



Jnanasankalini Tantra

*I remember again and again the dark primaeval Devi swayed with passion, Her beautiful face heated and moist with the sweat of amorous play, Bearing a necklace of Gunja berries, and clad with leaves -
Bhuvaneshvari Stotra, quoted in Avalon's Hymns to the Goddess*

Hindu tantras are discourses between Shiva and Shakti, the male and female aspects of divinity whose play creates the entire universe. The *Jnanasankalini Tantra* is a brief work of 107 shlokas (verses) which outlines the dynamics of this interplay.

Of particular importance in this short work is the emphasis placed on the syllable Om, made up of the three Sanskrit letters a+u+m. These represent Shiva, Shakti and their union and can also be represented by the three gunas or qualities well known as rajas, tamas and sattvas.

Other important elements of the tantrik cosmology are outlined here, including the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm, the five elements of earth, air, fire, water and space, and the essential similarity between the individual spirit, the Atma, and the universal spirit, the Paramatma.

The emphasis here is on Jnana, or pure knowledge. Although the spirit is one and all-pervading, it manifests through a variety of elements (tattvas). Through ignorance, an individual soul (jiva), may take each or any of these elements to be himself or herself.

The work here translated is, then, a brief summary of the essential elements of the Hindu tantrik tradition. There is no indication in the contents of this book when it was written, but it cannot be very old.

Translation

Mahadevi questioned Maheshvara, the Deva of all devas, the World Guru, sitting on the peak of Mount Kailasha: Speak to me of knowledge! (1)

Devi said - Deva! what is creation and how is creation destroyed? What is the Brahma Jnana beyond creation and destruction? (2)

Ishvara answered - Creation comes from that beyond words (avyakta) and returns to that beyond words at (the time of) destruction. Brahma Jnana is the avyakta, beyond creation and destruction. (3)

From the syllable Om comes everything, the fourteen vidyas, mantra, puja, dhyana, action and non-action. (4)

The four vedas, the six limbs of veda, mimamsa, nyaya, dharma shastra and puranas are the fourteen Vidyas. (5)

For as long as these Vidyas are known, (true) knowledge is not. On knowing Brahma Jnana one is strong in all other knowledge. (6)

The vedas and the puranas are like common whores but the Shambhavi Vidya is concealed like a Kula Shakti. (7)

All knowledge is in the body, all devatas are in the body, all sacred bathing spots are in the body, known through the words of a guru. (8)

Self-knowledge is the cause of happiness and liberation for a man, not dharma, not karma and not the reciting of mantra. (9)

Just as there is potential for fire in wood, as there is scent in flower and nectar in water, so in the centre of the human frame is Deva, devoid of good or bad. (10)

The Ida is the Ganges and the Pingala is the Yamuna. In the centre of the Ida and the Pingala is the Sushumna, the Sarasvati. (11)

The union of the three is known as the king of bathing places. Whosoever bathes there is released from all badness. (12)

Devi said-Maheshvara, what is Khecari Mudra? What is Shambhavi Vidya? What is knowledge of the self? Tell me of that! (13)

Ishvara said-A steady mind without external support, steady breath without restraint, steady seeing without looking, that resembles Khecari Mudra. (14)

Like a child or a fool's mind drifts in sleep and dream, even without actually being asleep, so a man who wanders similarly without support knows Shambhavi Vidya (15)

Devi said-Devadeva, Natha of the Cosmos, Parameshvara, tell me the differences between the different darshanas, each separately. (16)

Ishvara said-The tridandins are devoted to practice of the vedas. The Shaktas worship Prakriti, the Buddhists follow the void. (Shunya). (17)

The Carvakas, although knowing the tattvas, are atheistic prattlers, denying the existence of the source of all. (18)

Uma said, Lord! Speak of the characteristics of the microcosm! Talk of the five elements and the twenty-five qualities. (19)

Ishvara said-The five qualities of earth (Prithvi) according to Brahma Jnana are bone, flesh, nails, skin and hair. (20)

Knowers of Brahma Jnana say that semen, blood, marrow, urine and faeces are the five gunas of water. (21)

The knowers of Brahma Jnana say sleep, hunger, thirst, fatigue and idleness are the five qualities of fire. (22)

According to Brahma Jnana, holding, shaking, throwing, expanding and contracting are the five qualities of air. (23)

The knowers of Brahma Jnana say desire, anger, delusion, shame and greed are the five qualities of space. (24)

Air comes from space, fire comes from air, water comes from fire, and earth comes from water. (25)

Earth dissolves into water, water dissolves in fire, fire dissolves in air and air dissolves in space. (26)

Creation comes from the five tattvas and is dissolved into them. Greater than the five tattvas is that which is above them, without stain. (27)

The organs of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing are the five tattvas of the senses. Mind (manas) is the tattva that gives birth to them. (28)

The entire macrocosm is situated in the centre of the body. That with form is destroyed while that without form is indestructible. (29)

Whosever's mind is fixed on the formless becomes one with the formless. Therefore, by every means, reject that with form. (30)

Devi said-Adinatha, tell me of the seven dhatus. What are they? What is Atma? What is the inner Atma (Antaratma)? What is the Supreme Atma (Paramatma)? (31)

Ishvara said-Semen, blood, marrow, fat, flesh, bones and skin are the seven (dhatus) in the body. (32)

The body is Atma. Mind is the Antaratma and Paramatma is the Shunya (void) where the mind dissolves. (33)

Blood is the mother dhatu and semen is the father dhatu. The Shunya dhatu produced from vital breath is the foetus. (34)

Devi said-Tell me of the nature of speech. How is it produced and how is it dissolved? (35)

Ishvara said-Vital breath comes from the Avyakta, mind arises from vital breath. Speech comes from mind and is dissolved into mind. (36)

Devi said-Where does the sun dwell? Where does the moon dwell? Where does vital breath dwell? Where does mind dwell? (37)

Ishvara said-The moon is at the root of the palate. The sun is at the root of the navel. Vital breath is above the sun and mind is below the moon. (38)

The Cit is above the sun and the jiva is above the moon. Mahadevi, this is to be learned from the mouth of a guru. (39)

Devi said-Where is Shakti? Where is Shiva? Where is Time? What causes ageing? (40)

Ishvara said-Shakti is within (Patala). Shiva is without. Time is in space and causes ageing. (41)

Devi said-What wants to eat? What wants to drink? What stays awake in waking, dream and deep sleep? (42)

Shiva said-Vital breath wants food. Food is consumed by fire. Vital breath is awake during waking, dream and deep sleep. (43)

Devi said-What causes karma? What causes bad deeds. Who does bad deeds? How is one liberated from bad deeds? (44)

Shiva said-The mind does bad deeds. The mind is stained by bad deeds. That mind, having become itself, does neither good nor bad. (45)

Devi said-How does an embodied soul (jiva) become Shiva? What is cause and effect? Speak to me, of your grace! (46)

Ishvara said-Bound by delusion jiva, freed from delusion Sadashiva. You are cause and effect. Enlightenment is different from you. (47)

Folk subject to tamasa wander to this sacred place and that sacred place, thinking that Shiva is here, Shakti is elsewhere, mind is somewhere else and vital breath is somewhere else again. (48)

O Beauteous One, they do not realise the sacred place within the body. How then, can they be liberated? (49)

Veda is not the vedas, the eternal Brahma is veda. Whosoever knows the Brahma Vidya is a brahmin, skilled in the vedas.(50)

After churning the four Vedas and all the scriptures, the yogis have extracted their essence, leaving pandits to drink the butter milk which remains. (51)

All the scriptures are like dirty leavings with everyone speaking of knowledge. The Brahma Knowledge beyond words is not dirty leavings. (52)

The path of Brahma is the ultimate tapas and not ordinary tapas. Whosoever knows the upper semen, he is a deva. (53)

Meditation is not meditation unless the mind is united with Shunya. He who does so becomes happy and liberated, no doubt. (54)

Sacrifice (homa) is not homa unless it is samadhi, in which the vital breaths are sacrificed in the fire of Brahma. That is the true sacrifice. (55)

Good and evil acts give rise to good and evil consequences. Therefore, by every means, a wise man rejects them. (56)

For as long as ignorance prevails, so long does caste and family matter. After knowing Brahma Jnana, one is free from all distinctions of caste. (57)

Devi said-Shankara, I do not understand this knowledge you have spoken of. Devesha, remove my doubts! Tell me how the mind is dissolved. (58)

Shankara said-It is said that Brahma Jnana is like dreamless sleep in which is dissolved mind, speech and actions. (59)

Brahma Jnana, it is said, is a state of one-pointedness, without anxieties, peaceful, free of delusion and bestowing a child-like nature. (60)

In the next line I will declare that spoken by the knowers of the truth. Yoga is the rejection of all thoughts and concerns. (61)

One who reaches samadhi for a split second or even half a split second destroys the evil of a hundred births instantly. (62)

Devi said-Deva, what is Shakti and what is Shiva. Tell me about this! Reveal the nature of Jnana! (63)

Shakti dwells in the moving mind and Siva dwells in the steady mind. He who is established in the steady mind becomes accomplished while living in the body. (64)

Devi said-Where are the three Shaktis? Where are the six cakras? Where are the twenty one macrocosms? Where are the seven underworlds? (65)

Ishvara said-The upper Shakti is in the throat, the lower Shakti is in the anus. The middle Shakti is in the navel and the Shakti above these is without description. (66)

The adhara cakra is in the anus, the SvadhishÖhana is near the penis. I have spoken previously of the distinctions of the cakras. Hail to that above the cakras! (67)

The top half of the body is called Brahmaloaka, below that is Patalaloka. The body resembles a tree with the roots at the top and the branches below. (68)

Devi said-Parameshvara, Shiva, Shankara, Ishana. Speak to me! What are the ten vital breaths and what the ten doors? (69)

Ishvara said-Prana is in the heart, apana is in the anus, samana is in the navel region and udana is situated in the throat. (70)

Vyana is spread throughout the body, Naga moves upward, Kurma is situated in the tirthas. (71)

Krikara is in crying, Devadatta is in yawning, Dhananjaya is in singing and roaring. (72)

According to the yogis, these vital breaths have no support. The nine doors are clear and the tenth door is the mind, it is said. (73)

Devi said-Speak to me of the characteristics of the nadis spread throughout the body. Tell me of the ten nadis arising from Kundalini Shakti. (74)

Ishvara said-Ida, Pingala and Sushumna go upwards. Gandhari, Hastijihva and Prasava move below. (75)

Alambusha and Yasha are situated to the right. Kuhu and Shankhini are situated to the left. (76)

Various nadis, amounting to seventy two thousand, arise from these ten and exist in the body, it is said. (77)

Only a yogi with knowledge of the nadis is a true yogi. Devi, nadi knowledge gives siddhi for yogis. (78)

Devi said-Bhutanatha, Mahadeva, Parameshvara, speak to me! What are the three devas? What are the three bhavas? What are the three gunas? (79)

Ishvara said-The Rajabhava is Brahma. The Sattvabhava is Hari, The Krodhabhava is Rudra. These three devas are the gunas. (80)

These three devas, Brahma-Vishnu-Maheshvara, are one. Whosoever thinks of them as different in nature is never liberated. (81)

Brahma is like semen, Hari is like vital breath and Rudra is like mind. The three devas are the gunas. (82)

Brahma is compassionate, Hari is pure and Rudra is fiery. The three devas are the gunas. (83)

With one meaning, they are the same thing, supreme Brahma, the cosmos, all which moves and does not move. Whosoever thinks of them as different in nature is never liberated. (84)

I am creation. I am time. I am Brahma. I am Hari. I am Rudra. I am Shunya. I am everywhere. I am without distinction. (85)

I am the soul of all, o Devi. I am free from desire, I am space. I am my pure own nature, without stain, there is no doubt of it. (86)

He who has controlled his senses and courageous is a Brahmacari and a true pandit, speaking truth, devoted, generous, steady of mind. (87)

The path of Brahma is the root of tapas. Compassion is the root of duty. Therefore, by every means, rest in the path of compassionate duty. (88)

Devi said-Yogeshvara, Jagannatha dear to Uma as life itself, speak of veda, twilight worship, tapas, meditation, and sacrifice. (89)

Isvara said-One thousand ashvamedha and one hundred vajapeya sacrifices are not equal to even a sixteenth fraction of the greatness of Brahma Jnana. (90)

Travelling to the sacred tirthas and bathing there does not amount to a sixteenth fraction of the greatness of Brahma Jnana. (91)

No friend, no son, no father and no relatives can ever equal the guru, the revealer of the supreme thing. (92)

Learning, tirthas, and gods and goddesses (devatas) can never equal the guru, the revealer of the supreme thing. (93)

A disciple who has received a single syllable (of a mantra) from a guru can never find anything in the world to repay that debt. (94)

The Brahma Jnana is secret knowledge and should not be revealed to anyone but a devoted soul. (95)

The wise should reject mantra, puja, tapas, dhyana, homa, japa, animal sacrifice, nyasa, and all acts. (96)

Associating with others has many defects, not associating with others has many qualities. Therefore, by every effort, the wise should reject the company of others. (97)

The letter a is sattvik, the letter u is rajasik and the letter m is tamasik, these three are Prakriti itself. (98)

The indestructible is Prakriti, Ishvara is Prakriti and is itself indestructible. From Ishvara came Prakriti which is triple in nature. (99)

Prakriti is Shakti, the Maya, the cause of creation and destruction, the Avidya, the Mohini, whose form is sound. (100)

A is the Rigveda, the letter u is the Yajurveda and the letter m is the Samaveda. (101)

The Om should be known as the three nadas. The letter a is Bhuloka, the letter u is Bhuva and the letter m is Svarloka, it is said. In these three letters the Atma manifests. (102-103)

The letter A is earth and yellow in colour, the letter u is like lightning and space, and the letter m is white and heavenly. For sure the single Om pervades everything and is Brahma itself. (104-105)

Those seated in a steady position, who meditate daily and are free of worries and imaginings, are yogis and not otherwise, Shiva said. (106)

Whoever hears this or reads this every day becomes pure and free of all problems and resides in the Shiva heaven. (107)