

Text as the Metaphoric Body: Incorporation of Tripurā in *Saundaryalaharī*

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Abstract:

Saundaryalaharī is a classical Sanskrit text in one hundred stanzas dedicated to the goddess Tripurasundarī. The central argument of this paper is that this devotional hymn – a textual body comprised of metaphor and aesthetic suggestion – mirrors the deity being praised, as she is the goddess of beauty. The author effectively introduces an embodied Tantric theology that places sensory experience at the center of mystical and transformative experience. With select examples from the text, this essay analyzes the varieties of literary suggestion utilized by the poet to depict the transcendent experience.¹

Anatomy of the Text:

Saundaryalaharī (SL), a devotional poem traditionally attributed to Śaṅkara,² is one of the most revered and widely read texts with Tantric content. The multiple commentaries that accompany it, the wide distribution from north to south of the Indian sub-continent,³ the multiple translations into

¹ I am thankful to Dr. Jürgen Hanneder, Dr. Francis X. Clooney, and Dr. Walter Slaje for closely reading the document and providing valuable insight. I am also thankful to Mrs. Mary Hicks for editorial support.

² The text is most likely composed after 11th but prior to 15th Century. The use of nine *rasas* is not common in classical aesthetics before Abhinavagupta (950-1020 CE), and SL explicitly mentions it (AL 41, 50). The text integrates aspects of Kubjikā practice while addressing Tripurā. These two practices have remained prevalent successively in North and South of the Indian sub-continent in early times. For discussion on Abhinava, see PANDEY 1963; INGALLS and HOLMES 1990. For discussions on Kubjikā, see DYCZKOWSKI 1987, 2000, 2009; and on Tripurā, see BROOKS 1990.

³ For my analysis, I am using the KUPPUSWAMI (1991) edition, which comes with ten different classical commentaries. Follow BROWN (1958) for a critical edition. See EDGERTON (1959) and HACKER (1962) for Scholarly reviews on BROWN (1958). There are a number of unpublished commentaries in libraries and private collections. For instance, KUPPUSWAMI (1991, v) identifies 36 commentaries. The *Gopālasundarī* commentary is an example of the popularity of the text outside the Śaiva-Śākta households. This commentary interprets every single verse as praise to both Viṣṇu and Tripurā. Later-medieval Tantric texts identify a Tripurā *mantra* as Gopālasundarī that combines the 18 syllable Kṛṣṇa *mantra* with the 15-syllable Tripurā *mantra*.

English and various other regional languages,⁴ and the frequent recitations in temple and house rituals demonstrate its popularity. The text is composed in one hundred verses,⁵ in the *Śikhariṇī* meter, with seventeen syllables in each quarter of the verse.⁶ It is divided into two sections: the first, identified as *Ānandalaharī*, consists of forty-one verses, and the second, *Saundaryalaharī*, of the remaining verses. The first section relates to the philosophy and ritual visualization of Tripurā while the second is specifically dedicated to describing the physical beauty of the goddess, also called Sundarī, or the beautiful one. The text exemplifies a fusion of Tantric Śaiva and Śākta elements and Advaita philosophy.⁷ SL is a fine example of the fusion of aesthetics and Tantra.⁸

The text is essentially Tantric,⁹ with its central theme being the glorification of the goddess Tripurā.¹⁰ Composed in light of Śākta non-dualism, the text integrates elements from Kubjikā practice into Tripurā worship.¹¹ The

⁴ One of the most noteworthy studies on SL is that of NORMAN BROWN (1958). Besides the latest study by CLOONEY (2005), there are a number of other translations in English. A few among the translations I have scanned through include KUPPUSWAMI 1991, GURU 1988, SASTRI and GARU 1957, and SUBRAHMANNIAN 1977.

⁵ Most of the commentators consider the text complete in one hundred verses. In the 100th verse, a colophon sentence appears at the end of each of the commentaries (collected in KUPPUSWAMI 1991). However, the text in the Kuppuswami edition continues until verse 103. The verse 101 in the text comes with *Saubhāgyavardhinī*, *Ānandagirīyā*, *Tātparyadīpinī*, and *Kaivalyavardhinī* commentaries. In verse 102 and 103, all these commentaries and the additional *Padārthacandrikā*, *Diṇḍima*, and *Gopālasundarī* are available.

Composing a Śataka or a prayer in one hundred verses is one of the genres of classical Sanskrit poetry. The most exemplary is the *Sūryaśataka* of Mayūra or *Caṇḍīśataka* of Bāṇa.

⁶ The name of the meter also suggests the sweet made of yoghurt and spices.

⁷ Commentaries on the text clearly display traits of different traditions. It is possible that both Lakṣmīdharā and Gopālasundarī come from the Vaiṣṇava background.

⁸ This is not the place to discuss in detail the historical relation of Tantric scholars with classical Indian aesthetics. The following few examples demonstrate this fusion. Abhinavagupta, the foremost Tantric philosopher, was also the author of the *Abhinavabhāratī* commentary upon the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and the *Locana* commentary upon *Dhvanīyāloka*. Jayaratha wrote a commentary upon both the *Tantrāloka*, a Tantric text by Abhinavagupta, and the *Alaṅkārasarvasva* of Ruyyaka. Lakṣmīdhara, a commentator upon *Saundaryalaharī*, is also known as the author of *Alaṅkāramuktāvalī* and *Rasamañjarī*. Amṛtānandayogin, the commentator upon *Yoginīhr̥daya*, one of the foundational texts of the Tripurā tradition, was also the author of *Alaṅkārasaṅgraha*.

⁹ When SL (verse 31) mentions sixty-four Tantras, the unstated premise is that the *mantra* of Tripurā supercedes the ritually impure Tantras. Commentaries imply that SL itself is the sixty-fifth Tantra.

¹⁰ For discussion on Tripurā, see BROOKS 1990.

¹¹ Verse 14 explicitly enumerates the ‘rays’ (*raśmi*) found in the six *cakras*. This relates to the *raśmividyā* concept that refers to Śaḍanvayaśāmbhavavidyā, central to Kubjikā practice. Verse 34 identifies the practice of Pareśvara, one of the Śāmbhava Vidyās that is visualized in the Ājñā *cakra*. Verse 40, the final verse of the six-*cakra* practice that concludes

text traditionally comes with a manual where each verse is assigned with its own magical formula and geometric design. Whether through ritual transformation of self-awareness (the primary focus of the first section of SL) or through embodying the divine in her corporeal form (the focus of the second section), the centrality of physical experience is apparent throughout the text, and it is in this embodied spirituality that the integration of the aesthetic domain occurs within Tantric practice. The term *Tripurā*, referring to the central goddess described in the text, demonstrates a fluidity that embraces immanence and transcendence at the same time. Even the name reflects this, as the term can be analyzed etymologically as both ‘before or beside the triad’ (*tribhyaḥ purā*), and as ‘she who dwells in three cities’ (*trisu pūrṣu bhavā*).¹² The goddess is simultaneously addressed as *Sundarī*, the beautiful one, invoking her association with aesthetic beauty. The combination of both these names, *Tripurasundarī*, indicates an integration of the mystical and aesthetic aspects.

The philosophical foundation for the rise of this Śākta paradigm breaks the dichotomy between the immanent and transcendent. *Tripurā* is beyond the triad and thus transcendent, while dwelling in all three cities. The formless in this depiction is latent with forms, and when given form, they eventually dissolve into the very awareness nature of the body of the goddess. Rather than being exclusive, these transcendent and immanent modes are considered here as interdependent. With the coalesced identity of *Tripurā* and *Sundarī*, encountering the divine implies the recognition of aesthetic beauty. This integration highlights the role of language, as the poetic description woven throughout the text is inseparable from the linguistic body of the goddess. Like *mantra* language that cannot be translated, SL cannot be fully deciphered, with its aesthetic domain layered within the form of the text, as has been recognized by the classical commentators.¹³ This understanding displaces the commonsense comprehension of language as corresponding to reality; reality and language are not binary opposites here. To ground some of these arguments, this paper explores the link between mys-

with the *Mūlādhāra*, explicitly refers to *Navātman*, the *Vidyā* practiced in the base *cakra* in the *Kubjikā* tradition. For discussions on *Kubjikā* see DYCZKOWSKI 1987, 2000, 2009. Since the text combines both *Śrīvidyā* and *Kubjikā* practices, it outlines both the ascending and descending orders of *Kuṇḍalinī*. See verse 9 for the ascending order and verses 34-40 for the descending order.

¹² The mythological connection of Śiva as *Tripurāntaka* or the destroyer of the demon *Tripura* and the goddess as his consort is most likely the primary reason for this name. *Tripurā* texts exploit the concept of the goddess dwelling in three cities, making the three states of waking, dreaming, and the deep sleep as the stations of the self. For further discussion on the etymology and the concepts behind the term *Tripurā*, see DVIVEDI 1984, 85-86.

¹³ For discussion on the nature of *mantra* language, see TIMALSINA 2010; STAAL 1989.

tical and aesthetic language.¹⁴ In addition, rather than comprehending textual meaning in the minimal sense, I also explore in this paper the ways classical commentators opened up the text for a broader hermeneutics.

Pioneered by Bharata, the classical aesthetic tradition was advanced with the writings of Tantric aesthetes such as Abhinava or Jayaratha. The central literary devices in this system include ‘ornamentation’ (*alaṅkāra*), *rasa* or aesthetic relish, and *dhvani*, indirect suggestion.¹⁵ *Alaṅkāra* involves both the form of expression, the very language a poet uses that has characteristics such as rhyming, and literary tropes that relate to content, such as metaphoric and metonymic expressions.¹⁶ *Rasa*, central to classical Indian aesthetics since Bharata’s writings, identifies the psychological states ingrained with experience, such as erotic, comic, heroic, etc. Bharata outlines eight *rasas* that emerge with the integration of the emotional states (*bhāva*). There are eight emotions categorized as ‘dormant’ (*sthāyin*) and thirty-three collectively addressed as transient (*vyabhicārin*). In addition to these, there are also some psycho-physical conditions (*sāttvika*). All of these fall under the category of emotional states (*bhāva*). To this structure, Abhinava adds ‘peaceful’ (*śānta*) as an additional *rasa*.¹⁷ *Dhvani* or the suggested meaning, on the other hand, relates to the structure of poetic meaning, and is found in the domains of both *alaṅkāra* and *rasa*. While one can read SL as a Tantric text, one can also read it as a sublimely nuanced aesthetic document. Every single verse in the text displays one or another literary trope, and many of them are exemplary in their integration of multiple devices. The author of SL, in his effort to materialize the beauty of the goddess Sundarī, creates in words the aesthetic ‘body’ of goddess, replete with devices central to Sanskrit poetics.

The central argument of this paper is that the process of describing the beauty of the goddess is a technique for transforming a commonsense awareness into a mystical one. Language mediates this process: the select poetic expression, with the beautiful body of the goddess as the target, does not end in mere depiction of her physical *beauty*, as it culminates with the poetic

¹⁴ For discussion of the link between Tantra and aesthetics in classical India, see TIMALSINA 2007.

¹⁵ For discussion on classical Indian aesthetics, see DEVY 2002; INGALLS 1990; WARDER 1972.

¹⁶ I am using the term ‘metaphor’ in a loose sense. When metaphors are understood broadly, the *alaṅkāras* such as *arūpaka*, *heturūpaka*, *rūpaka*, *sakalarūpaka*, *samādhāna*, *sa-viśeṣaṇa*, *tattva*, *upacāra*, or *utprekṣā* are considered metaphors. Besides these, V. S. Apte also translates *lakṣaṇā* as a metaphor. A similar understanding is also found in GEROW 1971. The term metaphor is similarly used in Western literature in a varied sense, and it sometimes has involved various figures of speech such as hyperbole, metonymy, and simile. It would be misleading to understand any specific *alaṅkāra* as a metaphor.

¹⁷ For discussion on the number of *rasas*, see RAGHAVAN 1967.

beauty (*saundarya*) of the text. This is exactly where the aesthetic domain meets the esoteric domain, with ‘aesthetic beauty (*saundarya*)’ being a means to reach to the ‘beautiful one’ (Sundarī). In this process, the text mirrors the divine body by incorporating the aesthetic beauty.

This argument relies on textual analysis filtered through the aesthetic viewpoint, as the effort of the author of SL clearly intends to match the beauty of the goddess with his poetic genius. The description of the beautiful one (Sundarī), along these lines, mirrors the inner beauty of Tripurā. In this process of describing her beauty with an incorporation of the qualities of beauty outlined by classical aesthetes, the text transforms into the body of the goddess. The embodiment of divinity, vivid in this depiction, embraces both emotional and cognitive domains. Language and sensory modalities are very much active and creative in this process of experiencing the divine that is both transcendent and immanent. Even recitation of the verses filled with literary tropes that describe the divine in the flesh, the very process through which the divine form is grasped and experienced, is entwined with language and somatic experience. The distilled beauty expressed in the stanzas that refer specifically to the limbs of the goddess’s body are themselves the limbs of the text. In this way the text transforms into the divine body.

Based on this assumption of the integration of the esoteric and aesthetic, this paper grounds the argument that the centrality of embodiment in both Tantric and aesthetic systems is at the core of this melding of the two systems. Transformation of commonsense experience to a transcendent bliss may be achieved by devotees through devotion, through self-realization by the Tantrics, and through aesthetic experience by the connoisseurs of literary tropes and layers of suggested meaning. In this respect, generating the body of bliss parallels the constructive visualization of the body of the goddess that integrates the aesthetic experience. In essence, SL is exemplary in combining both esoteric and aesthetic experiences.

The integration of beauty and bliss in SL corresponds to the practice of Tripurā. Tripurā demonstrates her lavish nature and the practices centered on her are identified with the order of the Gandharvas that involves the assertion of pleasure, ornamentation and fragrances, and contemplation instead of asceticism.¹⁸ The ritual manuals explicitly state that not only is the goddess sensuous, even her practice involves sensuality. This physicality is fundamental to constructing the divine image as the aesthetic beauty materialized,

¹⁸ For the reference on *gandharvakrama*, see *Puraścaryārṇava* (PA), vol. 3, 259-263. The *mahārājakrama* of Mātāṅgī, the other goddess of the Sundarī order, demonstrates similar traits (ibid. 270-71). There is also a text titled *Gandharvatantra* that is dedicated to the order of Tripurā.

and parallels the construction of SL as an embodiment of the divine beauty in poetic language. This position opens up the possibility of self-recognition through the bliss experienced in realizing the corporeal beauty of the goddess. Just as the language describing the beauty of the goddess and the metaphors suggesting aesthetic bliss parallel esoteric experience, these qualities are integral to ‘experience’ itself. In this depiction, just as all cognitive modes are permeated with awareness, all instances of cognition in the same way involve the sense of aesthetic pleasure. The two names of the text, “waves of bliss and beauty,” describe this very intertwined nature of Tripurā practice.

The objective of the SL is not only to depict the body of the goddess. While describing the beauty of the divine body, the text aims to transform the experience of the reader/practitioner both aesthetically and mystically. The term to properly describe this transformation is *sāmarasya*, which, in its aesthetic sense, means ‘having identical taste,’ and in the esoteric sense of Tantra and Haṭhayoga, refers to the ‘mingling of fluids.’ Both the mystical and aesthetic experiences become a single targeted ‘meaning’ of the text, and the device of literary suggestion (*dhvani*) becomes the means to access this experience. While the use of *rasa* or aesthetic ‘juice’ is consonant with the concept of *sāmarasya*, the poetic ornaments (*alaṅkāra*) parallel the physical ornaments adorning the body of the goddess.

This fusion of Tantra and poetics becomes possible with the affirmation of the body, and finding the divine as immanent and the self as embodied. Encountering the dazzling form of Tripurā in SL parallels the recognition of the self: in essence, the self that is the heart of aesthetic experience is in itself the fundamental nature of beauty. Here the boundary of inside and outside dissolves, as the beautifully described form of the goddess mirrors the beauty within, and what constitutes the sacred is the pristine and beautiful aspect of the self.

Encountering the Divine Body of Bliss

The significance and centrality of the divine body in SL is vivid, particularly in the second part, where the limbs and ornaments of the goddess are recounted. Reading SL thus engages multiple strategies of grounding the sacred within the body. The author draws upon a wide range of aesthetic tools and concepts in developing this paper. In order to analyze the literary tropes that are at the center of this composition, I am primarily using three commentaries: *Lakṣmīdharā* (LD), *Aruṇāmodinī* (AM), and *Saubhāgyavardhinī*

(SV). Because it is not possible to analyze all the verses in this short paper, I will limit myself to a comparison of ten select verses. However, the literary tropes and suggestion are common throughout the text.

It is not difficult to find examples in SL for discussing the integration of the aesthetic and mystical, as this fusion is present in every single verse of the text. The very first verse clearly elucidates this point:

*śivaḥ śaktiā yukto yadi bhavati śaktaḥ prabhavitum |
na ced evaṃ devo na khalu kuśalaḥ spanditum api ||
atas tvām ārādhyāṃ hariharaviriñcyādibhir api |
praṇantum stotum vā katham akṛtapuṇyaḥ prabhavati || 1 ||*

Translation:

If Śiva is associated with Śakti, [he] is able to become the Lord/to come into being. If this is not [the case], Śiva [lit. (Mahā-)deva] is not even capable of pulsation. Hence, how can one bow on or pray to you without having earned virtue, as you are to be served even by the gods of creation, sustenance, and re-absorption?

Comments:

There are two central problems in translating this text. One, commentators attribute multiple meanings to this single verse,¹⁹ and any literal translation will necessarily fail to fathom all these meanings in a single translation. Two, the meaning of the text, or what the text refers to and suggests, is not confined to its conceptual references alone. Meaning is embedded within the text, and this cannot be dissociated from its Sanskrit language.

Throughout the text, suggestion (*dhvani*) is crucial not only for aesthetic presentation but also for esoteric designation. Commentators often use the terms ‘indicated’ (*sūcīta*)²⁰ or suggested (*dhvanita*) in order to imply this esoteric meaning. In this process of unpacking meaning, the terms or the entire passage of the text refer simply to another term or a single letter of a

¹⁹ The commentary AM gives fourteen meanings of this verse. This reflects a classical tendency to write commentaries that go beyond the literal meaning (*bhāvārtha*) of the text. Between the commentarial literature, *ṭīkā* generally describes the literal interpretation and the *bhāṣya* stands for an exposition. In the case of SL, some *ṭīkā*s such as *Lakṣmīdharā* or *Aruṇāmodinī* provide lengthy (and mostly creative on the part of the commentator) exposition while others, such as *Padārthacandrikā* or *Kaivalyavardhinī*, provide only the literal meaning.

²⁰ For instance, AM uses the term *sūcīta* 12 times in a single verse (verse 6), along with terms such as *pratiṣyate*, or *abhiprāya*, all suggesting indirect meaning.

mantra. For instance, LD derives *śrīcakra* as one of the designated meanings of this verse, Saubhāgyavardhinī (SV) derives Prāsāda, Anuttara, Vāgvādinī, the Śiva *mantra* of five letters, and the three letter Pāśādi *mantra*. Besides deriving the *śrīyantra* from this verse, AM finds fourteen different meanings of the verse which are related to deriving *mantras* through suggestion.

Some of these meanings are purely analytical. The first and second meanings of the verse suggested in AM follow the Advaita and Sāṅkhya paradigms. However, other meanings are speculative and one can derive those meanings only through assigning words or letters to the specific letters of a *mantra*. For instance, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth meanings given in AM relate to the Kādi and Hādi *mantras* of Tripurā.

AM suggests that there are two literary tropes of ‘insinuator’ (*parikara*) and the ‘seed of insinuator’ (*parikarāṅkura*) in this verse because all the terms applied here suggest that Śiva has hidden intentions. GEROW (1971: 203) summarizes this trope as “a figure in which the adjectival qualifications or epithets of a thing are multiplied with a view to re-enforcing the distinctiveness of that thing.” When the attributes used in the epithet suggest the specific action for which the subject is being invoked, these tropes are found.²¹ What is meant, in this trope, is suggested through the attribute. Through the allusion of the eternal bond of Śiva and Śakti, the *rasa* of *śṛṅgāra* (meaning) is suggested (*pratīti*), and within this, another trope of ‘model metaphor’ (*samāsokti*) is nested. In this metaphor, the character of one is ascribed to another based on action, sex, or attribute.²² GEROW (1971: 316) defines this as “a figure in which the descriptive qualifications of an explicit subject suggest an implicitly comparable object to which they likewise apply.” Since there is a cause-and-effect relation between the lines 1-2 and 3-4, designated by the term ‘therefore’ (*ataḥ*), commentaries suggest that two further literary tropes of *kāvyaṅga* and *śleṣa*²³ can be found in this verse. When the meaning of a term refers to a second meaning, this is the literary trope of *kāvyaṅga*. For instance, the term *trinetra* refers to Śiva, but if it is used to indicate fire, as Śiva has fire in his third eye, the trope there will be *kāvyaṅga*.²⁴ According to GEROW (1971: 174), this trope is “a figure in which a metaphorical relation of cause and effect is expressed

²¹ Jayadeva defines *parikara* as: *alanikāraḥ parikaraḥ sābhiprāye viśeṣane | sudhāmsūkalitot-tamsas tāpaṃ haratu vaḥ śivaḥ || Candrālōka 5.39*. For further discussion, see *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 10.57.

²² Jayadeva defines *samāsokti* as: *samāsoktiḥ parisphūrṭiḥ prastute’prastutasya cet | ayam aindrīmukhaṃ paśya raktaś cumbati candramāḥ || Candrālōka 5.62*. For discussion, see *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 10.56.

²³ The commentary AM also outlines the *kaiśikī vṛtti* and *vaidarbhī rīti* in this verse.

²⁴ For discussions on *kāvyaṅga*, see CĀ 5.38; SD 10.62.

conventionally either as intention or rationale.” Paronomasia (*śleṣa*) refers to “the expression of more than one meaning by words naturally, or literally, bearing one signification,”²⁵ that is, a play on words particularly a pun.

AM also points out that there are three types of suggested meaning (*dhvani*) in this first verse. The first kind, the suggestion of an idea (*vastu*) refers to evocation derived from the literal meaning (DĀ 1.4). This suggestion of an entity may be of a prohibition, an injunction, a fact, or a situation (Ingalls 1990, 82:18-19). Also, the suggestion generated by *alaṅkāra* falls under the category of primary indication. In the case of *alaṅkāra*, ‘what is suggested seems to be a figure of speech’ (Ingalls 1990, 82:21-22). The highest mode of suggestion is when *rasa* is derived through suggestion (*dhvani*). The perfect embrace of Śiva and Śakti designates aesthetic beauty (*śṛṅgāra*) through suggestion.

The following verse relates to the Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva. This is quite a common image wherein the divine couple is depicted in a single body, with the right half as Śiva and the left half as Śakti:

tvayā hr̥tvā vāmaṃ vapur aparitr̥ptena manasā |
śarīrārdhaṃ śambhor aparam api śaṅke hr̥tam abhūt ||
yad etat tvadrūpaṃ sakalam aruṅābhaṃ trinayanam |
kucābhyām ānamraṃ kuṭīlaśaśicūdālamakuṭam || 23 ||

Translation:

Having not been content with your appropriation of the left half of Śiva’s body, I suppose you appropriated also the remaining half of it. This is because your entire form is shining red, endowed with three eyes, slightly bent with your breasts, and the crown on your hair has the crescent moon.

Comments:

The commentary *Saubhāgyavardhinī* (SV) points out that this verse has a trope that highlights within it another trope, that of concealment (*apahnuti*).²⁶ In this poetic device, what is real is denied and what is fancied is ascribed.²⁷ The suggestion that the remaining half of the body be that of the goddess is thus congruent with this interpretation. The shift in the form of goddess depicted here, from a goddess with two eyes and wearing a crown to a god-

²⁵ SD 10.57, translation by BALLANTYNE and MITRA 1994, 401.

²⁶ GEROW (1971: 109) translates *apahnuti* as ‘denial’ and defines it as “a figure in which the object of comparison is affirmed in place of the subject of comparison.”

²⁷ For discussion on *apahnuti*, see SD 10.38-39. Jayadeva gives four varieties of *apahnuti*. See CĀ 5.24-28.

dess with three eyes and wearing a crescent moon, indicates the fusion of the attributes of Śiva within the body of the goddess. SV suggests that there is no explicit concealment to be derived literally. Therefore, this *alankāra* has been derived through suggestion (*dhvani*). There is also the suggestion of an entity (*vastu*), the condition of being identical with Śiva through the identity with the goddess. This suggestion rests on meaning, as this comes from the conclusion of the transformation of the body of Śiva to that of Śakti.

Not all commentators agree in the assignment of specific tropes to each of the verses. This distinction primarily rests on the ways the tropes are described by different aesthetes. AM suggests that the literary trope in this verse is that of fancy (*utprekṣā*).²⁸ In general, ‘fancy’ relates to imagining an object within the character of another.²⁹ This verse explicitly highlights the appropriation of the other’s properties. Following AM, this trope is supported by another literary device of *kāvyaṅga*, discussed above (verse 1). ĀG, on the other hand, suggests that this is not just fanciful (*utprekṣā*), as the properties of Śiva are in fact actualized by the goddess and so this is ‘real’ (*vāstava*); this aligns with SV in identification of the poetic device.

This verse is an example for how the poetic device functions in describing the mystical experience. The passage presents that the goddess has appropriated Śiva’s body. The commentary SV suggests the possibility of the practitioner’s intimate union with Śiva through his union with the goddess.³⁰ According to the commentary LD, this verse propounds the Uttara-Kaula doctrine following which there exists no category that transcends Śakti.³¹ In any case, it is not possible to fathom the suggested meaning of the primacy of the goddess without recognizing the literary device.

The fusion of physical and aesthetic ‘ornaments’ is vivid in verse 42 where the golden diadem of the goddess is described applying multiple tropes.

²⁸ GEROW (1971: 131) translates *utprekṣā* as ‘ascription’ and defines it as “a figure in which a property or mode of behavior is attributed to a subject literally incapable of sustaining that property, whereby an implicit simile is suggested whose subject (*upameya*) is the subject receiving the attributed property and whose object (*upamāna*) is the real basis of that property.”

²⁹ There are many varieties of *utprekṣā*. First based on explicit (*vācya*) or understood (*pratīyamāna*), this is divided into two, and they are further analyzed into fifty-six and thirty-two (collectively 88) varieties. This is further multiplied by two, based on whether or not the subject of the fancy is mentioned. SD, thus, describes a total of 176 varieties of *utprekṣā*. For discussion, see SD, chapter 10, verses 40–45.

³⁰ *tvatsāyujyam eva śivasāyujyam iti dhvaniḥ* | SV in SL 23.

³¹ *yad vā uttarakaulasiddhāntapratipādako ’yaṃ ślokaḥ* | *uttarakaulasiddhānte śaktitattvād anyat śivatattvaṃ nāsti* | *ataś ca śivatattvaṃ śaktitattva antarbhūtam iti prastutam* | LD in SL 23.

gatair māṅikyatvaṃ gaganamaṅibhiḥ sāndraghaṭitaṃ |
kirīṭaṃ te haīmaṃ himagirisute kīrtayati yaḥ ||
sa nīḍeyacchāyācchuraṇaśabalaṃ candraśakalaṃ |
dhanuḥ śaunāsīraṃ kim iti na nibadhnāti dhiṣaṇām || 42 ||

Translation:

Daughter of the snow mountain! He who sings [the glory] of your golden crown bedecked with the gems of the sky transformed to jewels, will have a doubt whether the crescent moon, spotted by the dazzling light of the gems³² is [in fact] the bow of Indra.

Comments:

The description of the golden diadem of the goddess in verse 42 utilizes four different literary devices of fancy (*utprekṣā*),³³ concealment (*apahṇava*), doubt (*sandeha*), and hyperbole (*atiśayokti*).³⁴ By referring to the bow of Indra (also ‘rainbow’) as the crescent moon, the writer utilizes metaphorical fancy (*utprekṣā*). This same metaphor also falls under the device of hyperbole (*atiśaya*), as it employs the crescent moon to describe the bow of Indra as having an excessive nature. Through rejecting the crescent moon and referring to the bow of Indra, this also indicates the device of concealment (*apahṇava*). By creating doubt as to whether this is the crescent moon or the bow of Indra, the metaphor also functions as doubt (*sandeha*). The AM commentary also identifies the trope of commixture (*saṅkara*).

Following the commentators, two phonetic and corporeal bodies of the goddess are depicted in this verse. While the meticulous choice of words functions at the aesthetic level to suggest literary tropes, the same words also indicate esoteric *mantras*. Just a few examples from the commentaries upon this verse will suffice to demonstrate that the text SL can be considered as a hypertext, with parallel readings possible. At the esoteric level, the commentary SV extracts the Kirīṭa *mantra* from this verse, saying: “With this,

³² I am translating *nīḍeya* as ‘gems,’ relying on Lakṣmīdhara’s (in SL 42) interpretation of the term as ‘. . . *nīḍaṃ golaṃ tatra khacitaṃ nīḍeyaṃ ratnajātam*. . .’ Aruṇāmodinī’s commentary explains the term *nīḍa* as: *nīḍaṃ rathasthāpanārthaḥ kulāyaḥ golakam iti yāvat* | Even this interpretation supports the same understanding.

³³ For discussion on 64 varieties of *utprekṣā*, see SD 10.40-46.

³⁴ See the commentary of Lakṣmīdhara on SL, verse 42.

the Kirīṭa mantra, “*haimakirīṭāya sahasrādityatejase namaḥ*,” is deciphered. The specific Kirīṭa mantra should be learned through the mouth of the preceptor.”³⁵

Ānandagiri, in his commentary, identifies two different mantras and justifies his reading as follows:

“The verse refers to the Vāgīśvarī mantra with a single syllable. Accordingly, [within the term] *himagirisute*, [the letter] ‘*ha*’ stands for [the word ‘*ha*’ that means] ‘for sure.’ *Aim* [refers to] the seed syllable [identified as] *vāgvabha*. . . What is the character of the mantra? This is the *kirīṭa* or the crown of all the mantras.”³⁶

Ānandagiri further explains:

“The esoteric meaning of the verse [starting with] *gatairmāṇikyā* [is as follows]: [The word] *gagana* refers to [the letter] ‘*ha*’. [The word] *māṇikyatvaṃ* [refers to] ‘*ra*.’ ‘*Maṇibhiḥ*’ [suggests] ‘*ī*.’ ‘*Sāndram*’ [refers to] the *anusvāra* or the phoneme ‘*ṃ*.’ ‘*himagirisute*’ [relates to] ‘*nityaklinne*.’ ‘*yacchāyāchhuraṇaśabalaṃ*’ [refers to] ‘*madadrave*.’ ‘*Candraśakalam*’ [refers to the word] ‘*svāhā*.’ Here those who come in the lineage [of Tripurā] understand the words [in the SL] as mantras by convention. Śaṅkarācārya, who is a *siddha* with the mastery [over both poetry and mantras] has the proficiency [and] after making a reference (*saṅketana*) [to this], hid the terms [of the words] and also the [specific] letters related to mantras for the grace of the disciples. You should have no doubt here. This indication has come following the lineage. This is not to be reached by intellect. What the guru has said is as [I have] written.”³⁷

³⁵ *etāvātā haimakirīṭāya sahasrādityatejase nama iti kirīṭamantra udāhṛtaḥ | kirīṭamantra-viśeṣo gurumukhād avagantavyaḥ | SV on SL, verse 42.*

³⁶ *athavaikākṣaravāgīśvarīmantraparatayā padyam | tathā himagirisute ha iti nīscaye | aim vāg-bhavabijam . . . kim lakṣaṇam mantram, kirīṭam sakalamantramakuṭabhūtam | Ānandagirīyā, SL 42.*

³⁷ *gatair māṇikyeti padyasya rahasyārthaḥ - gatair iti | gagana ha, māṇikyatvaṃ ra, maṇibhir ikāraḥ, sāndram anusvāraghaṭitam, himagirisute nityaklinne, yacchāyāchhuraṇaśabalaṃ madadrave candraśakalam svāhā | atra paraṃparāgatānāṃ saṅketamantrapadagrahaṇam | nanu vyutpattyā svatantrasiddhaḥ śaṅkarācāryaḥ svayaṃ saṅketanam kṛtvā padānām anabhivācyānām ca śiṣyānuagrahāyācīkṣat | tava nātra kvāpi śaikā | paraṃparāsamāgatō hy ayaṃ saṅketāḥ | na tu buddhigamyāḥ | gurūktam yathālikhītam eva | Ānandagirīyā, SL 42.*

Following the commentary AM, the verse also refers to the thousand petalled lotus in the body of the practitioner. The implicit meaning is that the description of the limbs of the goddess correlates to the corporeal limbs of the practitioner. The examples above have highlighted the *mantra* body of the goddess. What is explicit in the passage, the divine body, becomes one among many other understandings that are implicit, and according to Ānandagiri, this hidden meaning emerges from the lineage. Just as the carnal presence of the goddess depends upon her exotic limbs and her blissful nature relies upon the aesthetic qualities of her beauty, so also does her *mantra* body require the presence of *mantras* embedded within her limbs. Just as multiple literary devices play together in describing the ornament, a series of suggestions are at work that bring the esoteric meaning to the understanding of the reader. Following this maxim, commentators decipher the *mantras* of the associate deities when explaining the verses that describe the limbs and ornaments of the goddess.

Verse 47:

bhruvau bhugne kiñcid bhuvanabhayabhaṅgavyasanini |
tvadīye netrābhyāṃ madhukararucibhyāṃ dhṛtaguṇam ||
dhanur manye savyetarakaragr̥hītaṃ ratipateḥ |
prakoṣṭhe muṣṭau ca sthagayati nigūḍhāntaram ume || 47 ||

Translation:

Umā! Fond of removing fear in the world! I think of your slightly curved eye-brows as the bow of Kāma which he carried in his left arm,³⁸ [and as if] the string [is] fixed by your eyes that shine like bees. [It is as if Kāma] hides the bowstring below the elbow and [the middle of the bow] into the fists.

Comments:

This verse extols the beauty of the eyebrows of the goddess. In his poetic imagination, the poet sees a parallel between the eyebrow of the goddess and the bow of Kāma, the god of passion. The verse actually says very little of this in a literal sense. What is suggested is what matters. For instance, Kāma carries the bow made out of sugarcane, not so useful for real warfare. LD identifies the literary trope of metaphor (*rūpaka*) in this presentation of

³⁸ The term *savya* is used in Sanskrit for both right and left. In here, I am following the commentaries: ‘*savyo dakṣiṇas tadītarō vāmaḥ sa cāsau karaś ca*’ (Lakṣmīdhara), and ‘*savyo dakṣiṇas tadītarō vāmaḥ karaḥ | dhanur hi vāmakareṇaiva dhriyate*’ (Ānandagiri).

the eyebrow.³⁹ Here, although the particular adjective is identified as something that exaggerates the receiver of the qualities, neither the number nor the gender matches between the source and the target of the metaphor. The two eyebrows are compared with the single bow of Kāma. LD states that number and gender rules can be violated in an analogy and gives example of ‘*mukhaṃ candraḥ*’ (face is like the moon) as an example of gender violation. In this example, the target possesses the neuter gender and the source is in masculine gender. In another example, ‘*kalaśaḥ stanau*’ (breasts are like the vase), although the vase refers to both breasts, the term itself is singular, a clear violation of an agreement in number. LD compares the nose of the goddess to the left arm of Kāma that carries the bow, since her eyebrows are compared with the bow. With this comparison, LD indicates the literary trope of hyperbole (*atiśayokti*), suggesting that the nose of the goddess is so beautiful that it functions as an arm for the god of desire. LD also identifies the blend of different literary devices, which in itself demonstrates the trope of ‘commixture’ (*saṅkara*).

Kāmeśvara, in his commentary AM, identifies the first type of the literary trope of fancy in this case, as what is being compared is expressed and is explicit.⁴⁰ The eyebrows and the nose of the goddess are explicitly compared to the bow and arm of Kāma. What has been suggested here is that the glance of the goddess functions as the bow of Kāma to arouse the passionate desire of Śiva. AM also argues that there is a suggestion resting on entity (*vas-tu-dhvani*), alluding to the power of the glance of the goddess in destroying obstacles. Ānandagiri, on the other hand, points out that the basic perception of the eyebrows of the goddess is abandoned in the process of suggesting it as a bow and so this verse is applying the trope of concealment (*apahnuti*).

Verse 48:

ahaḥ sūte savyaṃ tava nayanam arkātmakatayā |
triyāmāṃ vāmaṃ te sṛjati rajanīnāyakatayā ||
ṛṭṭīyā te dṛṣṭir daradalitahemāmbujaruciḥ |
samādhatte sandhyāṃ divasaniśayor antaracarīm || 48 ||

Translation:

³⁹ Classical aesthetes do not agree on the varieties of *rūpakas* found in this verse. While Jayadeva identifies only four kinds (CĀ 5.18-21), the commentaries *Kāvyaprakāśa* and *Sāhityadarpaṇa* give eight varieties. *Kuvalayānanda*, on the other hand, names six varieties. *Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharāṇa* expands the scope of *rūpakas* by identifying fifteen varieties.

⁴⁰ Between the two *vācya* and *pratiyāmāna* varieties of *utprekṣā*, this falls under *vācyaot-prekṣā*.

Your right⁴¹ eye gives rise to the day, since it is of the nature of the sun. Your left [eye] creates night, since it is [the moon,] the master of the night. Your third eye with the glow of a slightly opened golden lotus gives rise to the intermediate time between day and night.

Comments:

Verse 48 of SL describes the eyes of the goddess, linking their function of causing day, night, and the intermediate states of dusk and dawn to successively her right, left, and third eye. Lakṣmīdhara considers this as the most perfect *kāvya* because it suggests that the deity transcends time and is beyond the cycle of birth and death through this evocative metaphor with an application of suggested meaning (*dhvani*).⁴² The third eye is compared to a barely opened golden lotus, suggesting its potentiality. Lakṣmīdhara identifies this supporting *dhvani* as intermediate level poetry (*madhyama kāvya*) that allows the highest level poetry to manifest through relying only on suggestion. He thus finds a blend of two different kinds of suggestion (*dhvani*).⁴³

The author of SV also locates literary suggestion (*dhvani*) in this verse and attributes it instead to a different construction. He finds that the description of three eyes being parallel to the sun, moon, and fire establishes the identity of the goddess with Śiva. Kāmeśvara, on the other hand, finds this verse as an example of suggesting an entity (*vastudhvani*) through literary ornamentation (*alaṅkāra*). The transcendence of the goddess and her identity with Śiva are both suggesting the facts, one aspect of *vastudhvani*.

At the esoteric level, the sun, moon, and fire not only describe the three channels of *prāna* in the subtle body but also identify the triadic body of Tripurā. Śivānanda praises the goddess as:

⁴¹ While the term *śavya* is used to designate both right and left and there is a possibility to read the passage as 'śavya, I am simply following the reading suggested by the commentators.

⁴² *bhagavatya avayavaviśeṣeṇa . . . kālotpattikathanāt bhagavatyaḥ kālāvacchedyatvaṃ dūrata evāpāstam iti dhvanyate | idam uttamaṃ kāvyam | LD in verse 48.*

⁴³ *ayam anuprāṇanātmakaḥ madhyamottamakāvyaḥ prayojakadhvanyoḥ saṃsr̥ṣṭiḥ | saṃsr̥jyamānaṃ vyaṅgyadvayaṃ pradhānadhvaninā aṅgāṅgibhāvena saṅkīryata iti dik | LD in verse 48.*

“The supreme goddess! the radiance in your *yonī* [possesses] the glow of molten gold; in the heart is the brilliance of lightening, and in the *ājñā* is the hue of the moon.”⁴⁴

The poetic devices utilized here not only describe the corporeal beauty of the goddess, they are also the tools that point towards its esoteric meaning, in this case, the distinct channels and distinct manifestations of the goddess to be found in different corporeal centers of the practitioner. In this way, the target, the body of the goddess that is described with the use of multiple literary tropes, itself becomes the source to describe the body of the aspirant.

Verse 50:

kavīnām sandarbhabastabakamakaraṇdaikarasikaṃ |
kaṭākṣavyākṣepabhramarakalabhau karṇayugalam ||
amuñcantau dṛṣṭvā tava navarasāsvādataralau |
asūyāsaṃsargād alikanayanaṃ kiñcid-arūṇam || 50 ||

Translation:

Your [third] eye in the forehead is somewhat red due to envy, having seen two baby bees [lit. eyes], stretched due to the side glance [up to] the pair of ears that is lustful only to the nectar of the blossoms of the reference of the poets, [and thus] drunk with the taste of nine *rasas*.

Comments:

This verse glorifies the third eye of the goddess. In this depiction, the third eye is jealous, as the wide eyes of the goddess almost touch her ears that are enjoying the aesthetic bliss of *rasas* by listening to the poetry. Lakṣmīdhara states that this depiction embodies the suggestion of an entity (*vastu-dh-vani*). He then points out ‘hyperbole’ (*atīśayokti*), since in this depiction, the eyes of the goddess are presented as enjoying the aesthetic bliss. He also indicates the trope of concealment (*apahnava*) when using the phrase, ‘baby bees’ (*bhramarakalabha*), since the phrase ‘baby bees’ in the passage substitutes for the eyes, denying that they are eyes but rather baby bees. In addition, Lakṣmīdhara also points out the application of the device of metaphor (*rūpaka*),⁴⁵ with the depiction of her eyes suggested by her glance (*kaṭākṣa*). Although a bee and a lotus are not related in terms of enjoying the pollen,

⁴⁴ *yonau kanakapuñjābham hṛdi vidyucchaṭojjvalam | ājñāyām candrasaṅkāśaṃ mahas tava maheśvari || Saubhāgyahṛdayastotra*, verse 6.

⁴⁵ GEROW (1971: 239) translates *rūpaka* as a literary device having the form of metaphorical identification. He defines it as “a figure in which the subject of comparison is identified with its object by a specific process of grammatical subordination.” For a varieties of *rūpaka*, see GEROW 1971, 239-259.

as it is the bee that enjoys the pollen, they are depicted as both enjoying in a metaphoric sense. Through establishment of this relation, there is also the device of hyperbole (*atiśayokti*).

The SV commentary indicates that the literal meaning, the glow of the eyes of the goddess, becomes subordinated through the application of literary devices that are used in the process of revealing suggested meaning. The two tropes applied here, following SV, are metaphor (*rūpaka*) and reason (*hetu*), and the trope of concealment (*apahnuti*) is found through suggestion.⁴⁶ Kāmeśvara maintains that there is a literary device of suggestion resting on literary tropes (*alaṅkāra dhvani*) in this verse, saying that the description gives the appearance of concealing of the natural glow of the third eye of the goddess.

Although commentators offer no further interpretations of poetic license found in this verse to imply that the third eye of the goddess is jealous, the poet is clearly applying suggestion (*dhvani*). By indicating that the third eye of the goddess is reddish, this verse evokes the third eye of Śiva, and through establishment of the identity between Śiva and Śakti by means of describing the reddish third eye, the poet is placing himself to the position of Cupid. As he would not like to be burnt down, the third eye of the goddess is depicted only as ‘somewhat red’ (*kiñcid-aruna*).

Verse 51:

śive śṛṅgārādrā taditarajane kutsanaparā |
saroṣā gaṅgāyāṃ giriśacarite vismayavatī ||
harāhibhyo bhītā sarasirahasaubhāgyajayinī⁴⁷ |
sakhīṣu smerā te mayi janani drṣṭiḥ sakaruṇā || 51 ||

Translation:

Mother! Your glance is saturated with love towards Śiva, contemptuous towards others, wrathful towards Gaṅgā, astonished at the deeds of Śiva, frightened by the snakes of Śiva, victorious with the virtue of the lotus, comic towards companions, and filled with compassion towards me.

Comments:

⁴⁶ *Kavikṛtavastukṛtasaundaryayor abhedādhyavasāyād atiśayoktyor anuprānyānuprāṇa-ka-bhāvasaṃbandhaḥ | apahnavas tu aṅgāṅgibhāvena saṅkīrṇaḥ | SV in verse 50.*

⁴⁷ Although LD reads this passage as ‘. . . janani,’ I am preferring the reading ‘. . . jayinī,’ as this reading is supported in the commentaries SV, AM, *Ānandagirīyā*, *Tātparyadīpinī*, *Padārthacandrikā*, *Diṇḍīma*, *Gopālasundarī*, and *Ānandalaharīṭikā*.

At its most esoteric level, this verse depicts various glances that generate the different magical effects of hypnosis, killing etc. On the poetic front, this verse expands the concept of *rasas* by evoking the basic emotions (*sthāyibhāva*). The description of the glance of the goddess thus provides the platform for both the esoteric and aesthetic expressions. The goddess, in this presentation, bestows a loving glance towards Śiva, a contemptuous gaze towards ordinary folk, a wrathful gaze towards Gaṅgā, and the glance of astonishment at Śiva's exploits. She has the frightened look upon seeing Śiva's snakes, while she bestows a gaze full of charm, compassion, and grace towards her devotee. This description of the gaze of the goddess thus evokes central basic emotions, and through the evocation of these emotions, suggests the *rasas*. Classical aesthetes disagree upon the number of *rasas* suggested in this verse. According to Lakṣmīdhara, there are only eight *rasas* indicated in this verse. AM, on the other hand, maintains that the peaceful (*śānta*) *rasa* is also suggested in the verse.

Following the general depiction, the sentiment of love towards Śiva with her amorous look depicts erotic flavor (*śṛṅgāra*); the sentiment of contempt towards others depicts the aesthetic flavor of disgust (*bībhatsa*) for their impermanent nature. Her gaze towards Gaṅgā is filled with rage, indicating the flavor of fury (*raudra rasa*). She has a gaze of wonder, indicating the flavor of wonder (*adbhuta rasa*), when listening to the wonders of Śiva such as subduing Tripura. The goddess embodies the mood of fear (*bhayānaka*) with her trembling because of Śiva's snakes. The *rasa* of heroism is depicted in her gaze that excels the charm of the lotus. Her gaze towards her attendants indicates the comic (*hāsya*) flavor. Her glance to her devotee indicates compassion.

Kāmeśvara, in his commentary AM, while indicating the presence of the mood of composure (*śānta*), suggests that this mood is expressed through the gaze of the goddess to the third eye of Śiva that burnt down Kāma to ashes. Since the union of Śiva and Śakti is an essential victory of Kāma, this act revitalizes him and the process is considered as the compassion of the goddess.

Following the *rasa* doctrine, the revelation of the aesthetic flavors rests on the presence of the abiding emotions (*sthāyibhāvas*). For example, in order to suggest the loathsome flavor (*bībhatsa*), the emotion of contempt has been introduced. In the same way, anger suggests the element of fury (*raudra*), as it is its dormant emotion. The problem is, not all the permanent emotions for aesthetic flavors are listed in this depiction. Lakṣmīdhara explains that heroic flavor is suggested (*dhvanita*) through the result of (*anubhāva*) her heroism in the presence of a red color in the lotus. The somatic symptoms, such as reddish eye, are considered *sāttvika-bhāvas*, and these, in gener-

al, are discussed within the consequents.⁴⁸ The comic gaze of the goddess suggests the flavor of *hāsya* in the same way. The success of the poet is in suggesting (*dhvanita*) the aesthetic flavors by describing the abiding moods and somatic symptoms.

Furthermore, there is also a literary trope of contradiction (*virodha*), as the goddess is simultaneously experiencing flavors derived through positive and negative emotions. The commentary SV identifies the two sentiments of fury (*raudra*) and disgust (*bībhatsa*), as contradictory to the erotic flavor (*śṛṅgāra*), and these emotions should not be present at the same moment in the same subject. Following the argument of SV, these *rasas* have different supports and thus there is no contradiction. This cryptic justification in SV fails to depict the sudden grasp of all the *rasas* and relies on sequential expression, as is the norm among human beings. He could simply say that this verse depicts the goddess as the support of various and sometimes contradictory emotions that eventually transform into *rasa*.

There is yet another issue concerning this verse: all the commentators discuss two different readings, either with a term ‘*giriśacarita*’ (the deeds of Śiva), or with a term ‘*giriśanayana*’ (the eye of Śiva). When following the second reading, Kāmeśvara has indicated the presence of *śānta rasa*, as has been already discussed. He also finds the presence of this *rasa* even when the verse is read with the first reading. In this case, the commentator explains that the acts of Śiva suggest dispassion, and through it, this verse indicates the peaceful flavor (*śānta rasa*).

Kāmeśvara also suggests that the presence of erotic (*śṛṅgāra*) and peaceful (*karuṇa*) essences are permanently found in the goddess and therefore the verse literally spells out these two *rasas*. As the other *rasas* are indicated through ‘abiding’ moods or suggested through results (*anubhāvas*), Kāmeśvara indicates the presence of the literary trope of ‘impassioned ornament that appears as if a flavor’ (*rasavad-alāṅkāra*). Viśvanātha explains that when a flavor or an incomplete flavor suggests a resemblance or the quelling of a sentiment is reduced to a subordinate condition, they become ornamentation (SD 10.95-96).

Ānandagiri adds further comments upon this issue. He brings the argument that according to Bharata, the experiences generated by different *rasas* are in opposition to each other. Following his theory, the pairs of erotic (*śṛṅgāra*) and loathsome (*bībhatsa*), heroic (*vīra*) and fearsome (*bhayānaka*), furious (*raudra*) and wonderment (*adbhuta*), and the flavors of comic

⁴⁸ I am primarily relying on *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, chapter 3, for discussion on these moods.

(*hāsya*) and compassion (*karuṇa*) are contradictory to each other.⁴⁹ In this verse (SL 51), the two contradictory *rasas*, *śṛṅgāra* and *bībhatsa*, are found in the first quarter, *raudra* and *adbhuta* are suggested in the second quarter; *bhayānaka* and *vīra* are in the third, and *hāsya* and *karuṇa* are situated in the final quarter of the verse. Thus the poet has skillfully presented all the possible contradictions in arranging the *rasas* in four quarters of the verse. According to ĀG, the poet, by a conscious choice of the arrangement of contradictory *rasas*, is suggesting that the nature of the goddess embodies and dissolves contradictions. That all the contradictions are resolved in the body of the goddess is expressed through this depiction of all *rasas*.

The ĀG commentary identifies additional interpretations concerning *rasa*. Accordingly, this verse culminates in evoking only the erotic flavor (*śṛṅgāra*), since other *rasas* are subordinate. He is most likely referring to the SV commentary in this statement, as this is the conclusion SV has reached in its discussion on the number of *rasas* described in this verse. The second position found in ĀG is that this verse does not stimulate any of the *rasas*.⁵⁰ This verse is simply listing various *rasas*. Ānandagiri finally states that there is no contradiction in the rise of erotic flavor.

Although the commentators do not highlight it, it is quite likely that the poet is only suggesting eight *rasas* here. It is not because he adheres to this position, as he has explicitly mentioned nine *rasas* elsewhere. Just like the poet describes two different orders of Kādi and Hādi *mantras* of the goddess (verse 32-33), or the two ascending and descending orders of Kuṇḍalinī, the poet synthesizes different positions within the text. The verse subsequent to this (SL 52) spells out the mood of peace (*śānta*) with the explicit use of pacification (*praśama*).

Following the *Diṇḍima* commentary, the eight *rasas* described in relation to a theatrical performance are applicable to the play of the Lord with the goddess, also identified as Prakṛti, as the goddess or *prakṛti* is the foundation of the world identified with drama. Lord Śiva is the substrate of complete indifference to worldly objects (*nirveda*), the permanent mood necessary for the rise of compassionate flavor. Following this argument, since the rise of *śānta* indicates the pacification of all eight *rasas*, this is why the poet is separately treating *śānta*.

⁴⁹ *rasau śṛṅgārabībhatsau mitho vīrabhayānakau | raudrādbhuta tathā hāsya karuṇau vairiṇau mithaḥ || Nāṭyaśāstra*. Cited in ĀG in verse 51.

⁵⁰ *vastutas tv ayaṃ śloko nīrasaḥ | atrāsmiṃ śṛṅgārātau nirūpyamāṇe avyavadhānena tadvi-rodhinām api nirūpaṇāt | ĀG in verse 51.*

Where the mystical and aesthetic domains overlap in this verse is in the discourse on the number of *rasas*. This verse simultaneously evokes all the *rasas* while clearly some *rasas* contradict others and cannot be simultaneously evoked.⁵¹ AM argues, since the magnitude of the goddess is extraordinary, it is possible for all the *rasas* to reside together. He further argues that just like *śṛṅgāra*, other *rasas* are also instrumental to liberation and therefore there is a mutual compatibility.⁵² Two points are explicitly clear: (1) the body of the goddess is conceived of as an integration of *rasas*, and (2) the aesthetic relish that results is instrumental to liberation.

Verse 55:⁵³

nimeṣonmeṣābhyām pralayam udayam yāti jagatī |
tavety āhuḥ santo dharanīdhararājanyatanaye ||
tvadunmeṣāj jātaṃ jagad idam aśeṣaṃ pralayataḥ |
paritrātuṃ śaṅke parihṛtanimeṣās tava dr̥śaḥ || 55 ||

Translation:

Daughter of the king of mountains! Wise ones say that the rise and dissolution of the world relies on the opening and closing of your eyelids. I think your gaze is forbidden from being closed to protect the entire world from dissolution, as it is originated of the opening of your eyelids.

Comments:

This verse speaks of the eyelids of the goddess. The poet relates the rise and collapse of the world with the opening and closing of goddess's eyelids. According to Lakṣmīdhara, this verse propounds the Advaita doctrine of *dr̥ṣṭisr̥ṣṭivāda*, following which the entities of perception appear and disappear corresponding to perception or its absence.⁵⁴ There is a clear resemblance of this verse with the first verse of the *Spandakārikā*.

At the esoteric level, the rise and collapse of the world or the opening and closing of the eyelids relate to two different orders of creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*) and retrieval (*saṃhāra*), vivid in Śrīvidyā rituals where the first order relates to

⁵¹ AM cites a passage following which *śṛṅgāra* and *bībhatsa* are contradictory to each other and so is *vīra* to *bhayānaka*, *raudra* to *adbhuta*, and *hāsyā* and *karuṇa*. See AM in SL 51.

⁵² *śṛṅgārasyevetararasānām api trivargopayogivāt parasparasauhārdam asty eveti keṣāñcinmatena na virodhaḥ |* AM in SL 51.

⁵³ This verse is numbered 56 in the critical edition. I am following the numbering according to Kuppaswami edition.

⁵⁴ For discussion on this Advaita doctrine, see TIMALSINA 2006.

initiating the ritual from the center of the *maṇḍala* and eventually coming out to the periphery. The retrieval order refers to the return from the periphery to the center. As far as the poetic devices are concerned, the LD commentary identifies the fancy of relying on ‘effect’ (*phalotprekṣā*). This specific trope relates to the signifier aspect of expression, where terms such as ‘as if’ etc. are used. In this verse, the glance of the goddess is depicted as granting protection. LD also points out that there is a suggestion of this fact, a variety of the *vastudhvani*, evident when the verse depicts the glory of the goddess by describing the rise and collapse of the world as a result of the goddess opening and closing her eyes. Classical Indian aesthetics consider the application of *alaṅkāra* highly suitable in the case when it becomes the part of suggestion (*dhvani*), and this is also the case here.

The SV commentary outlines that there is the literary device of concealment (*apahnuti*) in this verse, on the grounds that the blissful nature of the Brahman is described here under the guise of describing the blissful body of the goddess.⁵⁵ Kāmeśvara rejects this identification and states that there is no literary trope of fancy (*utprekṣā*) in this verse, the position also of the *Ḍiṇḍima* commentary. The argument is, this verse is simply stating the fact. In other words, the creation and dissolution of the world through the opening and closing of the petals of the goddess’s eyes is a literal depiction.

Although the commentators do not suggest it, it is reasonable to relate this verse to SK, verse 1. In this case, the Śaivite paradigm is inverted, with the role of Śiva described in SK being attributed to the goddess. This attribution is supported by a meticulous effort to apply suggestion based on fact (*vastudhvani*).

Verse 59:

Sphuradgaṇḍābhogapratiphalitatāṅkayugalaṃ |
catuścakraṃ manye tava mukham idaṃ manmatharatham ||
yam āruhya druhyaty avaniratham arkenducaraṇam |
mahāvīro māraḥ pramathapataye svam jītavate⁵⁶ || 59 ||

⁵⁵ *Niratiśayanānamayā eva brahmāvinābhūtaticchakteḥ devatāśarīropādhim avalambanāyāḥ svābhāvikaṃ tad anyathā prastūyata ity apahnutiḥ eva |* SV in verse 55.

⁵⁶ Although some editions follow the reading *sajjītavate*, I have followed the reading *svam jītavate*, that I think fits within the context most appropriately. While LD reads it as *sajjītavate*, SV reads ‘*asvaṃ paraṃ daiṭyasaiṅgham jītavate*’ or one who has conquered others, the demons. Although two additional commentaries, *Padārthacandrikā* and *Gopālasundarī* follow this line of reading, I see this as lengthy imagination. AM reads it as *svam ātmānam jītavate*, or one who has conquered oneself, the reading I have preferred here. *Ānandagīrīyā*, *Tātparyadīpinī*, and *Ḍiṇḍima* follow this same reading.

Translation:

I believe that your face is the chariot of Kāma with four wheels, having the pair of earrings reflected in the shining mirror-like cheeks. Having mounted this [chariot], the great victor Kāma plots against the master of goblins who has conquered himself and whose chariot is the earth, with the sun and moon as two wheels.

Comments:

This verse glorifies the earrings (*tāṭanka*) of the goddess. Being reflected upon her cheeks, these two rings give a glimpse of four wheels of the chariot of Kāma. In this depiction, Kāma is abiding in the face of the goddess in his battle with Lord Śiva, who has the earth as his chariot, with the sun and moon as its wheels. The face of the goddess is presented here as the chariot, with her earrings and their reflections appearing as wheels.

Lakṣmīdhara suggests that the first part of the metaphor demonstrates the literary device of fancy (*utprekṣā*), with the face of the goddess being presented as the chariot. In the second part, Kāma is glorified as a great victor for his ability to ride this glorious chariot and so it contains the literary trope of poetical reason (*kāvyaṅga*). In this device, a reason is implied in a sentence or a word. The might of Kāma is due to his chariot, a reason that is applicable only in poetic imagination. Although there is not an actual battle between Śiva and Kāma, this verse depicts a battle, and so hyperbole (*atiśayokti*) is present. Due to the blend of different literary tropes, there is also the device of commixture (*saṅkara*). Literary fancy (*utprekṣā*), on the other hand, only sustains the metaphor of poetic reasoning (*kāvyaṅga*) and therefore there is no separate integration of fancy and other literary tropes.

The commentary SV points out that this verse demonstrates suggestion (*dhvani*) by identifying the face of the goddess as the chariot of Kāma. In other words, there is not much glory to be given to the so-called mighty victor for defeating Lord Śiva, for he has the face of the goddess as his vehicle. ĀL also indicates that there is a literary device of concealment (*apahnūtī*), in which exaggeration overlays a simple description, for the earrings give a glimpse of a chariot, rather than the natural sight of the face. In addition, by suggesting that the splendor of Kāma's chariot exceeds that of the chariot of Śiva, the earrings of the goddess are glorified through suggestion (*dhvani*), with an application of hyperbole (*atiśaya*).

Kāmeśvara, on the other hand, suggests that there actually is the trope of illuminator (*dīpaka*). This trope relates to the situation when two distinct entities — one connected to the subject and another unconnected — are associated with the same attribute, or when the same case is connected with more

than one verb. In this situation, a single term fulfils two different purposes by being related to two different metaphors. For instance, the term *āruhya* (having ridden) connects both Kāma and Śiva, where Kāma is positioned on the face of the goddess and Śiva is depicted as riding the chariot of the earth.

ĀG identifies three different literary tropes of simile (*upamā*), metaphor (*rūpaka*), and concealment (*apahnuti*). Simile, following Viśvanātha, relates to a resemblance of two entities expressed by a single sentence that is not accompanied with a contrast or difference.⁵⁷ The application of the term ‘*manye*’ (‘I think’), which is used in the meaning of *iva* (like), shows the trope of simile, and the identity made between the chariot and the face demonstrates a trope of metaphor (*rūpaka*).

The poet reverses the Purāṇic heroism of Śiva in his conquest of Tripura, where his chariot is described vividly with the metaphors such as the sun and the moon as two wheels. In this depiction, Kāma has a chariot of four wheels (two being reflection of the rings in the cheeks of the goddess). The poet is thus comparing Śiva’s victory over Tripura to Kāma’s victory over Śiva. In essence, with the assistance of the goddess, Tripurā, even Tripura’s victor is subdued. The victory of Kāma in this depiction reverses the Purāṇic myth where Kāma gets incinerated merely by the glare of Śiva’s third eye. The poet attributes ‘the great victor’ (*mahāvīra*) to Kāma in order to emphasize the glory of the goddess that turns the defeat of Kāma into his victory. In essence, Śiva’s love for Pārvatī amplifies the victory of Kāma.

At the esoteric level, the text conceals within itself the *mantra* of Bhoginī. For instance, the terms in the verse such as *sphuradgaṇḍā* and *ābhoga* are used to decipher the phonemes *aiṃ* and *klīṃ*, and the term *tāṭaṅkayugala* is used to decipher ‘*kula*’.⁵⁸ If the *mantras* deciphered are considered a text, SL is a hypertext with the subtexts embedded within.

Verse 68:

bhujāśleṣān nityaṃ puradamayituḥ kaṅṭakavatī |
tava grīvā dhatte mukhakamalanāśriyam iyaṃ ||
svataḥ śvetā kālāgurubahulaḥ jambālamalinā |
mṛṅṅālīlāityaṃ vahati yad adho hāralatikā || 68 ||

⁵⁷ SD 10.14cd. For twenty-seven varieties of *upamā*, see SD 10.14-27. GEROW (1971: 140) translates it as ‘comparison’ and defines it as “the comparison of one thing with a substantially different thing in terms of a property, quality, or mode of behavior which they share; simile.” For a detailed analysis, see GEROW 1971, 140-170.

⁵⁸ ĀG deciphers two *mantras* in this verse: *aiṃ klīṃ kulaphsaum* and *oṃ aiṃ hrīṃ klinne klinnamadadrave hsaṃ* | See ĀG in SL 59.

Translation:

Eternally thrilled by the embrace of the destroyer of Tripura, your neck bears the glory of the stalk of your lotus-face. The creeper-like chain below [your neck], although naturally white, is dulled by the very fragrant paste mixed of *agallochum* etc. that bears the beauty of the lotus root.

Comments:

Verse 68 describes the neck of the goddess that is thrilled with the embrace of Lord Śiva. Her neck is compared to the stalk of lotus that holds the lotus-like face of the goddess. Resembling the glory of lotus-stalk, her neck, although naturally white, is darkened by the use of the *agallochum* paste. Her garland of pearls gives a glimpse of the fibrous roots of the lotus-stalk.

LD points out in the statement, ‘there is the glory of the stalk of lotus,’ that this expression has the literary device of illustration (*nidarśana*). This ornamentation is indicated in the case when a possible or even impossible connection of things implies a relation of type and prototype (SD 10.51). In this case, the counter-image of Śrī is indicated by the term Śrī that is used to describe the glory of the neck of the goddess. In the statement, ‘lotus-face,’ is the presence of the literary device of metaphor (*rūpaka*) is indicated, as this establishes identity between the source (lotus) and the target (face). In the second part of the verse, when the neck enhanced by the application of *aguru* is described as having the shine of the lotus-stalk, there is again a trope of illustration (*nidarśana*). And since this metaphor is also dependent upon the previous depiction, it is related as body and part, giving rise to the commixture (*saṅkara*) of metaphors.

The commixture of literary tropes comes to its pinnacle in this verse. SV points out that this verse contains the commixture (*saṅkara*) of metaphor (*rūpaka*), illustration (*nidarśana*), concealment (*apahnuti*), reason (*hetu*), and wonder (*vismaya*). The literary trope of concealment (*apahnuti*) is explicit here, since the lotus-stalk suggests the lotus, but what has been suggested is abandoned in order to derive what has been concealed (the face of the goddess).

The Divine Body of Metaphors

It is reasonable to conclude that SL constitutes three bodies of the goddess: the first section identified as *Ānandalaharī* generates the esoteric experience through ritual visualization, *mantras* and *maṇḍalas*, philosophical speculation, and the practice of *cakras* and *Kuṇḍalinī*. This section is linked with the

surge of bliss that occurs through the rise of *Kuṇḍalinī*, and the relation of this passage to mystical bliss is explicit even in the very title of the text. We can consider this as the *mantra* body of the goddess which is concealed within. The constituents of this body are *mantras* and *maṇḍalas*. The second section of the text that is also identified as *Saundaryalaharī* (the name through which the entire text is known) brings to prominence the corporeal presence of the goddess. Above all, the text, replete with literary ornaments, constitutes the aesthetic body of the goddess. By transforming ordinary language to the aesthetic one, the text thus mirrors *Sundarī* or the 'Beautiful One,' and in this sense, the text becomes the metaphoric body of the goddess. Furthermore, the text is not merely descriptive. It is performed, as singing in melody is inseparable from the process of comprehension. The text frequently acts as a hypertext, assuming divergent readings through adoption of mystical and literary perspectives. Above all, each of the verses is used as a *mantra* that cannot be reduced to its literal translation. In essence, the divine body depicted in the text is identical with the text itself.

The process of integrating multiple metaphors establishes the divine body of unparalleled beauty. In this creative poetic vision, literary tropes constitute the divine body: the face of the goddess is a lotus, with the goddess's neck being compared to its stalk; her ornaments are compared to the tangle of lotus roots. This depiction of beauty is inseparably linked to the text itself, as the poet's choice of words not only allows him to weave the metaphors but also to inscribe the *mantras*. This piece represents the most perfect expression of language: it represents the absolute even when it says it cannot describe it. It is vividly demonstrated in the text by the application of suggestion (*dhvani*) in every mode of expression that language is not merely a device of literal representation. This depiction of language evokes an early representation, where word and meaning are compared to Śakti and Śiva.⁵⁹ In the case of LS, Śakti is both the source and the target: Śakti as speech is the source and Śakti in her esoteric form is the target. In this light, a new framework is needed to ground speech that defies conventional understanding.

SL integrates mystical experience with the aesthetic one, as the same passage functions for both. While the *mantric* body of the goddess is linked to transforming commonsense experience to mystical one, the text itself that incorporates literary tropes and suggestions as a means to the desired end of aesthetic pleasure. The text is written for the connoisseur of both Tantra and

⁵⁹ See the benedictory verse of Kālidāsa in *Raghuvamśa* 1.1. This concept is reiterated in Tantra in various ways. For instance: *śaktis tu mātrkā jñeyā sā ca jñeyā śivātmikā* | Cited from *Tantrasadbhāva* in the *Cidvallī* commentary on *Kamakalāvīlāsa* 11.

aesthetics, and reading it just to serve a literary or Tantric purpose discredits its merits. On the surface, the poet praises the goddess through describing the divine limbs and ornaments. This process, however, is not distinct from of the metaphoric expression and the application of *alaṅkāra* or *dhvani*. When revealing multiple layers of meaning through primary or secondary indications or through suggestion, what is discovered is not just what is referred to, but also the innate experiencing mode of awareness. Since this realization underlies all the cognitive modes, there is no instance of cognition that is not endowed with self-awareness, the target meaning of the poem. This understanding cannot be reached without accepting the world-affirming Śākta philosophy that grounds the embodied nature of mystical experience. Following this philosophy, all modes of bliss - not just the aesthetic bliss - are the manifestations of the very self described in terms of 'awareness and bliss' (*cidānanda*).

The poet's application of *alaṅkāra* in describing the divine beauty while essentially composing poetry of suggestion (*dhvani-kāvya*) follows the classical comparison of *alaṅkāra* as the body and *dhvani* as the essential self of poetry.⁶⁰ The text demonstrates the prominent among innumerable *alaṅkāras*,⁶¹ and both the tropes that rest on the form of language and those that reveal content are displayed again and again in the text. The poet skillfully crafts both in a single verse (for instance, verse 1), and to fit the requirement of a poetry relying on suggestion (*dhvani-kāvya*), the literary devices are manifest as the second nature of the poet, without any intellectual gymnastics.⁶² This effort matches the poet's quest of materializing the beauty of the goddess without any effort (*sahaja*, verse 43) with the self-realization described in Tantric literature as 'born together' (*sahaja*).⁶³

The poet utilizes the poetic device of 'ornamentation' (*alaṅkāra*) with the awareness that the classical aesthetes viewed poetry or drama specifically as the body and literary tropes its ornaments. Although not all aesthetes take this literally, Ānandavardhana does, comparing the poetic *alaṅkāra* with bracelets (DĀ 2.6), recommending that it should be subordinated in order for *rasa* to be expressed (DĀ 2.19). The same *alaṅkāras*, however, attain the status of the self, if they are not simply resting in the signifying words, but are expressed through suggestion (*dhvani*). As Ānandavardhana (DĀ 2.28) states:

⁶⁰ Ānandavardhana is the first one to identify *dhvani* as the self (*ātman*) of poetry. For instance, see *kāvyaśāstram dhvanir . . . Dhvanyāloka* (DĀ) 1.1.

⁶¹ . . . *alaṅkāraṅām anantavāt*. . . *Locana* in DĀ 2.17.

⁶² For the recommendation of *alaṅkāra* in *dhvani-kāvya*, see DĀ 2.16.

⁶³ For the early history of *sahaja*, BHATTACHARYA 1999 (ed.); DAVIDSON 2002a; and DAVIDSON 2002b.

“Those figures of speech which cannot be made into the body of a poem when they are directly expressed, attain the highest beauty when they form a part of *dhvani*.”⁶⁴

The centrality of the body metaphor in describing *alañkāras* is crucial for the discussion of the divine body.⁶⁵ It is not coincidental in SL that the poetic *alañkāras* abound when describing the divine ornaments. For instance, verse 42 describes the golden diadem with an application of the device of doubt (*sandeha*) and exaggeration (*atiśayokti*); verse 61 portrays the nose pearl through an application of *rūpaka* and *upamā*; the garland of pearls is depicted in verse 68 with an application of *nidarśana*, *rūpaka*, and the inter-mingling of both into a single ornamentation (*sañkara*). Verse 74 again describes the garland of pearls with application of *utprekṣā* and *upamā*. Verse 91 portrays the anklets embedded with shining gems applying *utprekṣā*, *atiśayokti*, and the inter-mingling of both (*sañkara*). The relation of two corporeal and poetic ornamentations are, however, marginal to the description of the body of the goddess where *dhvani* plays central role in elevating the status of ornaments to the very essential body of the goddess.

Dhvani is at the center of the description of the divine body. The poet relies on *alañkāra* and *rasa* to reach to the suggested meaning (*dhvani*), and the text is saturated with examples of this application. Varied examples of *dhvani* can be gleaned from just the examples discussed above. In verse 23, the identification with Śiva through the identity with the goddess is reached through *dhvani*, and the poet utilizes multiple *alañkāras* in this process. The description of the eyebrows in verse 47 suggests the power of the goddess to destroy obstacles, a fine example of the application of *dhvani*. Lakṣmīdhara considers verse 48 as a perfect example of poetry with two different types of *dhvani* playing a role in the description of the eyes of the goddess that suggests transcendence of time. The aurora of the third eye of the goddess described in verse 50 is an example of *alañkāra*-based *dhvani*, as it applies multiple *alañkāras* in the process of animating the third eye. In extolling the glory of the goddess, verse 55 is an example of *vastu-dhvani*, and demonstrates a subordinate *utprekṣā* in this case. It is thus vivid that through suggestion, the literary device of ornamentation (*alañkāra*) transforms into the essence of literature, and for our argument, it makes the linguistic body irreducible.

Conclusion

⁶⁴ INGALLS, MASSON, PATWARDHAN 1990, 354.

⁶⁵ *Alañkāras* as the body of the higher self of *rasa* or *dhvani* is quite common in Sanskrit poetics. See also *Kāvyaḍarśa* 1.10.

SL is thus poetry for aesthetic experience and an *Āgama* for esoteric Tantric practice. With its focus on Tantric yoga in the first part identified as *ĀL*, 41 verses of the text elevate the experience of bliss from a limited bliss of self-awareness to the bliss that encompasses all that exists (*jagadānanda*).⁶⁶ This process coincides with spelling out the *mantras*, as confirmed by many classical commentaries. The esoteric domains involve the discourse on *cakras* and *Kuṇḍalinī*, integral to Tantric yoga. This meditative practice supports the inward flow of the mind.

The visualized body of the goddess, in this metaphysics, is not a device to reach to some transcendent experience that rests on rejecting language and form. On the contrary, the divine body and immanence as suggested by it, stand on their own as modes of the highest experience. This metaphysics does not reject transcendence. The text evolves on the framework of Trika, that the self or Śiva as simultaneously immanent and transcendent, the union of Śiva and Śakti in this depiction, or the transformation of Śiva to the body of the goddess, vividly exemplifies this. The experience of bliss and beauty culminates in the experience of the goddess's beautiful body, her carnal presence. Different mechanisms function in this transformative experience. While the experience of bliss unfolds the transcendent by means of a gradual flow of bliss in different stages of mystical surge, the experience of beauty relies on immanence. On one hand, what is beautiful is the transcendent nature of the goddess Tripurā - she who is beyond the triad - while on the other, where the beauty is found is in the flesh. Instead of placing transcendent and immanent experiences as oppositional, this perspective views them as complementary and simultaneously possible. With the example of 'waves' found in this description, the experience of transcendence is compared with knowing the 'ocean,' and immanent experience is compared with seeing 'waves.' Just as seeing the waves does not prevent knowledge of the ocean full of waves, in the same way, experiencing corporeal beauty does not preclude the highest esoteric experience. This position makes the dualism of mind and body irrelevant, grounding the transcendent self-experience within the periphery of embodied experience.

The text, following this argument, does not just describe the goddess but instead embodies her. Rituals directed towards the goddess, along the same lines, do not invoke the deity but confirm her corporeal presence. In the case of SL, the language of the text and its conscious flow of metaphors and metric articulation, are integral aspects of Trika, wherein the absolute

⁶⁶ The name of the text is itself picked from a phrase in verse 5d, . . . *cidānandalaharīm* | The term *parānanda* in verse 34d and 99d evokes the levels of bliss outlined in Trika literature.

is realized through both transcendent and immanent experience. What transforms the common words to the divine body is its aesthetic representation. The goddess is the beautiful one (Sundarī), and what embodies beauty (the words) stand for the divine body. Literary tropes of *alankāra* and suggestion (*dhvani*) thus mirror the very body and the self of the goddess. This platform grounds both the aesthetic and esoteric experiences.

Abbreviations

ĀG	<i>Ānandagirīyā</i>
ĀL	<i>Ānandalaharī</i>
AM	<i>Aruṇāmodinī</i>
CĀ	<i>Candrāloka</i> <i>The Candrāloka of Jayadeva</i> . Varanasi: Caukhamba Samskrit Series Office, 1970.
DĀ	<i>Dhvanyāloka</i> <i>The Dhvanyāloka of Ānandavardhana, with the Locana commentary of Abhinavagupta</i> . Varanasi: CHOWKHAMBA VIDYABHAVAN, 1987.
LD	<i>Lakṣmīdharā</i>
PA	<i>Puraścaryārṇava</i> , see RANA 1972
SD	<i>Sāhityadarpaṇa</i> <i>The Sāhityadarpaṇa of Viśvanātha, with the commentary Lakṣmī</i> . Chawkhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, 2007.
SK	<i>Spandakārikā</i> , see SINGH 1980
SL	<i>Saundaryalaharī</i> , see KUPPUSWAMI 1991
SV	<i>Saubhāgyavardhinī</i>

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