

KOSHALYA WALLI

RELEVANCE OF ABHINAVAGUPTA IN MODERN ERA

Each and every student of Kashmir Śaivism is familiar with the name of Ācārya Abhinavagupta, who hailed from the valley of Kashmir in the 10th Century A.D. Luckily, the said Ācārya does care for his parentage and we know from his pen that he was born of Smt. Vimala and Sh. Cakulaka – popularly known as Narsimāguptā¹. He lost his mother very early and his father brought him up giving the love of mother also. He was called Yoginibhū – born of a Yoginī. Abhinavagupta sought the blessings of his father whom he considered Guru of his Gurus².

This is followed by his prayer to the Guru in the Kula-process (Kulaprakriyā), for his blessings³. Abhinavagupta learnt the secret of

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1. विमलकलाश्रयाभिनवसृष्टिमहाजननी
भरिततनुश्च पञ्चमुखगुप्तरुचिर्जनकः ।
तदुभययामलस्फुरित भावविसर्गमयं
हृदयमनुत्तरामृतकुलं मम संस्फुरतात् ॥ T.A. I.1
 2. उपाध्यायाद्दृशाचार्य आचार्याणां शतं पिता ।
यः पूर्णानन्दविश्रान्तसर्वशास्त्रार्थपारगः ॥
श्री चुखुलको दिश्यादिष्टं मे गुरुरुत्तमः ॥ T.A. I.11-12
 3. एवं च तन्त्रप्रक्रियोपासन्नगुर्वभिमुखी करणान्तरम्
विश्रान्तिस्थानतया कुलप्रक्रियागुरुमपि उत्कर्षयति । T.A. I.12

Āgamas from Śambhaunātha⁴. Then he wrote the Īśwarapratyabhi-
jñāvivṛti. The Trika Rahasya is the best of all traditions⁵. Repeated
concentration on the knowledge gained from his worthy teacher is
essential to be an embodiment of the said knowledge. The disciple
shines in this process of concentration on knowledge. The light of
knowledge enlightens him. Being fully established in deep knowledge,
Abhinavagupta desires to be established fully in Trika dharma for the
welfare of the humanity. He specifically mentions his name which
shows his confidence in being the perfect one⁶.

What is the definition of an Āptapuruṣa (man of perfection)? He
who has experienced the Highest, seen Him in practice and is desirous
to establish that truth for the welfare of others is known as Āpta
Puruṣa⁷. Whatever is different from Śiva is a Pāśa - Bondage⁸.
Abhinavaguptācārya considers Śambhu as his Mahāguru⁹. He also
declares Mālinīvijayottara as the lighthouse of the Tantrāloka.
Whatever is in Mālinīvijayottara, is in Tantrāloka. Whatever is not in
Mālinīvijayottara, is not in Tantrāloka¹⁰. The sum and substance of

4. इत्यागमं सकलशास्त्रमहानिधानाच्छ्रीशंभुनाथ वदमधिगम्य सम्यक्
शास्त्रे रहस्यरससंतति सुन्दरेऽस्मिन्
गंभीरवाचिरचिता विवृतिमये यम् T.A. I.13 – Commentary
5. सन्ति पद्धतयश्चित्राः स्रोतोभेदेषु भूयसा ।
अनुत्तरषडर्थार्थक्रमे त्वेकापि नेक्ष्यते ॥ T.A. I.14
6. श्री भट्टनाथ चरणाब्जयुगात्तथा
श्री भट्टारिकांघ्रियुगलाद्गुरुसन्ततिर्या
बोधान्यपाशविषनुत्तदुपासनोत्थ
बोधोज्ज्वलोऽभिनवगुप्त इदं करोति । T.A. I.16
7. साक्षात्कृतधर्मा यथादृष्टस्यार्थस्य चिख्यापयिषया
प्रयुक्त उपदेष्टा चाप्तः । T.A. I.16 – Commentary
8. यत्किञ्चित् परमाद्वैत संवित्स्वातन्त्रयसुन्दरात् ।
पराच्छिवादुक्तरूपान्यत्तत्पाश उच्यते ॥ T.A. I.16 – Commentary
9. वन्दे शम्भुं महागुरुम् ॥ T.A. I.16 – Commentary
10. न तदस्तीह यन्न श्रीमालिनीविजयोत्तरे । T.A. I.17

various types of Śaiva thought is Trikaśāstra and the Mālinīvijayottara comprises the substance of the Trikaśāstra¹¹. That fame is Āgama is the famous dictum in the world of Āgamas. All the Śāstras concerning Śaiva thought are born of Śiva and offer great fruit of Jīvanmukta in the form of a Śaivamahābhāva¹². Ignorance is the cause of the Saṃsāra and knowledge is the sole reason of Mokṣa¹³. According to Mālinīvijayottara, ignorance is Mala and the reason of the sapling of the world¹⁴. Aṇava Mala is said to be of two types. This Mala is the reason of deterioration of bodha – knowledge/wisdom. In the first situation there is no awareness of the freedom of oneself. In the second place, there is loss of the freedom of wisdom/awareness, because contraction dominates¹⁵.

There are three types of malas – Māyīya, Kārma and Āṇava. All these are worth abandoning¹⁶. Mokṣa is complete development of one's real self. Ātman is the expansion of one's own form. Ātman is Saṃvid¹⁷. The world comprises fourteen bhuvanas and is known as Maṇḍal. The respective knowledge of these fourteen bhuvanas offers peace of kind. In other words, the knowledge of fourteen bhuvanas is the source of a type of detachment with regard to the bhuvanas. The nature of knowl-

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11. तत्सारं त्रिकशास्त्रं हि तत्सारं मालिनीमतम् ।। T.A. I.18
 12. प्रसिद्धिरागमो लोके
यतः शिवोद्भवाः सर्वे शिवधामफलप्रदाः । T.A. I.18 – Commentary
 13. इह तावत् समस्तेषु शास्त्रेषु परिगीयते ।
अज्ञानं संसृतेर्हेतुर्ज्ञानं मोक्षैककारणम् ।। T.A. I.22
 14. मलमज्ञानमिच्छन्ति संसाराङ्कुरकारणम् ।
इति प्रोक्तं तथा च श्रीमालिनीविजयोत्तरे ।। T.A. I.23
 15. स्वातन्त्र्यहानिर्बोधस्य स्वातन्त्रस्याप्यबोधता ।
द्विधाणवं मलमिदं स्वस्वरूपापहानितः । T.A. I.23 – Commentary
 16. मलं कर्म च मायीयमाणवमखिलं च यत् सर्वं हेयमिति प्रोक्तम् । T.A. I.30
 17. मोक्षो हि नाम नैवान्यः स्वरूपप्रथमं हि सः ।
स्वरूपं चात्मनः संवित् ।। T.A. I.31 – Commentary

edge is to release us from ignorance ¹⁸. The views of Bauddhas and Sāṃkhyas are explained and discussed by Ācārya Abhinava.

Creation is said to be of two kinds: (I) Common (sādhāraṇa) (II) Uncommon, by giving up the Vikalpas (determinative activity and concentrating on ahamidam – I am this gradually the state of godhood is attained. He who has identified himself with the Universe and is in know of the fact that all the manifested forms comprise his glory is the highest Lord even if the vikalpas (determinative activities) arise. It is said that is surely a state of freedom from doubts, wherein even doubt is not definitely doubted? ¹⁹

The question may be raised – what is the difference between the emancipated one and the bound one? In accordance with the Saṅgraha-tattvādihikāra, the emancipated one looks upon the common object of perception as one with himself, but the bound sees it altogether different from himself? ²⁰

18. चतुर्दशविधं यच्च प्रोक्तं संसारमण्डलम् ।

ज्ञानस्य हि मोचनमेवधर्मः ।

T.A. I.32 – Commentary

19. साधारणोऽन्यथा चैशः सर्गः स्पष्टावभासनात् ।

विकल्पहानेनैकाग्र्यात् क्रमेणेश्वरतापदम् ॥ I.P.V. 4.1.11

ऐश्वरः सर्गो द्विधा, साधारणश्च घटादिरसाधारणश्च अन्यथा निर्दिष्टो

द्विचन्द्रादिः, तस्य च सामान्यलक्षणं स्पष्टावभासनं नाम । सोऽयं सर्गो

यदा विकल्पहानक्रमेण तस्मिन्निर्विकल्पकपरिगृहीत एव एकाग्रत्वमवलम्ब्य

‘अहमिदम्’ इत्यैश्वर्यपरामर्शपदं भवति तदा ‘क्रमेण अभ्यासतारतम्येन

पशोः पशुत्वं प्रतिहन्तीश्वरत्वं च दर्शयति ।

सर्वो ममायं विभव इत्येव परिजानतः ।

विश्वात्मनो विकल्पानां प्रसरेऽपि महेशता ॥१२॥ I.P.V. 4.1.12

नहि सः प्रत्यगात्मा नाम पशुः कश्चिदन्यो योऽहम्, अपितु परिगृहीतग्राह्य

ग्राहकप्रकाशैकघनः परो यः स एवाहं स चाहमेव, न त्वन्यः कश्चित् ; अतो

विकल्पसृष्टिरपि ‘मम’ स्वातन्त्र्यलक्षणो ‘विभवः’ – इत्येव विमर्शे दृढीभूते

सत्यपरिक्षीणविकल्पोऽपि जीवन्नेव मुक्तः । यथोक्तम्

‘शङ्कापि न विशङ्कयेत निःशङ्कत्वमिदं स्फुटम् । I.P.V. 4.1.12 – commentary

20. मेय साधारणं मुक्तः स्वात्माभेदेन मन्यते ।

‘महेश्वरो यथा बद्धः पुनरत्यन्तभेदवत् ॥१३॥ I.P.V. 4.1.13

Parama Śiva is Cidānandaghana – pure consciousness and bliss, filled up with the mass of the endless tattvas that rest within Him. He is embodiment of complete changelessness²¹.

In short, Īśwarapratyabhijñā of Utpaladeva and its Vimarśinī prepared by Abhinavagupta help us to know the self and its powers of knowledge and action – and realising the powers to be non-different from the self, one knows and does everything one desires²².

The Tantrāsāra comprises twenty two Āhnikas. This work gives the essence of the Tantrāloka in prose form. According to the Tantrāloka, whatever means are used to witness the origin of Śaktipāta (unconditional grace) and the welfare of the Jiva (an individual, all those means lead to Nirvāṇa). An incorruptible devotion is the first characteristic of Śaktipāta. One should witness and experience the Pārameśvara. Śaktipāta (an unconditional grace of the Pārameśvara)

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21. सर्वथा त्वन्तरालीनानन्ततत्त्वौघनिर्भरः ।
शिवः चिदानन्दघनः परमाक्षरविग्रहः ॥१४॥ I.P.V. 4.1.12
22. एवमात्मानमेतस्य सम्यग्ज्ञानक्रिये तथा
जानन्यथेप्सितान्पश्यञ्जानाति च करोति च ॥१५॥ I.P.V. 4.1.15
इति प्रकटितो मया सुघट एष मार्गो नवो
महागुरुभिरुच्यतेस्म शिवदृष्टिशास्त्रे यथा ।
तदत्र निदधत्पदं भुवनकर्तृतामात्मनो
विभाव्य शिवतामयीमनिशमाविशन्सिद्धयति ॥१६॥ I.P.V. 4.1.16
मोक्षस्य नैव किञ्चिद्
धामास्ति न चापि गमनमन्यत्र ।
अज्ञानग्रन्थिभिदा
स्वशक्त्यभिव्यक्ता मोक्षः ॥१७॥ परमार्थसारः ॥ ६० ॥
भिन्नाज्ञानग्रन्थि-
र्गतसंदेहः पराकृतभ्रान्तिः ।
प्रक्षीणपुण्यपापो
विग्रहयोगेऽप्यसौ मुक्तः ॥१८॥ परमार्थसारः
अग्न्यभिदग्धं बीजं
यथा प्ररोहासमर्थतामेति ।
ज्ञानाग्निदग्धमेवकर्म न जन्मप्रदं भवति ॥१९॥ परमार्थसारः

bestowed on the deserving candidate by Paramaśiva Himself. This is a self proven fact and needs no other proof²³.

According to the Tantrāloka²⁴, mantras are of various types and various classes. Performance of Japa with the equilibrium of Prāṇa results in its essential success, otherwise success does not take place and the performer of Japa becomes an object of mockery. Thus the Yogī becomes empowered with the understanding of all the cakras in the sequence of the equilibrium of Prāṇa.

Japas are of three types – Japa not heard by even one's own self is known as Mānasa Japa. That, heard by one's ownself is called as Upāṁśu Japa. When heard by others is known as śabda²⁵.

The results of our sañcita Karma in the form of happiness and sorrow, we are to experience²⁶. The norms of Karma-Theory are that the actions in the form of good or bad deeds are to bear fruits that are to be experienced by us²⁷.

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23. स्वातन्त्र्यमात्रसारश्च असा परमाशवः शक्तः पातायता इत
 निरपेक्ष एव शक्तिपातो यः स्वरूपप्रथाफलः
 शक्तिपातोदये जन्तोयेनोपायेन दैशिकः ।।२२।।
 करोत्युद्धरणं तत्तनिर्वाणायस्य कल्पते ।
 निपाताद्यत्स्फुट चिह्नं भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी ।
 तथा शिष्यस्य ।
 शक्तिपातैकलक्षणा अनुध्या भक्तिरेव मुख्यं कारणम्
 T.A. Jayaratha's Commentary, II.2,1. Ahnika
24. जपेत्तु प्राणासम्येन ततः सिद्धिर्भवद्ध्रुवम् ।
 नान्यथा सिद्धिमाप्नोति हास्यमाप्नोति सुन्दरि ।
 जपहोमार्चनादीनां प्राणसाम्यमतो विधिः ।।३१।।
 कुर्यात्प्राणसमं जप्यं होमं प्राणसमं कुरु ।
 एवं प्राणसमा शक्तिः कुण्डलाख्या मनोन्मनी ।।४०।।
 Tantrāloka VII.38-40 – Commentary
25. आत्मा न शृणुते यं स मानसो जप उच्यते ।
 आत्मना शृणुते यस्तु तमुपांशुं विजानते ।।
 परे शृण्वन्ति यं देवि स शब्दः । स उदाहृतः
26. प्राक्कर्मवासनाशेषफलभोग्यत्वहेतवे ।। Tantrāloka II.86 – Commentary

Abhinavagupta time and again warns about “Doubt” – śānkā. The commentator Jayratha quotes Śrīgamaśāstra profusely on this account. Doubt gives place to glāni – selfhatred, doubt is the cause of impediments. Doubt leads to evil goal, hence doubt should be done away with²⁸. Option creates doubt. Doubt becomes the cause of bondage. Option born doubt gives rise to bondage²⁹. According to Karmasadbhāva śāstra, one should practise devoid of doubt³⁰. Abhinavaguptācārya quotes Utpaladeva – his Paramaguru. He said “We bow to that Maheśwara, who destroys all the doubts by doing away with them by thunderbolt”³¹. The commentator quotes Utpalastotrāvallī wherein it is said we bow to Maheśwara who works like thunderbolt to do away all doubts like time finishes poverty for ever in the form of fire³².

Without the unconditional grace of God, the knowledge of discrimination cannot take place. God’s grace gives rise to the knowledge of discrimination³³. The unconditional devotion to Śiva is śaktipāta³⁴. According to Mālinūvijaya, the first symptom is to have unshakeable devotion to Śiva.

Innate knowledge is present/takes place on account of the study of Śāstras, listening to the mantras from the mouth of guru who is expert in śāstras. Innate knowledge is given the name of Prātibha Jñāna. To have faith in Prātibha Jñāna is ‘a must’. Prātibha Jñāna is

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27. अर्जिते सति भोक्तव्यो भोगो दुःखसुखात्मकः
28. शङ्कया जायते ग्लानिः शङ्कया विघ्नभाजनम् ।।२५।।
शङ्कया कुगतिं याति तस्माच्छङ्का परित्यजेत् ।। T.A. XII.24 – Commentary
29. विकल्पाज्जायते शङ्का सा शङ्का बन्धरूपेणी
बन्धोऽन्यो न हि विद्येत ऋते शङ्का विकल्पजाम् ।।
Quoted in Nisācara Śāstra in T.A. XII.24 – Commentary
30. शङ्काशून्यो भवेत् सदा । T.A. XII.24 – Commentary
31. उवाचोत्पलदेवश्च श्रीमानस्मद्गुरोर्गुरुः । T.A. XII.24 – Commentary
32. सर्वाशङ्काशानिं सवालक्ष्मीकालानलं तथा ।
सर्वामङ्गल्यकल्पानां मार्गं माहेश्वर नुमः ।। T.A. XII.25 – Commentary
33. नहि ईश्वरशक्तिपातमन्तरेण तद्विवेकज्ञानमेवोदयादिति । T.A. XII.25 – Commentary
34. तत्रैतत्प्रथमं चिह्नं रुद्रे भक्तिः सुनिश्चला ।। T.A. XII.113 – Commentary

manifest on account of yoga, Japa, and the like³⁵. Siddhis help in creating faith in others, otherwise at the end of the life, emancipation will take place – this wo'nt be believed by any³⁶.

Ātmā together with pratibhā (intuition) is known as Śakti-Tattva. Being possessed with that grace (śakti-pāta) one can cross the wordly ocean³⁷. It is said that devotion when reaches culmination is known as mukti-emancipation³⁸. According to Śrīpūrva Śāstra, a teacher knowing all the tatvas is in know of the secrets – the mystic view-point all the elements, according to the Ultimate, that teacher is equal to the Ultimate Energy. He throws light on the inner meaning of the mantras³⁹. Initiation has its own benefit. A sādhaika should be initiated in Śaivīpradā Dikṣā. A sādhaika gets the benefit of Śivatva. He obtains knowledge and knows the secret of creation in a befitting manner, and thus by the practice of sādhanā, a disciple becomes emancipated. He is taken for Living Śiva. Written it is at a place that he there and then becomes Śivamaya. This is the benefit of Dikṣā (initiation)⁴⁰. In nut-

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35. भस्मच्छन्नाग्निवत्स्फोट्यं प्रातिभे गौरवागमात् ।।
बीजं कालाप्राप्तसंसिक्तं यथा वर्धेत तत्तथा
योगयागजपेक्षुक्तैर्गुरुणा प्रातिभं स्फुटेत् ।।१७६।। T.A. XIII
36. सिद्धिजालं हि कथितं परप्रत्ययकारणम् ।
इहैव सिद्धाः कायान्ते मुच्येरन्निति भावनात् ।।T.A. XIII.183
सिद्धिर्हि नाम परेषां प्रत्ययमात्रम् अन्यथा
देहान्ते मुक्तिरिति कस्य समाश्वासः स्यात् ।। T.A. XIII.183 – Commentary
37. स. एव प्रतिभायुक्तः शक्तितत्त्वं निगद्यते ।
तत्पातावेशतो मुक्तः पशुरेवभवाणवात् ।। T.A. XIII.209 – Commentary
38. भक्तिरेव परां काष्ठां प्राप्ता मोक्षोऽभिधीयते । T.A. XIII.216 – Commentary
39. यः पुनः सर्वतत्वानि वेत्त्येतानि यथार्थतः ।
स गुरुर्मत्समः प्रोक्तो मन्त्रवीर्यप्रकाशकः ।।T.A. XIII.219
40. इत्यादिभेदभिन्नो हि गुरोर्लाभ इहोदितः
तस्माद् दीक्षा स लभते सद्य एव शिवप्रदाम् ।। T.A. XIII.224
ज्ञानरूपां यथा वेत्ति सर्वमेव यथार्थतः ।
जीवनमुक्तः शिवीभूतस्तदैवासौ निगद्यते ।।
..... तत्क्षणाद् वा शिवं ब्रजेत् । T.A. XIII.224 – Commentary

shell, the thirteenth Āhinka deals with the details of Śaktopāya. The main symbol of Śaktopāya is the complete devotion to the Ultimate⁴¹.

What Mantra to own for Japa? According to the commentator, Jayaratha, whatever mantra gives mental satisfaction, whatever mantra enhances the good fortune, with that the man with soul may worship his Iṣṭa⁴².

To conclude, Abhinavagupta inspires us to grasp the significance of human birth. Human being is the crown of the whole creation. He is not bundle of bones, flesh, blood, nerves system, he is eternal, immortal, cosmic energy. He has to turn within himself to find and experience the one truth, consciousness/awareness and bliss. For this recognition of his own real self – who he is, he has to work hard, to concentrate on the source of his life the prāṇa-vital air. Segregation of body, mind and intellect from the real self is the job he has to undergo. Only then he is empowered to identify his inner self with the self of the whole creation.

This is the path to solve the problems concerning family, home, neighbourhood, community, society, region, province, nation and multinations. Thus the relevance of Abhinavagupta's writings, of his Tantrāloka, is the utmost today to solve the burning problems of the whole world, where violence has taken the better part of the humanity, Abhinavagupta is the solution.

41. निपाताद्यत्स्फुटं चिह्नं भक्तिरव्यभिचारिणी । T.A. XXI.29 – Commentary

42. यातिकञ्चिन्मानसाह्लादि यच्च सौभाग्यवर्धनम् ।

तेनात्मानमलङ्कृत्य देवमभ्यर्चयेत्सदा ।। T.A. XXIX.21

