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KUBJIKĀ THE EROTIC GODDESS. SEXUAL POTENCY,
TRANSFORMATION AND REVERSAL
IN THE HETERODOX THEOPHANIES
OF THE KUBJIKĀ TANTRAS

Although Kubjikā is an Indian goddess, nowadays she is virtually unknown in India and her worship there has practically ceased ¹. Even so there is a considerable body of literature associated with her cult, most of which is unedited ². Virtually all the manuscripts of the Tantras

1. References to the goddess Kubjikā outside the *Tantras* of the *Paścimāmnāya*, the Western Kaula Tradition, are relatively rare. An important passage relating to the *Umāmaheśvaracakra*, a Mantra which forms a part of her complex cult, is found in the *Agnipurāṇa*. A short medieval tract, probably of Bengali or Maithili origin, called the *Kubjikātantra* was published by Chatterjee in Bengali script in the late 19th century. There is, however, very little connection, if any, between this Tantra and those of the *Paścimāmnāya*.

2. The main Sanskrit texts I have consulted for this paper are as follows. The *Manthānabhairavatāntra*, *Kumārikākhaṇḍa* (MBT (KKh)) and *Yogākhaṇḍa* (MBT (Y)). These are two of the four sections of this *Tantra* the whole of which is not less than 22,000 verses (*śloka*) long. I am preparing a critical edition of the *Kumārikākhaṇḍa* for the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (Delhi, India). The edition, along with philological notes on the deviant forms in the Sanskrit of this text, will be about 800 pages long. The edition will be accompanied by two other volumes. The first will contain a translation of the text with extensive notes, the second will be a study of the entire *Manthānabhairavatāntra* with reference to the corpus of the *Kubjikā Tantras*. I have also made use of the *Ciñcinīmatasārasamuccaya* (CMSS) which is a short tract of about 2,000 verses that I have edited for my personal use. I have also consulted manuscripts of the *Kularatmoddyota* (KRU) and

of this Kaula cult are either Nepalese or copies of Nepalese originals. The earliest manuscripts recovered were copied in the Kathmandu Valley in the eleventh century which gives us an indication of the time the cult came to the Valley. Although initiation was not originally restricted to particular castes³, nowadays, only members of a few, largely Newar, castes have a right to be initiated. Moreover, only Rājopādhyāya Brahmins, the former family priests of the Malla kings, and their assistants, *Karmācāryas*, can give initiation⁴. Kubjikā is worshipped exclusively by Newar initiates in private shrines reserved for esoteric cult deities which, for Hindu-Newars, are generally goddesses and, for Buddhists, deities of the Anuttarayoga Tantras.

Although the texts describe a number of iconic forms, hardly any have been found. Kubjikā can and, it seems, is usually, if not always, worshipped in her *maṇḍala*; and even that is not essential. Daily worship can be performed by an initiate in his own home. It can be offered to a triangular diagram which he traces with his finger on the palm of his hand at the beginning of the rite and then imagines to be in front of him as a representation of the Vulva (*yoni*) of the goddess.

the *Śrīmatottaratantra*. An incomplete edition of the latter text has been published under the name *Gorakṣasamhitā* (vol. 1) edited by Janārdana Pāṇḍeya, Sarasvatībha-vanagranthamālā, Sampūrṇānanda Sanskrit University, 1976. The *Kubjikāmatatantra* (KMT), the root text of this school, has been edited by Goudriaan and Schoterman.

3. The original model for the adept of the Kubjikā cult is that of the renouciate *yogi*. Even so, the lists of followers of this tradition recorded in the MBT and elsewhere clearly indicate that people of all castes and women were initiated. The Brahmin householder as an initiate received a similar name (ending with *-ānanda*) as did the outcaste. The relative importance of the renouciate with respect to the householder also seems to have eroded away. Thus in one part of the MBT (KKh) the renouciate is exalted above the householder as able to attain the perfections of Yoga (*siddhi*) (*ibid.*, 11/94-6). Elsewhere we find that the reverse is the case and the householder is declared to be at least the equal, if not superior to the renouciate and the teachings are declared to be specifically for him. Interiorisation of the ritual and prescribed modes of behaviour and dress, clearly contribute to the domestication of the Kubjikā cult. At present it is virtually entirely a cult for householders. See note 11.

4. On Newar castes and their structure, see *The Newars* by GOPAL SINGH NEPALI, Himalayan Booksellers, Kathmandu, 1965.

Myths of Origin

The oldest myth concerning the origin of the goddess Kubjikā and the transmission of her cult is told in the first three chapters of the *Kubjikāmatatantra*. The scene opens with the coming of Bhairava to Himavān's ashram where he meets his daughter, the virgin (*kumārikā*) Kālikā. Bhairava shows her the entire universe as «burning with the quality (*guṇa*) of the bliss of the empowering energy (*ājñā* of the Transmission of the Teaching)»⁵. This vision makes of her «an awakened being» (*prabuddhabhāvātmā*). She is then told that she must become qualitiless and so abandon her form as a young virgin (*kumāritva*). The god then imparted the teachings to her and, ordering her to go to Mount Kumāra, he disappeared. She is amazed by what she has seen and in this state of «supreme wonder» she questions distraught: «Who are you and what am I doing?»⁶. After long thinking, she abandons her companions and goes to the Mountain of the Moon (Candraparvata) to look for Bhairava. This mountain is said to lie to the west of Meru⁷. It is a beautiful tropical paradise, a place

5. *Ājñā* is an important technical term found particularly in the *Kubjikā Tantras*. Literally, the word means «permission» or «command» and so, by extension, «grace» or «empowerment». Through the power of «*ājñā*» the deity dispenses «*adhikāra*». This word denotes the fitness or suitability of a person or being to perform a certain task or fulfill a function. It can be translated as «authority». A god, for example, may be given the authority – *adhikāra* – to govern a particular world order by the permission / command / grace – *ājñā* – of the Supreme Deity. The Master transmits it as an empowering energy to his disciple in the course of initiation. It is literally transferred into the body through the recitation of the Mantras (KRU 5/148ab). The psychic centre between the eyebrows where the teacher is said to reside is called «*ājñācakra*». This is because the mental faculties lie here and beyond it is the domain of «*ājñā*» which is that of Kubjikā as the energy *unmanā* – «Beyond Mind». This is the energy of the will (*icchāśakti*) that conjoins with the transcendental sphere of Śiva (*śāmbhava-pada*). It seems that the technical use of this term was developed particularly in this Kaula school but is not unknown outside it. In the *Kṛṣṇayāmala*, the goddess Tripurā is said to be «under the control of Kṛṣṇa's command (*ājñā*)» (KY 4/8). In a more technical sense, a name of the goddess Lalitā in the *Lalitāsahasranāmastotra* of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* is «*ājñā*». In the *Lingapurāṇa* Śiva says that «initially my eternal command (*ājñā*) arose out of my mouth». See *Lalitāsahasranāmastotra*, translation by Suryanarayana Murti, p. 174.

6. KMT 1/54-5.

7. The Western Tradition – *Paścimannāya* – is that of the goddess Kubjikā. The

where, the text says «Kāmadeva has taken up his residence»⁸. This mountain «made of the beauty of the moon» has at its centre a beautiful Stone (*śilā*). It is in fact a *maṇḍala* with symbolic doors, fortified walls and arches. The goddess is again astonished when she beholds the Stone. The previous state of wonder with its ensuing confusion was brought about by her cosmic vision that induced her to wander throughout the world in search of the god. The present state of wonder, in a sense, reverses all that occurred in the previous one. She is astonished not by the vision of a universal reality but by that of a marvellous particular. Instead of it inducing her to action and «waking up» she mounts the Stone and falls into a yogic trance brought about by the energy of empowerment (*ājñā*). As a result, the world is enveloped in her energy and merged into her as she assumes the form of a *Liṅga* (*liṅgarūpā*)⁹.

word «*paścima*» means both «west» and «subsequent». Thus the following statements can have two possible meanings:

paścimedam kṛtaṃ deva pūrvabhāgavivarjitam
(KMT 2/20cd)

paścimaṃ sarvamārgānām (*ibid.* 2/21c)

They can mean: «This, O god, is (the tradition of the) west / (the tradition which is) subsequent devoid of the (tradition of the) east / prior (one)».

And: «The last/western (portion) of all the paths».

Of the two options it seems that in these references the sense of «*paścima*» seems to be that which follows after in time. It is the latest Tradition. Bhairava has told the goddess that before (*pūrva*) he had given her the teachings now it is she who has to propagate them. In this sense «*paścima*» would mean «subsequent». The distinction is temporal rather than spatial. The spatial is, however, more common. The association repeatedly made in the MBT between the *Paścimāmnāya* and *Sadyojāta* indicates an adaptation of a Siddhānta model. Of Sadāśiva's five faces which teach various doctrines, *Sadyojāta* is the western face. Although both directional and temporal symbolism are found in the texts there is a greater emphasis on the former rather than the latter. In space, the *Paścimāmnāya* is closely associated with the Mountain of the Moon, a place that the goddess likes in a special way and underscores the goddess's strong lunar associations. It is also the place from she sets off to spread the teachings in the land of Bhārata. Its location to the «west of Meru» (*ibid.*, 1/59c) does not seem to be coincidental. In time the *Paścimāmnāya* is the latest and, in a sense, the last because it is the Kaula tradition of the Kaliyuga, the fourth and last aeon. The previous three aeons are associated with the three traditions of the other three cardinal directions.

8. *Ibid.* 1/57-9.

9. *Ibid.* 1/63-6.

Now it is the god's turn to be overawed to see that there, in the absence of the goddess's creation (*śāmbhavīśṛṣṭi*), everything shares in the perfection of absolute being (*nirāmaya*). Everything is immersed in the darkness of the unmanifest absolute except the place where the goddess in the form of a Liṅga resides which, due to its brilliance, he calls the Island of the Moon. The god now abandons his unmanifest form and begins to praise the Liṅga. This arouses the goddess from the oblivion of her blissful introverted contemplation and she bursts apart the Liṅga to emerge from it in all the splendour of her powerful ambivalence. Dark as «blue collyrium» she is «beautiful and ugly and of many forms». Bhairava asks the goddess for the favour of empowerment (*ājñā*), confessing that her terrible austerity is harmful to him. The goddess is overcome with emotion and shame and becomes bent over (*kubjikārūpā*).

The goddess is not embarrassed just because she has been asked to be the god's teacher but because this implies that she must unite with him to make the transmission effective. The goddess who is «round» as the Liṅga becomes «crooked» as the triangular Vulva (*yoni*)¹⁰. From the previously neutral indifference of transcendence, she must be aroused to become the fertile, erotic womb. The energy that is transmitted through the lineage of teachers is the spiritual energy of her aroused sexuality. It is the flow of HER emission. The energy of empowerment (*ājñā* - a feminine word) is her seminal fluid that is released through the conjunctio with her male partner. The god encourages her to unite with him by reminding her that the empowering energy (*ājñā*) she has to give is a product of their reciprocal relationship.

But for this union to be possible and complete, the goddess must travel around the Land of Bhārata. In her tour the goddess propagates the teachings by generating sons and daughters¹¹ by uniting with an

10. Danielou writes: «In the stage beyond manifestation the yoni is represented by the circle, the central point being the root of the liṅga. But in differentiated creation, the three qualities become distinct and the circle changes to a triangle. These are the essential figurations in the symbolism of yantras». *The Gods of India*, Hindu Polytheism, by ALAIN DANIELOU, Inner Traditions International Ltd., New York, 1985, p. 231. Danielou thinks of the central point of the triangle as the *liṅga*. he says that «the liṅga stands for liberation in all the triangles of nature» (*Ibid.*).

11. To be initiated is to be born as the son or daughter of the god/goddess and so

aspect of Bhairava in the sacred places she visits. Minor conjunctions led to and make up the supreme conjunction. She receives the energy to do this from an assembly of Siddhas and Yoginīs who unite in ritual intercourse (*Khecarīcakra*). In another myth of initiatory empowerment told in the *Manthānabhairavatantra*, it is Bhairava who receives authority from the goddess in this assembly. There the goddess again appears in a powerful kratophony, this time she does not emerge from a Liṅga but from the sacrificial jar placed in the centre of the *maṇḍala*. This was previously filled with Bhairava's sperm produced from him by the massage of the members of the assembly. It seems, therefore that although the male partner is essential even so he, in a sense, produces HER sperm.

In her journey around the land of Bhārata the goddess assumes various forms in various places where she resides as the presiding goddess of that place. She thus reveals different aspects of herself according to where she becomes manifest. Thus in some of these places the erotic component of her nature becomes apparent. The form of the goddess is, as one would expect, particularly erotic in Kāmarūpa.

belong to a family/lineage/clan along with other initiates. The motherhood of the goddess in this sense is as particular as it is universal. She travels to the sacred sites and there generates sons and daughters. In this way a household (*grha*) is formed. In this household the members belong to diverse clans (*gotra*) and distinctions in caste (*jāti*) are recognised. The stages of life marked by the requisite ritual purifications (*samskāra*) as outlined in the *smṛtis* is also reproduced. Initiation into this tradition largely follows the model of the Śaivasiddhānta in many respects and this is one of them. A necessary preliminary for initiation into Siddhānta Śaivism is the regeneration of the aspirant as a «Śaiva Brahmin» (*Śaivadviija*) who is fit to receive the initiation. The pattern here is largely based on the Vedic initiation in which the sacrificer must, for the purpose of the sacrifice, also be the priest and so must be transformed accordingly. The *Kubjikā Tantras*, as do the *Tantras* as a whole, prohibit caste distinctions in the ritual setting. At the same time, the distinction is never forgotten outside it. Moreover, initiates into other Tantric systems that are not Kaula are treated as if they belonged to a different caste. They should not eat the sacrificial offerings with initiated Kaulas who are enjoined to make every effort to avoid intermingling with them. The *guthi* institution that operates amongst the Newars in the Kathmandu Valley seems to be derived from the incorporation of family lineage and caste as aspects of a transmission. The ambiguity of having a caste and hence being a part of the conventional, «orthodox» social order and being without caste as a progeny of the goddess is paralleled by that which prevails between the identity of the initiate as being somehow both householder and a homeless renunciate. Cf. above, note 3.

There she is «made haughty by the enjoyment of passion» (*kāmabhogakṛtāṭopā*). Her aroused erotic nature is symbolized by her fluidity, she melts or flows. She is also arousing so she causes to melt and flow «the three worlds» by the force of her desire (*icchā*). Thus she is called both *śukrā* – «female sperm» and *śukravāhinī* – «she who causes sperm to flow». This reminds us of the ancient symbolic connection found in the Veda between moisture, water, rain, potent fluids (including sexual juices and milk) and energy¹². Moreover, her intense spiritual potency is symbolized by her powerful sexuality represented by her perpetual moisture as the Vulva full of seed¹³. Even she is amazed to perceive the intensity of her erotic state and for a moment loses consciousness, overawed by the powerful beauty of her own form. This is just as happens to the initiate in the rites of initiation due to the impact of the empowering energy of the Transmission. Here she is young and passionate (*kāminī*) and what she reveals gives even the god who merely beholds her here «the attainment of the fruit of the bliss of passion». Again, this is just what happens ideally at the climax of initiation when the Master (*ācārya*) gazes at the disciple who falls down «like a tree cut down from its root» liberated from the burden of Karma by the sudden rise of the energy of Kuṇḍalinī that pierces through his inner psychic centres. Aroused and arousing in this way, she is accordingly called the «Mistress of Passion» (*kāmeśvarī*) and as such is implicitly identified with the goddess Tripurāsundarī.

12. The primary symbols that are manipulated in the *Tantras* of all schools, Hindu, Buddhist or Jain can be traced, or at least related to, the symbolism of the Vedas and the Vedic ritual. Indeed, many important symbols universally found in the *Tantras* such as those that relate to the sun, moon and fire cannot be properly understood without reference to their earlier naturalist basis. This is most evident in the Veda where it is more evident how that nature serves as the primary source of its symbols. These same symbols frequently reappear in the *Tantras* but are so internalized and abstracted that their original form as natural symbols, although apparent to a degree, is not clearly evident. It is possible, in fact, to find parallels and precedents in Vedic literature for many symbols and ritual patterns found in the *Tantras*. This would have to be the object of a separate study.

13. The temple to the goddess Kāmākhya at Gauhati in Assam, the site identified by tradition as that of Kāmarūpa, enshrines the Yoni of the goddess. It is a round black stone that emerges from the ground. There is a cleft running down its centre from which water seeps, constantly fed by a small underground spring. The water that emerges becomes periodically red during which time the goddess is said to be in mensis.

Kubjikā's varied identity as a range of goddesses symbolizes the varied facets of her metaphysical being, her «personality» if one would hazard to perceive one in a purely Tantric deity such as this one with a relatively scant mythology. Accordingly, in one of her iconic forms, she is depicted as having six faces. One of these is that of Tripurā¹⁴. Again, in the Sequence of the Young Woman which, along with that of the Girl and the Old Woman, is one of the three ritual procedures through which she is worshipped, she is portrayed as Tripurā. Tripurā, young and attractive, is the acme of the erotic goddess. Her

14. The goddess has three basic forms: 1) Gross 2) Cosmic and 3) Triangular as the Yoni. The most important gross form in which she is visualized is described in chapter 29 of the MBT (KKh) verse 34cd to the end. There she is said to be dark blue like a blue lotus and brilliant like the ashes of Kaula (*vīra*) yogis. She has six faces each with three eyes which are the Sun and Moon with Fire in the centre. As the six spheres of her *maṇḍala*, she is of six types and is the power of consciousness that moves inwardly. She has twelve arms and is adorned with many garlands. She sits on a lion throne made of a corpse (*preta*) and is adorned with many ornaments. She is established in the Kula teachings and the countless Kula schools with their secrets. The lords of the snakes serve as her anklets, zone, belt, chock and tiara; scorpions are the rings on her fingers. In her twelve hands she carries: the stick of the world, a great lotus, ascetic's staff (*khaṭvāṅga*), noose, makes the gesture of fearlessness, a rosary, a bouquet of brilliant jewels, countless scriptures held along with a conch (*śaṅkha*), a skull, a gesture which grants boons, trident, the mirror of Karma and the five immortal substances.

On her head is a garland of vowels and she has a necklace of letters. Around her throat is a necklace of 50 scorpions. Her six faces are as follows:

- 1) Uppermost: the goddess Parā: It is white as milk and possesses 17 energies.
- 2) Top of the head: Mālinī. This is the face of the sky. It is white like a conch or snow and is peaceful and serious (*saumya*).
- 3) Eastern face: Siddhayogeśvarī. It is white and distraught with rage. It is adorned with the form of Mantra.
- 4) Southern face: Kālikā. This face is terrible (*raudra*) with large protruding teeth. It is like a dark blue lotus.
- 5) Northern face: Tripurā. This face is red like a pomegranate flower. It is round like the full moon, peaceful and gives bliss.
- 6) Western face: This is the face of Umākhecārī and is white.

The heart of the goddess shines like a clean mirror. Her countenance (presumably with its six faces) shines with the rays of the newly risen sun and is radiant with brilliant energy. The topknot is made of light that shines like countless lightning flashes. Her breast plate is made of brilliant energy and is hard to pierce. It is hard to behold and is of many forms. Her weapon is like the Fire of Time that licks up (the worlds) and is hard to bear. The text teaches that by visualizing the goddess in this way one should consume everything with the brilliant energy (*tejas*) of the goddess.

enchancing spirituality and perfect purity is intensely and vividly conveyed by her form as powerfully spiritual as it is erotic. Tripurā is the «Mistress of Passion» (i.e. the primordial cosmogonic desire and energy of grace) *par excellence*. Incorporated into the goddess Kubjikā or as one of her manifestations, Kubjikā colonises the goddess Tripurā even as she reveals through her one of her dimensions¹⁵.

The androgynous form of the goddess as a «Yoni-Liṅga» (an expression used in the texts) is particularly important in this account and it is this aspect that is stressed when this myth is retold in a different, but essentially similar form in the *Manthānabhairavatantra*. There she assumes this form in a cave on Kailash, the *axis mundi*. Her crooked form when she emerges from the Liṅga is the Yoni, the manifest form, normally kept hidden that the god desires to see. As the Liṅga in the Cave (*guhā*), she is withdrawn into herself – the Cave of the Yoni which, by another reversal, is the «Abode of Sambhu». In this condition she is inactive. As, the male phallus, she is impotent,

15. Tripurā and her *yantra* – Śrīcakra – serve as vehicles for the transmission of energy to other goddesses. This energy is symbolized and evidenced by an intensity of passion. Tripurā, a powerfully erotic goddess, serves to intensify the erotic energy of other goddesses. This appears to be the case with the goddess Kubjikā and so too, for example, with Rādhā in the *Kṛṣṇayāmala*. The KY declares that when Kṛṣṇa desires pleasure (*bhoga*) he contemplates himself in the form of a woman and Rādhā is created (chapter 12). But although generated by Kṛṣṇa for his own purposes, Rādhā turns out to be indifferent in him even though she is described as «passionate» (*susnigdā*) (chapter 13). From chapter 16 to chapter 28, the *Tantra* describes Kṛṣṇa's struggle to attract Rādhā. In order to do this Kṛṣṇa transforms himself into Tripurā. The goddess then sends out the energies that surround her in Śrīcakra one sphere at a time to overcome Rādhā's pride and fill her with desire. But Rādhā either makes these energies her own servants or frightens them away with the energies generated from her own body. Finally Tripurā herself sets about the task and assumes the form of Mantra. She then recites the Mantras and displays the gestures (*mudrā*) that are made when worshipping the triangle which is the innermost part of Śrīcakra. The gestures arouse her passion and make her feel distressed by separation from Kṛṣṇa. The final gesture makes her completely shameless. Finally, of course, the couple unite. This myth clearly illustrates how passionate sexual desire is a symbol of spiritual desire and how this must grow to an unbearable extreme to lead to final union. The shame Rādhā feels is the final stage she must abandon just as Kubjikā has to do to give herself up totally to the ravishment of the conjunction (see above, p. 117). Here Tripurā plays the role of the erotic goddess who imparts her passion to Rādhā through the ritual she performs. Analogously, the incorporation of this goddess into the composite figure of Kubjikā serves to enhance her erotic power.

immersed in formless contemplation. This conjunctio is accordingly called the Neuter (*napuṃsakam*). It can be the «neuter-male» absolute, in which case the term retains its regular neuter gender. It can also be the Female Eunuch: the feminine «*napuṃsakā*». In one myth of origin, recorded in the *Kularattnodiyota*, the goddess is generated from the god just as in the earlier myths, she emerges as the Yoni from the Liṅga. In another myth in the *Kularattnodiyota*, he is generated from her. In this case the Liṅga emerges out of the Yoni which is symbolized by the stone (*śilā* - a feminine word!) that acts as the *maṇḍala* that envelopes its base in the account of the *Kubjikāmatatantra*¹⁶. In this way, these Tantras attempt to portray the goddess simultaneously as a polarity in a conjunctio and as containing within herself the conjunctio as a *coincidentia oppositorum*. She is simultaneously the two opposites. Reversals of opposites, their conjunction, identification and transcendence all operate together in the dynamics of the goddess. She relates to her male opposite both externally and internally. This gives rise to three possibilities:

1) The goddess is alongside the god in the centre of the matrix of energy that is the goddess.

16. Sex change is a recurrent mythological theme. This is an example of the sex change of a feminine deity to a male one which, on the contrary to the somewhat easier and more common reverse change, involves not the loss of a sex organ but its acquisition. Another example is found in the *Hevajratantra*. The Buddha recommends that the adept identify with either of the two partners of the conjunctio, namely, the female Nairātmyā or the male Hevajra. But even though either is initially presented as equally good for the solitary state (*ekavira/ā*), the culminating conjunctio invariably takes place with Nairātmyā, not Hevajra (called Heruka in the passage below), because the initiate must be reconstituted in the womb of his Mother. Consequently a question arises as to how the adept who has identified with Nairātmyā can couple to generate himself. The Buddha replies by saying: «The *yogi* who has identified with the goddess Nairātmyā should, abandoning the feminine form, assume the form of the Lord (*bhagavān*). After relinquishing the breasts, the Vajra (i.e. phallus) arises in the middle of the Lotus (i.e. vagina), the sides become the bells (i.e. testicles) and the stamen (i.e. the clitoris) becomes the Vajra. The other forms assumed are those of Heruka, the great being of erotic delight. The man who is one with Heruka attains the masculine form without any difficulty and by this the *yogi* whose powers are fully manifest attains the Gesture of Accomplishment». (*Hevajratantra* 2/2/23-5)

The matrix of energy can be understood as that of Speech. This universal power through which the cycles of existence are perpetuated consists of the primary energy of the phonemes that together constitute the womb of Mantras. Laid out in a triangular diagram, called Meru, they are assigned to fortyeight small triangles drawn within the triangle. In one scheme their contents are symbolized as 48 Siddhas who reside in the Yoni. The last two, the letters «H» and «KS» represent the god and the goddess in the centre in the vertical dimension. Energizing conjunctios are in this way occurring in a number of ways. Each male siddha is in conjunctio with the female triangle in which he resides. All of them together are contained in the one cosmic Yoni in the centre of which is the universal hierogamy that compliments and completes the individual conjunctios. The phonemes thus arranged according to their normal alphabetical order constitute the male Aggregate of Words: - *Śabdarāsi*.

One could say that this is a dominantly male Yoni despite the multiple conjunctios that generate energy both universally and through each particular. To set the balance, a second Yoni is required which is dominantly female. This is achieved by laying out in the same fashion another order of the alphabet which is female. This is called Mālinī «the Goddess who wears the Garland of Letters». This second Yoni represents the withdrawal of the energies into the primordial chaos in which male vowels («seeds») are higgaldy piggaldy conjoined to female consonants («yonis»). These two, *Śabdarāsi* and Mālinī are, along with *maṇḍala* and *mudrā*, Mantra and *vidyā*, one of a triad of conjunctios that together constitute the triadic universe. Their conjunction analogously makes the ritual powerful along with its Mantras and yoga. In this case Mantra is the Nine-syllabled Mantra (*navātmāmantra*) which is the sound-body of the god Bhairava and the *vidyā* is the One-syllabled Vidyā (*ekākṣaravidyā*) which is the sound-body of Kubjikā. This is the syllable «AIM». Its triangular form with an upward slanting line topped by the nasalizing point nicely represents the Yoni with its clitoris (the female phallus) and the seed that arouses it to fertility and power.

2) The god is in the centre of the matrix alone.

In this scheme the Triangle of energies is made of the phonemes that are laid out around the sides. Śiva is in the centre surrounded by his energies. Although one would think this to be the most fundamental scheme insofar as it represents the Liṅga in the Yoni – the most common conjunctio in India, this scheme is not at all as common as the previous one or the following.

3) She is in the centre of the matrix alone as a *coincidentia oppositorum*.

This is a very powerful and important option. The Yoni is not only a matrix of Mantric energy, it is also the world of the Transmission of the energy through the Lineages of the Traditions. The Triangle in this perspective has at its corners and centre the primary sacred seats (*pīṭha*) of the goddess. These are the well-known, indeed paradigmatic sites: Pūrṇagiri, Jālandhara, Kāmarūpa and Uḍḍiyāna. In these centres reside the teachers of the primordial Divine Transmission (*divyaugha*). This scheme, incidently, in this, unmodified, form is just as we find in the innermost triangle of Śrīcakra ¹⁷. It can be amplified with the addition of more sacred sites and there are a good number of variations on this basic pattern ¹⁸.

17. See my *The Canon of the Śaivāgama and the Kubjikā Tantras of the Western Kaula Tradition*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988, p. 178 n. 110.

18. The Yoni as a triangular figure represents a series of triads with which Kubjikā, as Śāmbhaviśakti, Śiva's energy in its cosmic form, is consequently identified. It is in this triadic form that the energy is manifestly active (*prasṛta*).

These triads are:

- 1) A) The Transmental (*Manonmanī*) - Will (*Ichchā*)
 B) The Pervasive (*Vyāpinī*) - Knowledge (*Jñāna*)
 C) The Equal One (*Samanā*) - Action (*Kriyā*)
- 2) The Drop (*Bindu*), Sound (*Nāda*) and Energy (*Kalā*)
- 3) The Drop (*Bindu*) as the Principle of Time (*Kālatattva* i.e. Śiva), the Principle of Knowledge (*Vidyātattva*) and the Principle of the Self (*Āmatattva*). These correspond to: i) the three qualities of Nature (*guṇa*), ii) Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra (MBT (Y) p. 390-2).

An important feature of this sacred geography is that it is always understood to have an internal equivalent as places within the inner,

4) The Three Sequences. These are three sequences (*krama*) of ritual action. The ritual reenacts the creation of the world and so this triad, as do the others, generates the world. The triad consists of i) The Sequence of the Girl (*Bālākrama*), ii) The Sequence of the Young Woman (*Yauvanākrama*) and iii) The Sequence of the Old Woman (*Vṛddhākrama*).

5) Corresponding to the previous triad is that of the three sequences (*krama*) i) Individual (*Ānava*), ii) Empowered (*Śākta*) and iii) Pertaining to Śiva (*Śāmbhava*).

6) An important triad is that of the three energies: i) Supreme (*Parā*), ii) Middling (*Parāparā*) and iii) Inferior (*Aparā*). This triad is that of the goddess Mālinī who, as the crooked Kuṇḍalinī, is the Yoni (ibid., p. 376). The connections between the Kubjikā tradition and the Trika that flourished in Kashmir are numerous. This one is frequently stressed.

Just as triads are an important feature of the symbolism of the Yoni, so are quaternities. These are formed from the triad for the corners with an extra element for the centre. Further additions have been made to the basic pattern and so the *pīṭhas* are in various places said to be 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. The group of 8 is based on the principle of geometric compounding of octades. The Goddess Parā, who is equated with Khañjini («She Who walks with a limp»), the alias of Kubjikā («The Hunchback»), resides in all the eight sacred centres. She radiates her empowering energy (*ājñā*) throughout them through the medium of a teacher who is given the title «Nātha» and so reveals the Tradition within it. The Supreme Goddess in the centre of each *pīṭha* is portrayed as six-fold (*ṣaṣṭprakāra*) because there are six primary forms of the Goddess in each location. In the first *pīṭha*, *Ādipīṭha*, these six aspects are: *Uḍḍāmbā*, *Raktā*, *Kālī*, *Karālīnī*, *Kālasaṃkarṣiṇī* and *Kubjikā*. It is interesting to note that here Kubjikā is understood as an aspect of Parā and that Kālī is such along with her. In this way the close connection between these goddesses and hence with the traditions of which they are the primary deities are brought into close juxtaposition.

The eight *pīṭhas* are:

- 1) *Ādipīṭha*
- 2) *Jālandhara*
- 3) *Pūrṇa*
- 4) *Kāmarūpa*
- 5) The Union of Three - *Tisra*
- 6) The Moon - *Candra*
- 7) The Sound - *Nāda*
- 8) The Unmanifest - *Avyakta*

They each contain six octades (*aṣṭaka*) called:

- 1) *Bhairava*
- 2) *Yoginī*
- 3) *Vīra*
- 4) *Dūtī*
- 5) *Kṣetra*
- 6) *Ceṣṭa*

subtle body, technically called «*kulapiṇḍa*» – the body of energy. The goddess is moving through this body sanctifying its parts by filling them with the energy of empowerment (*ājñā*). Ultimately, this body of fully empowered energy is the body of the goddess. In one respect it has the shape of a human body with a head, arms and legs but in another, deeper aspect, it is the sacred sphere (*maṇḍala*) of the goddess which is her Yoni. Although the texts do not say so explicitly, it seems that the triangular land of Bhārata is just that Portion of the Virgin Goddess.

In the centre of this goddess, who is the Yoni, is the same goddess as the Liṅga that makes her blissful. It is the «Crooked Liṅga» (*vakrālīṅga*), the Liṅga of the goddess Vagrā, the Crooked goddess i.e. the energy Kuṇḍalini – symbolized by the clitoris «facing downward». From this Liṅga «churned from above», as the texts tell us, flows out the creation of the goddess into the spheres of her psycho-cosmic *maṇḍala*. Its primary form is the energy of empowerment (*ājñā*) which is the Drop (*bindu*) of white, lunar sperm that also flows through the Transmission ¹⁹. In this scheme the goddess forms an

The remaining elements are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) The Tree (<i>vrkṣa</i>) | 9) The Gesture (<i>mudrā</i>) |
| 2) The Root (<i>kanda</i>) | 10) The Pledge (<i>samaya</i>) |
| 3) The Tendril (<i>vallī</i>) | 11) The Seed (<i>bīja</i>) |
| 4) The Creeper (<i>latā</i>) | 12) Speech (<i>bhāṣā</i>) |
| 5) The Cave (<i>guhā</i>) | 13) <i>Vaṭuka</i> |
| 6) <i>Yakṣiṇī</i> | 14) The Servant (<i>kiṃkara</i>) |
| 7) <i>Mahābalā</i> | 15) The Cremation Ground (<i>śmaśāna</i>) |
| 8) The Secret Language (<i>chomakā</i>) | 16) The Hermitage (<i>maṭha</i>) |

It is interesting to note that the names of the female attendants (*dūtī*) in Kāmarūpa largely coincide with those found in Śricakra. These are the names of the arrows of the god Kāmadeva. Also worth noting, is that the Yakṣiṇī in one of these *pīṭhas* is called Khañjini. The cathonic connection and that with the vegetal world and the Goddess is here quite evident. Her power, as usual, is understood as flowing through the transmission of her teachings. These conduits of power are here represented as living. They are trees, creepers, roots and vines which, with the other elements, form a part of the sacred geography of the Yoni and its inhabitants. (MBT (Y) p. 394-427. This section is called *Brhatpīṭhādihikāraṇa*).

¹⁹. Doniger quotes the following passage to show how the more common concept of the male androgynous Liṅga appears in contemporary South India in a modified form:

internal conjunctio with herself. Self-stimulation and the self-regeneration of bliss is symbolized by the image of the goddess found in the *Parātantra* as licking her own Yoni to drink its vitalizing juices.

All three schemes, not only the last, in their own way attempt to represent a Möbius strip-like system that perpetually reverts back into and out of itself. To reinforce this process theory of reality and its immediate ritual and soteriological application, the entire system itself emerges from a pre-cosmic absolute and reverts back to it. This absolute is both a neuter transcendent (beyond the opposites) and the sexuater neutrality of the conjunction of opposites which is the dynamic condition of their interrelation that characterizes immanence. The «Neuter» (*napuṃsakam*) is an androgynous absolute generated by the hierogamy of Śiva and Śakti. It is the One understood as the supreme conjunctio from which all the phenomenal order is generated.

This conjunction takes places in stages, the first of which is desire, just as it was the last to be absorbed into it. The passionate desire of the primordial couple, male and female, engulfs and consummes into itself all other things. When only that remains beside the Two, it is finally absorbed into the ecstasy (*ānanda*) of their conjunctio. The fullness of their passion manifests, as Abhinava puts it, in the fullness of their union²⁰. But although union brings perfect satisfaction it does not extinguish desire. It is not the end but a new beginning. Pure transcendence can only be a metaphorical possibility in any scheme of reality. It necessarily lies outside it. It is total extinction, the end of all

«The civalinkam or the phallus is a male form, but the substance within it, which is liquid (semen) or light (the diety), which is its action, is cakti, female ... the sign of maleness is really the locus of female qualities in a man, the male womb [that yields a] milky, generative substance» (Egnor in *Sexual Metaphors and Animal Symbols in Indian Mythology* by WENDY DONIGER O'FLAHERTY, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981, p. 318).

She goes on to comment:

«In the context of Indian Ideas about self-contained fluids, the liṅga in the yoni may be regarded as a male image in another way; it may symbolize the fantasy of protecting the phallus by taking it inside the body – the male's body – a narcissistic fantasy of self – sufficiency.

This would be an inversion of the myth in which the full body of the god Śiva emerges from inside the liṅga» (*ibid.* p. 318).

The *liṅga* in this case is clearly within the goddess.

20. TĀ 3/170.

endings. The transcendent IS because it is not, never has been, nor ever will be, touched by becoming. The conjunctio IS a conjunctio because it is taking place NOW. It is perpetually renewed. It IS because it OCCURS not just because it exists. And so Desire arises ever and anew. It is the energy of the conjunctio, Kaulinī who is the Mother of Insight (*darśana*), the Supreme Goddess, the Female Eunuch (*napuṃsakā*) whose form is the «sprout» of the clitoris²¹.

It is certainly true, as Doniger points out, that «male androgynes by far outnumber female androgynes and are generally regarded as positive, while the female androgynes ... are generally negative»²². Moreover, «the female androgyne is not only barren but dangerous: she is a women with a phallus, the erotic mare in the “wrong” species, who threatens the seducing man with opposition»²³. Even so, this does not entirely apply to Kubjikā who is a rare example of an Indian androgynous goddess. Although she is not represented as such in her iconography, her more «essential» identity as ambivalent Yoni shares masculine traits along with its obviously feminine ones. Even though she is a feminine androgynous being, she is predominantly positive and, in this case, is not infertile. She does however have a dark, negative side which is represented by Kālī with whom she is regularly identified²⁴. Her association with the lower spheres of existence is connected to her igneous identity. She is the devouring consumming mother as the Fire of the Aeons (*samvartā*) that burns in the centre of her sacred Circle – *samvartāmaṇḍala*, the «Divine Liṅga». There, in the Centre, she is Rudra's energy which is «beautifully terrifying» (*subhīṣaṇī*). It is this aspect which identifies her most closely with Kālī.

But even though she, like Kālī, consummes the worlds into the Void of her Yoni, the Triangle of the energies of will, knowledge and action, Kubjikā is largely a benign androgyne despite her femininity. This is because the tension between the opposites is released within her through the blissful flux of emission. Her mad passion to consume everything into herself – the cosmic womb – has been satisfied. She is

21. MBT (Y) p. 181.

22. DONIGER, '81, p. 284.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 288.

24. For example, see above p. 113-114.

blissful with the Liṅga pouring out its energizing seed within her. Filling her, that is, with that same energy of bliss that is her own dynamic nature. As Alan Watts remarks, the Tantric androgyne symbolizes a state «in which the erotic no longer has to be sought or pursued, because it is always present in its totality».²⁵

With this androgyne, there is no association with fears of loss of power and virility²⁶. On the contrary, from the Yoni vitality is gained, drunk as from the Fountain of Life. The Yoni with its Triadic associations of the Solar, Lunar and Igneous energies that reside in the corners and fuse in the Centre are energized by it. Transposing in abstracted terms the natural symbols exploited so extensively in the earlier Vedic tradition, the Sun as a universal Tantric symbol applied in this specific context combines within itself all the positive forces that make for fertility and power. The Moon drips its nectar as the secretion of the Yoni that «oozes bliss» and the Fire burns to accept that offering to strengthen the deities and the body of the Perfected Yogi (*siddha*) that contains them.

Tantric symbols and rituals as often happens, although drawn from the outer world of nature, symbolize inner states. Kubjikā is first and foremost Kuṇḍalinī. It is in fact in these Tantras that the symbolism of Kuṇḍalinī and the stations of her rise and descent was first elaborated in its most commonly known form. These centres are themselves Yonis of energy in the centre of which the Goddess of the Centre (*madhyadevī*) resides²⁷. And by the logic of reversals that characterize

25. *Patterns of Myth*, Vol. 3, *The Two Hands of God: The Myths of Polarity*, by ALAN W. WATTS, New York 1963, p. 204-5.

26. Cf. DONIGER, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

27. There are two principle Yonis, an upper and a lower. The latter is called the «Circle of Birth» (*janmacakra*). In the centre of this Circle is another one called the «Circle of the Drop» (*bindumaṇḍala*). In the centre of this resides the mantric energy of the goddess as *Parā Vidyā* (the seed-syllable «AIM»). This is *Rudraśakti* who is the brilliant energy (*tejas*) of the Drop. Her form is like that of a bright flame (*śikhā*) that burns fiercely on the wick of a lamp. This is the goddess who the Expansion (*vikāsa*) of is consciousness. Aroused by the force of the exhaled breath, it burns upward in the form of the subtle resonance (*nāda*) of blissful consciousness into the higher spheres of existence, consuming the dross of the Karma of the lower spheres. It is progressively led upward by the current of the channel which runs along the axis of the subtle body (i.e. *susumnā*). After it has passed through various stages, it wains away in the Drop in the centre of the Triangle of Meru at the top of its passage.

microcosms according to which the container is the contained and vice versa, they all form a part of the sacred geography of the Yoni. This is the body of the goddess and, by extension, that of the initiate, energized by the Mantras that are the «waves of the Ocean of the Yoni». Thus when she rises within the Yogi, she rises within herself and the hierogomany that results at the climax of her flow is completely internalized. The male Liṅga is so fused with the female Liṅga that the first is experienced as an inner extension of the second within the Yoni. The Yogi must return to the primordial emptiness of the Yoni. Not him, for the Self resides there in any case. The Physical world, body, sensations, the play of the qualities, the vital constituents of the body all, in short, that has been previously labelled and energized with Mantra as part of the constitution of reality, the spheres of energy – all this must dissolve away into the primal androgynous being.

This process is energized by the energy of the Moon Goddess Kubjikā who resides in the centre of the Yoni in her aspect as the energy of the New Moon (*amākalā*). This is the Sequence of Withdrawal (*samhārakrama*). It is completed by the Sequence of Emission (*śrṣṭikrama*) which follows. In this sequence also, the energy of the goddess is drawn out of the Drop but this time the one which is in the centre of the upper Yoni. From here the goddess shines as the Full Moon from which she rains down her energy in the form of vitalizing seminal fluid (*retas*). This fills and energizes the lower centres up to the genitals. Just as the previous phase was that of the New Moon (*amākrama*) this is that of the Full Moon (*pūrṇimākrama*). In this way the goddess, identified with the bliss of universal consciousness is said to melt (*dravate*). The upper Yoni, in other words, flows with sexual fluid. (MBT (KKh) 13/110-143) The conjunction of the two Yonis is called Yonimudrā.

Important to note is that although one can distinguish two Yonis, there is in fact only one. The text stresses that this «arising» and «falling away» takes place from and into the Drop in the centre of the Yoni (*ibid.* 13/128cd). They are connected by the currents of the two breaths, ascending and descending. In the centre of both Yonis resides the goddess, just as she resides in the centre of every matrix of energy in the micro/macro-cosm. In Her essential metaphysical identity she is described as the Energy of Consciousness (*citkalā*). She is the «Spark of Consciousness (*citkākinī*) that illumines and activates the otherwise insentient activity of the three «strands» of Nature (*prakṛti*). She is activated by the conjunction of the two Yonis, this union – *yoga* – stimulates her flow out of the matrix of energy constituted symbolically by the phonemes of the alphabet. The seed pours out flaming upwards (i.e. inwards). In its aroused condition it is the consumming energy of Desire (*icchā*) «burnt by Passion» (*kāmadagdhā*). The culmination marks the release of Seed (*retas*) that flows down (out) to the Drop of origin. In this way Karma is destroyed and the «living being» (*jīva*) is penetrated by Energy.