 2009, Introduction Vol II, 43.

¹⁵⁵ Amṛtānanda also cites this *Cidvilāsastava* verse in his *Dīpikā* commentary (1.68) on *Khecarī mudrā*.

¹⁵⁶ See Skora 2016.

¹⁵⁷ See notes to verse thirty-five.

Extensive teachings on Khecarī, emptiness, and the energy of the supreme void are found in several Kaula tantras, but are largely absent in the mainstream Śrīvidyā tradition. Within Śrīvidyā, Khecarī usually refers to the *Sarvakhecarī mudrā*, one of the ten *daśamudrās* used in the ritual worship of Tripurasundarī, and the *Khecarī bīja* as found in places such as the *Gurupādukā* mantra. Select teachings on Khecarī can be found in the *Yoginīhrdayatantra* (cited below) and in commentaries from *Śrīvidyācāryas* such as Amṛtānanda.

The *Khecarī bīja* is one of the principal Kaula *bīja* mantras associated with Kālī, reabsorption, complete dissolution, and pure nonduality. This incredibly important mantra is known as the *Pañcapīṇḍanātha* 'the lord of the five heaps' and the *Māṭṛsadbhāva* (the essence of the *māṭṛs*, sometimes glossed as the perceivers) which was used in early Kaula traditions to invoke the power of the seven *māṭṛs*. The *Khecarī bīja* has a number of principal forms and is revealed in several important tantras such as the *Siddhayogeśvarīmata* where it is described as the "heart of *yoginīs*" and is said to be especially effective for women:¹⁵⁸

puruṣeṇādbhikāro 'sti asmin strīvidhikarmani |
strīyāyāḥ siddhido hy eṣaḥ kadācit puruṣasya ca ||
vaktrād vaktragatam strīṇām na ca lekhyati pustake |

“A man can [also] have the right to perform this ritual act concerning women. For it [mainly] bestows success onto women, and sometimes also onto men. It has been transmitted by women from mouth to mouth and not written down in a book.”¹⁵⁹

In ritual worship, the *Khecarī mudrā* is often performed in conjunction with the rite of dismissal, which Amṛtānanda will discuss in the following verse. The *Khecarī mudrā*, in addition to invoking nondual awareness, also suggests dissolution. When used in *pūjā*, this *mudrā* signals bringing the deity back into the heart of the practitioner, often aided by the medium of a flower that was previously offered during the invocation of the deity.¹⁶⁰

In this verse, Amṛtānanda teaches a beautifully poetic contemplation on Khecarī as a supreme state of awareness moving in the sky of consciousness. Amṛtānanda synthesizes, in a single verse, much of what has been taught in the Kaula tantras concerning Khecarī and reinforces that she brings about the state of supreme Śiva consciousness.

The *Yoginīhrdayatantra* teaches:

dharmādharmasya saṃghaṭṭādutthitā vittirūpiṇī |
vikalpotthakriyāloparūpaḥaviḅhātini || 1.67 ||
vikalparūparogāṇām hāriṇī khecarī parā |
sarvarogaharākhye tu cakre saṃvinmayī sthitā || 1.68 ||

¹⁵⁸ Törzsök 2014, 361.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ See verse twenty.

"Born from the unifying interaction of *dharma* and *adharma* in the form of intelligence, she destroys the faults of omission in ritual action resulting from differentiated thought. [This *mudrā*], the supreme *khecari*, destroyer of the diseases born from differentiated thought, abides, made of consciousness, in the Sarvarogahāra *cakra*."¹⁶¹

Amṛtānanda in his *Dīpikā* commentary on this verse mentions that Khecari is the energy of consciousness (*cicchakti*) moving in the supreme void—totally merged in the supreme union (*saṃghaṭṭa*) of Śiva and Śakti and resides at the elevated state of the eight triangled *cakra*, known as the *yonicakra*.

In the fifth chapter of his *Tantrāloka*, Abhinavagupta describes how the *Samhāra bija* can lead one into a supreme state of consciousness (*paratattvāntahpraveśa*) as follows:

arthakriyārthitādainyaṃ tyaktvā bāhyāntarātmani || 75 ||
kharūpe nirvṛtiṃ prāpya phullāṃ nādadaśāṃ śrayet |
vaktram antas tayā samyak saṃvidah pravikāsayet || 76 ||
saṃvidakṣamaruccakrām jñeyābhinnam tato bhavet |
taj jñeyam saṃvidākhyena vahniṇā pravilīyate || 77 ||
vilīnam tat trikone 'smiñ śaktivahnau vilīyate |
tatra saṃvedanodārabindusattāsunirvṛtaḥ || 78 ||
saṃhārabījavīsrānto yogī paramayo bhavet |

"Abandoning dependence on actions directed towards a goal, and attaining contentment in the Void (KH) nature (*rūpa*) which is external and internal (at the same time, the yogi) should rest on the expanded plane of sound (PH). By means of that (transcendental plane of Sound, he should) bring about in the proper manner the expansion of the inner mouth of consciousness, by virtue of which the Wheel of perceptions, the senses and vital breaths, become one with the object of knowledge. That Objectivity is destroyed by the Fire of Consciousness (R), and thus annulled, merges into this the Fire of Power, the Triangle (E). The yogi, perfectly content there in the noble awareness (*saṃvedana*) of the essential being of the Point (M), resting in the seed-syllable of withdrawal (KHPHREM), becomes the Supreme Reality."¹⁶²



¹⁶¹ Translation by Padoux 2013, 52.

¹⁶² Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 IV, 93-7.

VERSE 39:

Visarjana

यत्स्वरूपमहिमा विकल्पितं शक्तिचक्रमिह रज्जुसर्पवत् ।
तत्स्वरूपपरमार्थबोधतस्तत्र तस्य विलयो विसर्जनम् ॥ ३९ ॥

yatsvarūpamahimā vikalpitam śakticakram iha rajjusarpavat ।
tatsvarūpaparamārthabodhatas tatra tasya vilayo visarjanam ॥ 39 ॥

The majesty of that innate nature is imagined to be a *cakra* of divine energies, like a snake [is mistaken for] a rope. The disappearance of that [*cakra*] as a result of awakening to the ultimate truth of that same innate essence [is the ultimate form] of ritually inviting the deity to depart.

Notes:

The supreme reality of pure consciousness can never be accurately described by language, words, diagrams, *maṇḍalas*, or even the Śrīcakra. In this verse, Amṛtānanda builds on the famous *rajju sarpa*, or mistaking a "snake for a rope" idiom, so well known to Indic religions and philosophy. As the story goes, those who enter a dimly lit room and see a rope on the floor may, due to mistaken knowledge, perceive it to be a snake. However, the reality of the snake immediately disappears when a lamp illuminates the room and it is suddenly revealed that there was never a snake at all, just a rope in its place! In this same spirit, Amṛtānanda delivers a powerful teaching to Śrīvidyā practitioners on the ultimate reality of the Śrīcakra, form, representation, and truth.

Just as the invocation of the deity is a critical element in the ritual worship, so the dismissal of the deity is equally important. In the second half of the verse, Amṛtānanda builds on the *rajju sarpa* story of reality and connects it to the Śrīcakra and the rite of *visarjana*, the "inviting the deity to depart" procedure in ritual worship. Closing the verse, Amṛtānanda teaches that when the knowledge of ultimate reality dawns upon the practitioner, the Śrīcakra will disappear and this is the supreme form of inviting the deity to depart.

Similar in meaning to Amṛtānanda's verse on the the supreme form of *visarjana*, Abhinavagupta teaches about the nondual meaning of invoking and dismissing deities in the twenty-sixth chapter of his *Tantrāloka* as follows:

devaḥ sarvagato deva nirmarāyādaḥ katham śivaḥ ।
āvāhyate kṣamyate vety evaṃ prṣṭo 'bravīd vibhuḥ ॥ 45 ॥
vāsanāvāhyate devi vāsanā ca visrjyate ।
paramārthena devasya nāvāhanavisarjane ॥ 46 ॥

"Oh God! How can Śiva, who is God, present in all things, and unrestricted (*nirmarāyāda*) (by rules and regulations), be invoked or dismissed? Questioned thus, the pervasive Lord said: "Oh Goddess! that which is invoked (to be worshiped) is a latent trace (*vāsanā*) (of a notion

previously formed of deity), and it is (that same) trace that is dismissed. In reality (*paramārthena*), God is neither invoked nor dismissed."¹⁶³



¹⁶³ Translation by Dyczkowski 2023 IX, 386.

VERSE 40:

Samāpta

या क्रिया समभिहारतस्त्रिधा दर्शितात्र गुरुभावनादिका ।
सा विभेदलयभावनादिकाभ्यस्यतां परशिवैक्यसिद्धये ॥ ४० ॥

yā kriyā samabhihāratas tridhā darśitātra gurubhāvanādikā ।
sā vibhedalayabhāvanādikābhyasyatām paraśivaikyāsiddhaye ॥ 40 ॥

The three types of ritual action, such as meditating on the Guru and other acts, are collectively revealed here. They should be practiced in the form of meditations on the dissolution of duality and difference [that structure ritual] to attain unity with supreme Śiva.

Notes:

Amṛtānanda ends his *Cidvilāsastava* with a profound teaching on the nature of ritual worship and the utility of how his contemplations are to be used in practice. Amṛtānanda teaches that all ritual worship is based on duality, a distinction that necessarily requires a difference between a subject and an object; items fit for worship and items that should be rejected; and ultimately between a worshiper and the deity worshiped.

When ritual worship is overtly focused on such distinctions, it can actually work to reinforce duality and difference—something Amṛtānanda would definitely be against. And yet, far from rejecting ritual worship, in this verse, Amṛtānanda seems to be suggesting that the *Cidvilāsastava* might be a type of higher level mode of ritual worship that happens within the mind alone. Of course, as explored in the introduction, it is quite possible that what Amṛtānanda had in mind was to provide inner contemplations that were meant to accompany external ritual practice. Either way, it seems clear that Amṛtānanda's final teaching to his readers is that the contemplations within the *Cidvilāsastava* are meant to dissolve duality and awaken one's recognition that they are pure, nondual, supreme, and self-luminous Consciousness.

इति चिद्विलासस्तवः समाप्तः

iti cidvilāsastavaḥ samāptaḥ

This concludes the *Cidvilāsastava*.



Appendices

APPENDIX ONE:

The Thirty-Six Tattvas

The thirty-six *tattvas* are a system of essential categories that help explain how consciousness expands through awareness of itself into new forms. The *tattvas* develop in *Sāṃkhya* as twenty-five categories of being, or "that-ness" and help explain what constitutes reality. This set of twenty-five *tattvas* receives further interpretation in Śaiva Siddhānta through the adding of eleven additional *tattvas* to make the standard thirty-six that have since become canon in tantric Śaivism. Readers interested in deeper explanations of each *tattva* are referred to the teachings of Swami Lakshmanjoo.

TATTVA CHART

37 *Paramaśīva* - the summation of all thirty-six *tattvas*, pure immanence and transcendence.

Often equated within Śrīvidyā to be the goddess, Tripurasundarī.

36 *Śīva* - Completely transcendent 'untouched' consciousness.

Pure elements

35 <i>Śakti</i>	Pure Energy
34 <i>Sadāśīva</i>	Eternal Śīva
33 <i>Īśvara</i>	The Lord
32 <i>Śuddhavidyā</i>	Pure knowledge

Kaṅcuka (coverings)

31 <i>Māyā</i>	Cosmic illusion
30 <i>Kalā</i>	Limited Agency
29 <i>Vidyā</i>	Limited Knowledge
28 <i>Rāga</i>	Attachment
27 <i>Kāla</i>	Time
26 <i>Niyati</i>	Necessity
25 <i>Puruṣa</i>	Soul

24 *Prakṛti* Nature

Antahkarana (internal faculties)

23 <i>Buddhi</i>	Intellect
22 <i>Ahaṁkāra</i>	Ego
21 <i>Manas</i>	Mind

Jñānendriya (faculties of knowledge)

20 <i>Śrotra</i>	Ears
19 <i>Tvac</i>	Skin
18 <i>Cakṣus</i>	Eyes
17 <i>Rasana</i>	Tongue
16 <i>Ghrāna</i>	Nose

Karmendriya (faculties of action)

15 <i>Vāc</i>	Speech
14 <i>Pāṇi</i>	Hands
13 <i>Pāda</i>	Feet
12 <i>Pāyu</i>	Anus
11 <i>Upasthā</i>	Genitals

Tanmātra (sensations)

10 <i>Śabda</i>	Sound
9 <i>Sparsā</i>	Touch
8 <i>Rūpa</i>	Form
7 <i>Rasa</i>	Taste
6 <i>Gandha</i>	Smell

Mahābhūta (great element)

5 <i>Ākāśa</i>	Space
4 <i>Vāyu</i>	Air
3 <i>Tejas</i>	Fire
2 <i>Jala</i>	Water
1 <i>Prthvī</i>	Earth



APPENDIX TWO:

Cidvilāsastava: Text & Translation

VERSE 1

स्वप्रकाशशिवमूर्तिरिकिका तद्विमर्शतनुरेकिका तयोः ।
सामरस्यवपुरिष्यते परा पादुका परशिवात्मनो गुरोः ॥ १ ॥

**svaprakāśaśivamūrtir ekikā tadvimarśatanur ekikā tayoh |
sāmarasyavapur iṣyate parā pādukā paraśivātmano guroh || 1 ||**

The form of Śiva as innate luminosity is unique; the embodiment of His self-awareness is also unique. The fusion of the pair is the true form of the divine sandals of the Guru who is one with Paraśiva.

VERSE 2

चित्रभानुशशिभानुपूर्वकत्रिभिर्भेदनियतेषु वस्तुषु ।
तत्तदात्मकतया विमर्शनं तत्समष्टिगुरुपादुकाजपः ॥ २ ॥

**citrabhānuśaśibhānupūrvakatritribhedaniyateṣu vastuṣu |
tattadātmakatayā vimarśanaṁ tatsamaṣṭigurupādūkājapaḥ || 2 ||**

Objects of experience are encompassed by the nine divisions [of the Śrīcakra] based upon the [three] luminaries: fire, sun, and moon. The awareness of any object as corresponding to that luminous nature is the repetition of the mantra of the Guru's sandals—the holistic form of the triad.

VERSE 3

तीर्थमद्वयसुधारसोदधेर्वारितं निजविमर्शवेलया ।
आणवादिमलमोचनोचितं स्नानमत्र विधिना निमज्जनम् ॥ ३ ॥

**tīrtham advayasudhārasodadher vāritaṁ nijavimarśavelayā |
āṇavādimalamocanitaṁ snānam atra vidhinā nimajjanam || 3 ||**

Encompassing the ocean of the nectarean essence of nonduality with the shoreline of one's innate awareness is the sacred bathing place. According to this method, immersing oneself in such a [tīrtha], which liberates one from [the three] impurities such as the contraction of consciousness, is the true ritual bath.

VERSE 4

सा निशा सकललोकमोहनी वासरः स खलु सर्वबोधकः ।
सामरस्यमिह सन्धिरेतयोः श्रीपरैव ननु सान्ध्यदेवता ॥ ४ ॥

**sā niśā sakalalokamohanī vāśaraḥ sa khalu sarvabodhakaḥ |
sāmarasyam iha sandhir etayoh śrīparaiva nanu sāndhyadevatā || 4 ||**

Night bewilders all beings and day awakens everything. The twilight in which they meet, in this [nondual teaching], is the fusion [of Śiva and Śakti]. The Supreme Goddess herself is indeed the presiding deity of that twilight.

VERSE 5

स्वप्रकाशशिव एव भास्करस्तद्विमर्शविभवा मरीचयः ।

यैः स भासयति वेद्यमण्डलं तस्य पूजनमहन्तया मतिः ॥ ५ ॥

svaprakāśaśiva eva bhāskaras tadvimarśavibhavā marīcayaḥ ।

yaiḥ sa bhāsayati vedyamaṇḍalaṃ tasya pūjanam ahantayā matiḥ ॥ 5 ॥

The sun is Śiva who is self-luminous. The sunrays are the creative powers of his self-representation by means of which he makes the world of objectivity shine forth. Reflecting upon that self-luminous Śiva as one's own identity is the true ritual worship of the sun.

VERSE 6

चिद्विलासमयभित्तिभावितं ज्ञानदीपविगलत्तमोगुणम् ।

आत्मतत्त्वमिह यागमण्टपं तस्य पूजनविधानमर्चनम् ॥ ६ ॥

cidvilāsamayabhittibhāvitaṃ jñānadīpavigalattamoguṇam ।

ātmatattvam iha yāgamaṇṭapaṃ tasya pūjanaividhānam arcanam ॥ 6 ॥

The ritual pavilion is the reality of the Self manifest as a canvas for the play of consciousness in which the quality of darkness melts away in the flame of knowledge. Veneration is the process of worshiping that [Self].

VERSE 7

भेदलक्षणविपक्षसङ्कटात्तारणं परमिहात्मरक्षणम् ।

संविदात्मकतया विमर्शनं बन्धनं भवति सर्वतो दिशाम् ॥ ७ ॥

bhedalakṣaṇavipakṣasaṅkaṭāt tāraṇaṃ param ihātmarakṣaṇam ।

saṃvidātmakatayā vimarśanaṃ bandhanaṃ bhavati sarvato diśām ॥ 7 ॥

The highest rite of self-protection here is liberating yourself from the dire straights of dualistic views. Ritually binding all directions is contemplating them as permeated by consciousness.

VERSE 8

वेदिका हृदयपद्मकर्णिका चिन्मयी वसति तत्र देवता ।

यो हि तद्यजनकर्मकर्मठस्तस्य पाशभिदुरः स भैरवः ॥ ८ ॥

vedikā hrdayapadmakarṇikā cinmayī vasati tatra devatā ।

yo hi tadyajanakarmakarmaṭhas tasya pāśabhiduraḥ sa bhairavaḥ ॥ 8 ॥

The ritual altar is the throne of the heart lotus. The deity that is consciousness dwells there. Bhairava destroys the limitations of the one who is devoted to the worship of that [deity of consciousness].

VERSE 9

विश्वभेदविभवा विकल्पधीलक्षणा भवति विघ्नसन्ततिः ।
निर्विकल्पनिजधामविश्रमस्तन्निराकरणमत्र कीर्तितम् ॥ ९ ॥

**viśvabhedavibhavā vikalpadhīlakṣṇā bhavati vighnasantatiḥ ।
nirvikalpanijadhāmaśramas tannirākaraṇam atra kīrtitam ॥ 9 ॥**

The multitude of obstacles, whose powers [generate] the duality of the universe, have conceptual cognition as their defining feature. The rite of dispelling those [obstacles] is understood in this [view] as reposing in the innate luminosity of non-conceptual awareness.

VERSE 10

यत्र निर्विषयबोधलक्षणः स्वात्मशम्भुरवतिष्ठते ऽनिशम् ।
तत्त्वजालकमिदं शिवावधि क्षमामुखं सकलमासनं मतम् ॥ १० ॥

**yatra nirviṣayabodhalakṣṇaḥ svātmaśambhur avatiṣṭhate 'niśam ।
tattvajālakam idaṃ śivāvadhī kṣamāmukhaṃ sakalam āsanaṃ matam ॥ 10 ॥**

The “seat” of the practitioner should be understood as that entire collection of reality levels, from earth to Śiva, upon which the deity of the innate Self whose nature is pure awareness is ever established.

VERSE 11

आत्मतत्त्वगतयोरशुद्धयोरत्र कर्मकरणात्मनोर्द्वयोः ।
शुद्धतत्त्वलयभावनामयी शुद्धिरात्मकरयोः परा मता ॥ ११ ॥

**ātmatattvagatayor aśuddhayor atra karmakaraṇātmanor dvayoḥ ।
śuddhatattvalayabhāvanāmayī śuddhir ātmakarayoḥ parā matā ॥ 11 ॥**

In this [teaching], the ultimate ritual purification of the hands is understood as visualizing the two impure realities present in the Self—“action and the [five] faculties [of action]”—dissolving into the pure reality [that is their source].

VERSE 12

वेद्यसंविद इदंस्फुरात्मनो वेत्संविदि विलापनामयी ।
वृत्तिरद्वयविमर्शविग्रहा प्राणसंयतिरुदीरितोत्तमा ॥ १२ ॥

**vedyaśaṃvidā idaṃsphurātmano vetśaṃvidi vilāpanāmayī ।
vṛttir advayavimarśavigrahā prāṇasaṃyatir udīritottamā ॥ 12 ॥**

The highest form of breath control is taught as an awareness that embodies a non-dual realization that dissolves the object of consciousness flashing forth as “this” into the consciousness of the [supreme] subject.

VERSE 13

आसनानि नवचक्रसंविदामुद्भवस्थितिलयास्त्रिशस्त्रिशः ।
अङ्गषट्करचना षडध्वनामंशतावगतिरात्मसंविदः ॥ १३ ॥

**āsanāni navacakrasaṃvidām udbhavasthīlayās triśas triśaḥ ।
aṅgaṣaṭkaracanā ṣaḍadhvanām aṃśatāvagatir ātmasaṃvidāḥ ॥ 13 ॥**

The seats [of the Goddesses of the Śrīcakra] are the arising, sustaining, and dissolution of the cognitions of the nine circuits [of the Śrīcakra], three by three. The performance of [installing the Goddess's body] in six parts of the [practitioner's] body is understanding the six courses [of the entire world] as aspects of one's own Consciousness.

VERSE 14

काम ऊर्ध्वगतबिन्दुराननं भानुरेष तदधोगतौ स्तनौ ।
चित्रभानुशशिनावुभौ कला योनिरत्र सपरार्धकुण्डली ॥ १४ ॥

**kāma ūrdhvagatabindur ānanam bhānur eṣa tad adhogatau stanau |
citrabhānuśāśināv ubhau kalā yonir atra saparārdhakunḍalī ॥ 14 ॥**

Desire (*kāma*), [which in the *kāmakaḷā* diagram] is the upper *bindu* that is the face [of the Goddess], is the sun. The active [dividing] power (*kalā*) is the two breasts below that [upper *bindu*] which correspond to both fire and the moon. Here the *yoni* is the lower half of *kunḍalinī* [in the form of the phoneme HA].

VERSE 15

एवमात्मनि चतुष्कलामये सर्वतत्त्वसमवायलक्षणे ।
न्यासमाहुरिह वैखरीतिवागवृत्तितः समविशेषभावनम् ॥ १५ ॥

**evam ātmani catuṣkalāmaye sarvatattvasamavāyalakṣaṇe |
nyāsam āhur iha vaikharītivāgvr̥ttitaḥ samaviśeṣabhāvanam ॥ 15 ॥**

In the same way, here we teach the installation [of mantras on the body] based on the activity of speech that is “articulated” to be the universal and distinct contemplation of the Self identified with the collection of all the principles of reality and endowed with four aspects.

VERSE 16

पूरुषत्वसमवाप्तिहेतुपुर्यष्टकारव्यनिजसूक्ष्मवर्ष्मणः ।
चित्पदे लयविधानमष्टवाग्देवतान्यसनमिष्टमुत्तमम् ॥ १६ ॥

**pūruṣatvasamavāptihetupuryaṣṭakākhyanijasūkṣmavarṣmaṇaḥ |
citpade layavidhānam aṣṭavāgdevatānyasanam iṣṭam uttamam ॥ 16 ॥**

The higher form of the mantric installation of the eight speech goddesses (*Vāgdevatā*) is prescribed as the practice of dissolving one's own subtle body called the “fortress of the eight,” which perpetuates individuality, into the field of consciousness.

VERSE 17

अन्तरङ्गकरणान्युपाधयः स्वप्रकाशनभसो ऽत्र सङ्क्रमात् ।
पीठभावमुपयान्ति तानि तन्न्यासकर्म परधाम्नि हृल्लयः ॥ १७ ॥

**antaraṅgakarāṇāny upādhayaḥ svaprakāśanabhaso 'tra saṅkramāt |
pīṭhabhāvam upayānti tāni tannyaśakarma paradhāmni hṛllayaḥ ॥ 17 ॥**

The [four] centers of the yogic body are the limiting factors of the sky of self-luminous awareness. They transform into the [four] power sites (*pīṭha*) located [in the body] in that order.

The rite of installing those [four inner power sites] is dissolving the Heart into supreme radiance.

VERSE 18

तत्त्वधामयुगमातृकात्मकत्रिभिर्भेदनियतेषु वस्तुषु ।
पानपात्रपरमामृतत्रयं तुर्यविश्रमणमर्घ्यशोधनम् ॥ १८ ॥

**tattvadhāmayugamātrkātmakatritribhedaniyateṣu vastuṣu ।
pānapātraparamāmṛtatrayaṃ turyaviśramaṇam arghyaśodhanam ॥ 18 ॥**

The triad of the ‘act of drinking’, the ‘vessel’, and ‘supreme nectar’ is the purification of the ritual libation (*arghya*), which is [ultimately] when the objects encompassed by the nine divisions [of the Śrīcakra]—comprising the reality levels (36), the (three) luminaries (3), the ages (4), and the phonemes (50)—[all] come to abide in the fourth state.

VERSE 19

मेदिनीप्रमुखमाशिवं मतं तत्त्वचक्रमिह चक्रमुत्तमम् ।
स्वस्वभावसमवायभासिनी देवता भवति सांविदी कला ॥ १९ ॥

**medinīpramukham āśivaṃ mataṃ tattvacakram iha cakram uttamam ।
svasvabhāvasamavāyabhāsinī devatā bhavati sāmvidī kalā ॥ 19 ॥**

The great wheel of all the reality levels, from earth to Śiva, is understood here as the supreme [Śrī]cakra. The central deity [of that *cakra*], radiantly manifesting as united with one’s inherent nature, is the dynamism of consciousness.

VERSE 20

आन्तरस्य निजसंविदात्मनो मातुरक्षकरणाध्वना बहिः ।
मेयसंविदि समर्पणं तदावाहनं समरसत्वलक्षणम् ॥ २० ॥

**āntarasya nijasaṃvidātmano mātur akṣakaraṇādhwanaḥ bahiḥ ।
meyasaṃvidi samarpaṇaṃ tad āvāhanaṃ samarasatvalakṣaṇam ॥ 20 ॥**

Casting outwardly the perceiver—the inner nature of consciousness—into object-awareness through the pathway of perception is the [true] ritual of summoning (*āvāhana*) of the deity. That [invocation of the deity] is [thus] identified as a [non-dual] fusion.

VERSE 21

पञ्चधैव यदिदं प्रपञ्चितं पञ्चधानुभवशाश्वतोदयम् ।
तत्सुसंहरणमौपचारिकं कर्म निर्मलनिजात्मसंविदि ॥ २१ ॥

**pañcadhaiva yad idaṃ prapañcitaṃ pañcadhānubhavaśāśvatodayam ।
tatsusaṃharaṇam aupacārikaṃ karma nirmalanijātmasaṃvidi ॥ 21 ॥**

This world, unfolding in a five-fold process, is the constant arising of the five [sensory] experiences. The auspicious reabsorption of that world of experience into pure, innate consciousness of the Self [here constitutes] the [five] services of ritual worship.

VERSE 22

यस्तु पञ्चदशधा प्रकल्प्यते काल एष शशिभानुसंक्रमात् ।
तस्य शाश्वतपदे लयक्रिया नित्यवासरकलार्चनं मतम् ॥ २२ ॥

**yas tu pañcadaśadhā prakalpyate kāla eṣa śaśibhānusaṅkramāt |
tasya śāśvatapade layakriyā nityavāsarakalārcanaṃ matam ॥ 22 ॥**

Time, based upon the transits of the moon and sun, is conceived as having fifteen divisions. Ritual adoration of those [fifteen] divisions of the *Nityā* [Goddesses] that govern the day is the practice of dissolving Time into the eternal.

VERSE 23

बाह्यचक्रसुषगा मरीचयस्तत्त्वजाललसदात्मसंविदः ।
तत्समर्चनमतीव चिन्मयानाख्यधाम्नि विलयक्रमक्रिया ॥ २३ ॥

**bāhyacakrasuṣagā marīcayas tattvajālalasadātmasaṃvidah |
tatsamarcanam atīva cinmayānākhyadhāmnī vilayakramakriyā ॥ 23 ॥**

One's innate consciousness, shimmering as the entire collection of principles, shines with rays that beautifully light up the tangible Śrīcakra. The [true] worship of that [*maṇḍala*] is the Krama practice of dissolving in sequence [those sensory rays] into the luminous abode of the Nameless, which is nothing but consciousness.

VERSE 24

यच्चतुर्विधमिदं विभासते तत्त्वरूपममृतान्तराकृति ।
तस्य पञ्चमपदे लयक्रिया संमतं बलिचतुष्टयं तथा ॥ २४ ॥

**yac caturvidham idaṃ vibhāsate tattvarūpam amṛtāntarākṛti |
tasya pañcamapade layakriyā saṃmatam balicatuṣṭayaṃ tathā ॥ 24 ॥**

This fourfold set of *tattvas*, whose inner aspect is nectar, shines forth. The set of four *bali* oblations should be understood as the practice of dissolving that [four-fold set of *tattvas*] into the reality of the fifth.

VERSE 25

पञ्चधा प्रसरतश्चिदात्मनो ह्यान्तरस्य बहिरिन्द्रियाध्वना ।
सामरस्यमिह संविदात्मनारात्रिकं परमिदं समीरितम् ॥ २५ ॥

**pañcadhā prasarataś cidātmano hy āntarasya bahirindriyādhvanā |
sāmarasyam iha saṃvidātmanārātrikaṃ param idaṃ samīritam ॥ 25 ॥**

The ultimate [form of ritually] waving the flame [before the deity] is taught here as the union of the individual self, flowing outwardly through the fivefold channels of the sense faculties, with the nature of pure Consciousness.

VERSE 26

वाक् सहैव मनसा निवर्तते प्राप्यनिष्कलनिरञ्जनाद्यतः ।
तत्र निर्मनसि शब्दवर्जिते धाम्नि विश्रमणामुत्तमो जपः ॥ २६ ॥

**vāk sahaiva manasā nivartate prāpyaniṣkalanirañjanād yataḥ |
tatra nirmanasi śabdavarjite dhāmi viśramaṇam uttamo japaḥ || 26 ||**

There is an undivided and pristine reality that should be realized, from which speech, together with the mind, turn away. The repetition of the mantra, in its ultimate form, is bringing [speech and the mind] to rest in that luminous reality that transcends the mind and conventional language.

VERSE 27

बिम्बितं स्फुरति यत्र संविदो रूपमान्तरमिदन्तया बहिः ।
विश्वमेतदखिलं चराचरं दर्पणं हृदयदर्पणं परम् ॥ २७ ॥

**bimbitaṃ sphurati yatra saṃvido rūpam āntaram idantayā bahiḥ |
viśvam etad akhilaṃ carācaram darpaṇam hṛdayadarpaṇam param || 27 ||**

The mirror [ritually presented to the Goddess] is the mirror of the Heart. In that [true mirror of the Heart] this entire universe of sentient beings and inanimate objects is reflected. [Although this mirror of the heart] is the innermost nature of consciousness, it radiantly manifests outwardly as the objective world.

VERSE 28

छादयन्निखलमात्मसंविदा त्रायते त्रिविधतापसंकटात् ।
यच्चिदम्बरगतं शिवात्मकं छत्रमत्र कमलं सुधामलम् ॥ २८ ॥

**chādayan nikhalam ātmasaṃvidā trāyate trividhatāpasamkaṭāt |
yac cidambaragataṃ śivātmakaṃ chatram atra kamalam sudhāmalam || 28 ||**

In this [perspective], the ritual parasol, a lotus as pure as nectar, is the reality of Śiva that spans the sky of Consciousness. Providing shelter [*cha*] with the awareness of the Self, it protects [*tra*] all beings [like an umbrella offering shade] from the perils of the three types of suffering.

VERSE 29

पञ्चधा स्फुरणमेव संविदश्चामरं विविधचारुचङ्गमम् ।
विश्वदृग्लयविचित्रनिर्मितः स्वेक्षणक्षणभवो भवस्तवः ॥ २९ ॥

**pañcadhā sphuraṇam eva saṃvidaś cāmaram vividhacārucaṅkramam |
viśvadṛglayavicitrānirmitaḥ svekṣaṇakṣaṇabhavo bhavastavaḥ || 29 ||**

The royal whisk, which has diverse and lovely waving motions, is the shimmering of innate awareness through the five [senses]. The song of praise offered to Śiva is when momentary acts of [devotional] seeing, beautifully fashioned, [all] dissolve into an all-encompassing vision [of reality].

VERSE 30

एषणात्रयमयस्य वर्ष्मणस्तत्त्वसंचयमयस्य संविदि ।
धाम्नि तत्त्वसमतीतसत्त्वके स्वात्मनः खलु निवेदनं मतम् ॥ ३० ॥

**eṣaṇātrayamayasya varṣmaṇas tattvasaṃcayamayasya saṃvidi ।
dhāmi tattvasamatītasattvake svātmanaḥ khalu nivedanaṃ matam ॥ 30 ॥**

Offering oneself should be understood as surrendering the “body,” which encompasses the collection of the reality levels with its threefold desires, into pure consciousness, that reality whose existence completely transcends all levels of reality.

VERSE 31

स्वप्रकाशवपुषा गुरुः शिवो यः प्रसीदति पदार्थमस्तके ।
तत्प्रसादमिह तत्त्वशोधनं प्राप्य मोदमुपयाति भावुकः ॥ ३१ ॥

**svapraśāśavapuṣā guruḥ śivo yaḥ prasīdati padārthamastake ।
tatprasādam iha tattvaśodhanaṃ prāpya modam upayāti bhāvukaḥ ॥ 31 ॥**

The Guru is Śiva who offers blessings in the form of the innate light of Consciousness upon the head of all beings. The initiate who receives that blessing of such a [Guru], which purifies all levels of reality, is filled with delight.

VERSE 32

पाशजालकमिदं परं पशोर्नाशकारणमतो मतं हविः ।
तत्त्वतो निजगुरोर्निरीक्षणत्प्राप्यते तदमलं पवित्रम् ॥ ३२ ॥

**pāśajālakam idaṃ paraṃ paśor nāśakāraṇam ato matam haviḥ ।
tattvato nijaguror nirīkṣaṇāt prāpyate tad amalaṃ pavitraṃ ॥ 32 ॥**

A bound individual is ensnared by an array of limitations. For this reason, the oblation to the fire (*haviḥ*) is understood [here] as bringing about their dissolution. That immaculate purifying offering (*pavitra*) is truly realized by the glance of one’s own Guru.

VERSE 33

वेद्यराशिदमनेन विश्वतो निर्विकल्पमयवासनोल्बणम् ।
चित्तमेव दमनं शिवे ऽमुकस्यार्पणं दमनकार्पणं परम् ॥ ३३ ॥

**vedyārāśidamanena viśvato nirvikalpamayavāsanolbaṇam ।
cittam eva damanaṃ śive ‘mukasyārpaṇaṃ damanakārpaṇaṃ param ॥ 33 ॥**

Through completely calming (*damana*) the diverse multitude of objects of awareness, the mind itself, with its layers of mental tendencies free of conceptual distinctions, becomes tranquil in Śiva. Such a ritual offering of that [mind] is the supreme rite of the *damanaka* offering [in honor of Kāmadeva].

VERSE 34

दीयते परशिवैक्यभावना क्षीयते सकलपापसंचयः ।
येन चिज्जलधिपारसेतुना दीक्षणं गुरुकटाक्षवीक्षणम् ॥ ३४ ॥

diyate paraśivaikyabhāvanā kṣīyate sakalapāpasamcayah |
yena cijjaladhipāraseturā dīkṣaṇam gurukaṭākṣavīkṣaṇam || 34 ||

The rite of initiation, [which is ultimately nothing but the] sudden glance of the Guru, is a bridge over the ocean of Consciousness that bestows (*dīyate*) meditation on one's unity with Supreme Śiva and dissolves (*kṣīyate*) the entire mass of negativities.

VERSE 35

अन्तरङ्गकरणात्मनां चतुःस्रोतसां विविधदेवताजुषाम् ।
पूजनं परमिहोन्मनीशिखामध्यवर्तिपरमात्मयोजनम् ॥ ३५ ॥

antaraṅgakarāṇātmanāṃ catuḥsrotasāṃ vividhadevatājuṣām |
pūjanaṃ param ihonmanīśikhāmadhyavartiparamātmayojanam || 35 ||

Here worship of the four [Kaula] streams devoted to various deities and consisting of inner elements and the Śākta pantheon, in its highest form, is uniting with the supreme Self that is present at the peak of the transmental state.

VERSE 36

पञ्चबोधकरणानि मानसं दर्शनानि विषयप्रदर्शनात् ।
दर्शनानि षडमूनि तानि तत्पूजनं भवति तल्लयश्चित्ति ॥ ३६ ॥

pañcabodhakaraṇāni mānasam darśanāni viṣayapradarśanāt |
darśanāni ṣaḍ amūni tāni tatpūjanaṃ bhavati tallayaś citi || 36 ||

The worship of the six traditions is when the mental perceptions of the five-fold senses arising from the perception of objects is dissolved into pure awareness.

VERSE 37

जाग्रदादिसमयाश्चतुर्विधाश्चान्तरात्मपरमात्मविग्रहाः ।
पञ्चमे ऽत्र तदतीतचिद्धने धाम्नि तल्लयमतिस्तदर्चनम् ॥ ३७ ॥

jāgradādisamayāś caturvidhāś cāntarātmāparamātmavigrahāḥ |
pañcame 'tra tad atītacidghane dhāmnī tallayamatis tadarcanam || 37 ||

The set of four initiatory pledges (*samaya*), which correspond to waking [and the other states], relate to the inner self and the supreme self. The worship of the *Samaya* deities is the awareness of those [four pledges / states] dissolving into the fifth, the undifferentiated light of transcendent consciousness.

VERSE 38

खे निरस्तनिखिलक्रियाक्रमे या चितिश्वरति शाश्वतोदया ।
सा शिवत्वसमवाप्तिकारिणी खेचरी निखिलखेदहारिणी ॥ ३८ ॥

**khe nirastanikhilakriyākrame yā citiś carati śāśvatodayā |
sā śivatvasamavāptikāriṇī khecarī nikhilakhedahāriṇī ॥ 38 ॥**

Consciousness, ever-arising, moves (*carati*) in the sky (*khe*) in which all sequences of action have ceased. She is thus Khecarī, who brings about the realization of the state of Śiva and removes all afflictions.

VERSE 39

यत्स्वरूपमहिमा विकल्पितं शक्तिचक्रमिह रज्जुसर्पवत् ।
तत्स्वरूपपरमार्थबोधतस्तत्र तस्य विलयो विसर्जनम् ॥ ३९ ॥

**yatsvarūpamahimā vikalpitam śakticakram iha rajjusarpavat |
tatsvarūpaparamārthabodhatas tatra tasya vilayo visarjanam ॥ 39 ॥**

The majesty of that innate nature is imagined to be a *cakra* of divine energies, like a snake [is mistaken for] a rope. The disappearance of that [*cakra*] as a result of awakening to the ultimate truth of that same innate essence [is the ultimate form] of ritually inviting the deity to depart.

VERSE 40

या क्रिया समभिहारतस्त्रिधा दर्शितात्र गुरुभावनादिका ।
सा विभेदलयभावनादिकाभ्यस्यतां परशिवैक्यसिद्धये ॥ ४० ॥

**yā kriyā samabhihāratas tridhā darśitātra gurubhāvanādikā |
sā vibhedalayabhāvanādikābhyasyatām paraśivaikyāsiddhaye ॥ 40 ॥**

The three types of ritual action, such as meditating on the Guru and other acts, are collectively revealed here. They should be practiced in the form of meditations on the dissolution of duality and difference [that structure ritual] to attain unity with supreme Śiva.

इति चिद्विलासस्तवः समाप्तः

iti cidvilāsastavaḥ samāptaḥ

This concludes the *Cidvilāsastava*.



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