

Body, Self, and Healing in Tantric Ritual Paradigm

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Abstract: This article addresses the spiritual healing practices in classical India that are still prevalent throughout the sub-continent. Primarily relying on the text, Netratantra, with its purview of religious exorcism, mantra healing, and yogic and contemplative practices, this article explores the possibility of relating practices in the field to what has been inscribed in the texts from within the culture. This research demonstrates the fluid relationship existing between the textual and oral traditions, in contrast of the 'high' and 'low' cultures conceived by the Indologists. Tantric texts are exemplary in this regard, as they attempt to provide a framework for the cultural references they are encoding. In a broader sense, this article explores the understanding of the body that is presupposed in the detailed prescriptions of mantra healing. Although what is ailing is the flesh, healing practices detailed here are directed towards the mentally constructed body, and rituals include visualisation, chanting, and other forms of practices. The body in this belief-system defies the oppositional boundaries of 'outside' and 'inside', and 'subject' and 'object'. The healing process relies on the interaction and interpenetration of mental body with the constructed body and the flesh through mantras and other agents.

Preliminary Remarks on Tantric Healing

The central premise of this article is to examine Tantric healing, exploring the connection between contemplative practices dedicated to self-realisation and ritual exorcism. This study relates the text-based contemplative practices with shamanic rituals based on possession, spells, or potions that rely on control of, or counseling with, the spirits. Primarily relying on *Netratantra* (NT) that addresses both contemplative techniques and the pacification of spirits, this article shifts the discourse on healing techniques to address the concepts of the body and the self, bringing embodiment and self-realisation to an interface. NT not only provides a methodology for the pacification of spirits, it also supplies a theoretical framework for addressing disease and healing. The approach of this text is, in many ways, similar to shamanic healing, but what is unique is that the text superimposes the

Tantric philosophy of self-realisation upon the indigenous practice of spirit healing. This provides a unique opportunity to utilise a theoretical framework from within the culture, before engaging these ritual-based worldviews in contemporary discourse.

The highest goal of the Tantras is liberation through self-realisation. In the non-dual Tantric paradigm, this process is described in terms of self-recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). In the state of realisation, the practitioner experiences himself as Śiva, the supreme divinity. This transformed self-experience reverses the early Sāṅkhya paradigm that relies on the binary of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, where the first stands for the self-identical to consciousness and the latter to the three *guṇas* that transform into the material world. Instead of three *guṇas*, the Āyurveda system follows three *doṣas* or bodily humours that cause disease when imbalanced. These two concepts are essential in discourse with the Tantric paradigm. Although the initial outlook here is Sāṅkhyan, with the spirits and deities embodying *guṇas*, the Tantric paradigm of balancing the forces of the natural world parallels the Āyurvedic system of balancing *doṣas*. This textual ethnography allows us to read indigenous belief systems in dialogue with the philosophies developed within the same culture.

Before engaging the healing techniques addressed in NT, a few presuppositions need to be identified. The cosmos of NT is populated by spirits, and in this sense, is identical to other Shamanic worldviews. Some of these spirits inflict disease whereas others heal them. The body, in this paradigm, is an open system in which deities and spirits cavort and reside. The ritual healing technique relies on the construction of a ‘conceptual body’ that is superimposed upon and considered as identical to the phenomenal body.¹ The pivotal concept underlying this healing is the integral relationship between the mind and body. The ritually constructed body, identified as the ‘*mantra*-body’, remains central throughout the entire healing process, and *mantric* speech functions as bodily armour (*kavaca*). One can make a distinction between shamanic and Tantric healing in the sense that the Tantric healing that relies on inviting select deities into the body and blocking unwanted spirits also aims to transform self-awareness, hitherto confined within the body, to the cosmic awareness that embraces the totality.² This leads to the argument that the healing process, initiated with bodily healing, culminates with self-recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). In this reversed paradigm, the ailing body is healed through the transformation of self-awareness.

Following the working definition given by David White, Tantras are predicated upon

the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways. (White 2000, p. 9)

Congruent with this definition, scholars have explored the absence of boundaries in Tantras between ‘the self and the other’ (Dupuche 2001) or the ‘spirit and flesh’ (Skora 2007). On an ethnographic level, the Tantric perspective facilitates an interpretation of indigenous beliefs and practices regarding possession and relates the Shamanic paradigm of the living cosmos populated by spirits and the exegetical systems from within South Asia (Smith 2006; Hitchcock and Jones 1996), while on epistemic and phenomenological level, it helps us understand self-experience in light of the lived-body.³

Tantric healing, in this light, reconfigures the orientation of matrices (*mātrkā*) that limit and cause suffering into alignment with the vision of the identification between the self, the cosmos, and Śiva.⁴ This also relates disease imprinted in the flesh to the mind. When the body is viewed as mirroring the cosmos in this inverted paradigm, the energies that unite or yoke (Yoginīs) and abide in different realms are invited to reside in the body. Deities thus have both the microcosmic and cosmic functions of residing in the individual body or in the body of Śiva (that being the cosmos). NT in particular is a fundamental text in order to understand the worldview that ‘weaves’⁵ the indigenous belief-systems in a single rubric.⁶ If by shamanism we understand ‘a family of traditions whose practitioners focus on voluntarily entering altered states of consciousness in which they experience themselves, or their spirit(s) traveling to other realms at will and interacting with other entities in order to serve their community’ (Walsh 1989, p. 5),⁷ this closely approximates Tantric healing practices, where the world is populated with various spirits and a Tantric practitioner invokes, expels, domesticates, and pleases various forms of spirits roaming in different realms. This reading problematises the construction of categories such as ‘high’ Tantra that emphasises philosophy as opposed to folk Tantric practices.⁸

Creation, in the Tantric depiction, is under the domain of disease and death. This creation is both ontological, with Śiva manifesting as the world, and epistemic, with individuals perceiving distinction and separation between the self and the other. Tantras fuse these epistemic and ontological realities with the assignment of deities that carry out the functions of limiting and confining the individual’s perceived reality within the body. Bondage and the diseases that empower bondage are, in this view, maintained by these deities that reside within the body of Śiva. Yoginīs, Mātrkāś, and other subordinate deities found at both the cosmic and individual levels, themselves being in the intermediate realm of speech and comprised of *mantras*, interact with the individual’s mind and body, affecting only those who have false notions regarding oneself.⁹

The self, as described in Tantras, refers to both reflexive awareness and the cosmic presence that embodies all that exists. In light of this understanding, the constraints imposed on self-awareness, or the misidentification of the self as confined and suffering, result in limiting one’s will, one’s cognitive faculties, and eventually one’s actions. The central argument found in NT is that, due to these impositions upon the self, the deities abiding in different realms within the body

react, as their unbound flow with the central deity or the self is somewhat blocked in this process of misidentification. Diseases, in this depiction, are the consequence of the objective thirst that is governed by Yoginīs and other spirits. While the role given to these spirits is not flattering, Tantras explain that these deities simply carry out their role of ‘recycling’ and thus are being gracious by releasing individuals from their vicious acts. While the final riddance to disease and death in this paradigm is one’s recognition of oneself as Śiva, Tantras provide rituals and *mantras* to communicate with these deities. These *mantras* also function as tools to expel the deities in certain cases and please them in others. *Mantras* and rituals oriented towards these deities, following this cosmology, release the supplicant from the debilitating effects of their own actions. This understanding, while relating healing to the apparently magical effects of rituals, also describes the elevated level of self-awareness that is integral to complete healing, and relates self-knowledge to healing.

Healing the constructed body

Cultures are written upon the canvas of the body. It is through the medium of the body that cultures speak, whether visually in the form of tattoos or conceptually through the mental constructs regarding disease and healing. Whether the visceral experiences are masked or revealed, the subject body is in dialogue with culture through the text written upon the body. Tantric healing, rather than being immediately directed to the flesh, is navigated through a constructed body. The speech act of uttering mantras and their ritual application is an instrument that binds the mental and the physical. Whether through ritual installation (*nyāsa*) of the syllables, or invoking various deities to protect the limbs through ritual shielding (*kavaca*), the immediate bodily awareness is transformed to meet the envisioned body. Healing rituals in many regards resemble both initiation rites and everyday Tantric practices, as they are directed towards transforming bodily awareness. The flesh, while remaining in the background, is the recipient of the transforming awareness, for the healing experience is visceral and not merely conceptual. In this depiction, body is the distillation of motor energies, cognitive energies found in the act of awareness, and the energies inherent to the self or the reflexive aspect of consciousness. The deities in a triad—representing volition (*icchā*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriyā*)—describe the engagement of the self in the world, as these energies are dormant to the self qua Śiva.¹⁰ Just as the motor energy is the materialisation of will, the body, along the same lines, is crystallised desire. Tantric practice thus aims to transform the mental orientation in order to shift one’s corporeality.

A term frequently used in Tantras to refer to the body is *piṇḍa*, or ‘mass’, and this identification projects the cosmos (*brahmāṇḍa*) onto the body.¹¹ Whether as the flesh or as the constructed body, this ‘mass’ is always changing. Tantras bring to the fore the immediately felt awareness of the body that becomes all the more

acute at the juncture of illness. Tantras utilise this sense of limit as a starting point, aspiring to transform limited bodily awareness to collective consciousness. The concept that disease and death are linked only to the confined bodily awareness and not to the cosmic consciousness is what the Tantrics credit for a paradigm shift that grants a healing experience.

In the alternative Tantric perspective of the body, the subject and object domains are merged, and the body is not dissociated from the discourse of the self. This opens up a new paradigm for the interconnectedness between mind and body. This Tantric position deviates from earlier dualistic tendencies. Although the non-dual Tantras adopt a reductionist approach to reach to the core of consciousness as the ultimate reality, this reduction differs from that of the Advaitins, since in this monistic paradigm, the world or the body is the very expression of divinity or consciousness. While both reject dualism, Tantras assign the root of suffering, disease, and death common to all the sentient beings to the lack of non-dual awareness. As maintained by the Tantrics, the 'recognised'-self, while remaining the 'absolute observer', is also the absolute observed and the ground of observation. Furthermore, what is sensed, the body, is not distinct from what is 'sensing', the domain that involves the perceptual field. The visualised body felt by a practitioner, thus, is the conduit to the somatic and the precognitive.

As mentioned above, Tantras utilise a distinct mode of language, *mantras*, as an intersection of the subjective and objective horizons. *Mantra* is thus recognised as the bridge between the self and the flesh. In Tantric terminology, just as our sense organs become active to grasp the objects, *mantras* evolve as a separate organ that relates to the body through the breath.¹² This position echoes the phenomenological description of language as an element of incarnation, or the comparison of learning a new word with acquiring a new sense organ.¹³ The interaction through *mantra*, in the Tantric paradigm, links the two bodies where one, the given, is ailing and aging, and the other, the envisioned, is perfect. Cognition, intrinsically linguistic in nature, embodies the force that cuts through duality and saturates the object body with the properties envisioned in the subject body. *Mantras* are thus considered living and breathing; this is language incarnate, and to engage with *mantras* is to open an inter-subjective dialogue. Just like human subjects, *mantras* do not exist simply to refer to something. This visceral depiction of *mantras* makes the interaction with speech tangible, with *mantras* having the ability for somatic imprint.

Mantras touch

This touching is often found described in the language of seeing or gaze (*dr̥ṣṭi*).¹⁴ The evil gaze of the spirits is described in Tantras as the 'emission of gaze' (*dr̥ṣṭipāta*), whereas the healing gaze is found in the terminology of the divine gaze (*śiva-dr̥ṣṭi*).¹⁵ The text that dedicates multiple chapters on healing is itself titled as the 'eye' (*netra*).¹⁶ The gaze depicted here is not only flowing outward and

procreative, it is simultaneously counter-reflexive, with it describing the mode of consciousness depicted as *vimarśa*.¹⁷ Just as the heart is the somatic centre, vision is the core of consciousness. It is not only the conduit for reaching out to the object or in a sense, penetrating the objective domain, but also the self qua vision that cannot be reduced further.

The lived aspect of language, its carnal role, becomes graphic in Tantras, with specific *mantras* emanating their corporeal forms. The deities, in this depiction, are speech. This specific form of speech not only engages the self and transforms one's cognitive domain but also interacts with corporeality. At least, Tantric healing relies on this premise. The plasticity of the body is vivid not only in the Tantras that depict it as the constellation of various energies, but also in the Upaniṣadic portrayal of the three bodies or five sheaths that comprise corporeality.¹⁸ Tantric *maṇḍalas* as the emanation of Śiva's body or the myths suggesting various Yoginīs, Bhairavas, and Kālīs emanating out of Śiva's limbs, all reconfirm the same theme that the body is a constellation of living energies in speech form. The collection of deities that break the boundary between outside and inside and that roam freely in the cosmic planes as well as within the body, gives a higher role to speech, as these deities are summoned, praised, pleased, or expelled with the use of *mantras*.

Yoginīs interact in various systems within the body.¹⁹ Bhūcarī refers to the group of Yoginīs that relate to motor organs and influence corporeality. Dikcarī refers to another group of deities that interacts with inner organs. Gocarīs interact with the mind and with senses. Khecarīs dwell in the void of consciousness. Vāmeśvarī initiates the outward flow of consciousness that gives rise to limited subjective identities and is also at the source of highest realisation. Tantras depict these Yoginīs as the bridge from one lived experience to another. When all these deities exert their unbound powers within the body and in their cosmic realms, one remains identical to Śiva, and the practitioner's bodily awareness lacks the sense of suffering. When the self-experience is confined, the Yoginīs find themselves limited, and disease is a corporeal imprint of their discontent.

Tantras prescribe two sets of acts to be carried out by these deities. The Yoginīs, literally those who unite, relate different strata of corporeality and self-experience, while Mātṛkās, literally the 'matrices', define the boundaries. Interestingly, these energies that give the sense of limit also refer to the phonemes. The vitality of these deities lies in the fluidity of one's somatic experience and their notions regarding person. Just as Yoginīs roam from one to another realm of experience, Mātṛkās accomplish both the engendering of bondage and liberation. Yoginīs are identified as governing physical substances (*dhātunātha*), with seven different deities successively presiding over flesh, blood, and other corporeal substances.²⁰ Bodily change, not just disease and death but also aging, is assigned to the roles of Yoginīs and Mātṛkās, and these deities affect living beings merely by their gaze. Tantric healing, in this sense, is a process of generating the cooling gaze that counteracts an evil gaze. The premise of this healing process is that the cosmos is populated with spirits that interact through speech,

consume bodily fluids, and can be channelled through a select recitation of *mantras*. The body, accordingly, is not only a constellation of energies but also food for the energies that activate and inhabit them in their divine form. Since the focus of Tantric practice is not the flesh but bodily awareness, the healing effort is focused on altering the bodily sense in order to transform corporeality.

The root cause of suffering in this depiction is not knowing oneself as identical with Śiva. With this lack of awareness arises the misconception of the self as the agent and the enjoyer of limited actions. Rather than presenting the Yoginīs and Mātrkās as evil for their role in causing suffering, Tantras depict them as merely the facilitators that allow one to reap the result of their actions. The first level of healing, one that is temporary through pleasing or banishing the Yoginīs, allows the subject to pursue the higher and permanent healing that coincides with the negative Yoginīs serving as one's apprentices. The healing process thus parallels the recognition of role of these deities.

The body, in this depiction, is not the transcendent and unknowable 'other', although it remains unknown until it is known as it is, i.e. the confluence of energies. In the NT's Śaiva Tantric paradigm, the healed self is not the 'no-self' (*anātman*) or devoid of self-essence but rather the transformation from limited awareness to unbounded vision. Tantras consistently maintain that healing energy is within the body. It is through the visualised awareness that one relates to the cosmos that is the collective consciousness reflected in the surge of Yoginīs upward, soaking the healing cells of the body with rejuvenating juices. In essence, spirits and deities in various groups carry out the role of limiting self-experience when in bondage, and transforming self-awareness that results in the final remedy.

Disease in the Tantric paradigm

In the monistic Tantric paradigm, the physical reasons of suffering, such as the imbalance of bile, etc. are not isolated from purely psychological states such as having fear, doubt, or other sensations arising due to lust, the sense of impurity, aversion, or dullness. While all suffering in this paradigm is attributed to the spirits, some spirits are born simply due to physical imbalance.²¹ Bhūtas, the term for both the phenomenal elements such as the earth and for specific spirits, particularly the spirits of dead people, explicitly relate to corporeal imbalance.²² Physical conditions, such as being exposed to heat or cold, are not sufficient to cause disease in this light. Just like drinking polluted water makes one vulnerable to disease, touching a corpse, in this understanding, gives an opening (*chidra*) to the spirits wanting to enter into the body and live on the life substance of the host. One becomes ill, along these lines, not by simply being affected by these spirits but by lacking the rejuvenating bodily fluids.

The identities shared by the body and consciousness, consciousness and the self, the self and Śiva, and Śiva and the cosmos, are commonplace in Tantras.²³ While

consciousness in Tantric depiction is pure and non-dual, it is dynamic and always engaged in grasping objects. This dynamism of consciousness is identified as the root of creation. It is due to ignorance (*avidyā*) that the individual subjects are bound and suffering. This lack of self-awareness or the projection of false identity results in disease. NT epitomises the transforming and rejuvenating effect of the gaze of Śiva, often worshipped in healing rituals in the form of *Mṛtyuñjaya*.²⁴ Tantras categorise various spirits according to their nature, and specific physical symptoms are attributed to these spirits. Prominent among them, besides *Yoginīs* and *Mātrkās*, are *Vināyakas*, *Bhūtas*, *Piśācas*, *Yakṣas*, and *Rakṣas*. There are also the shadows and the shape-shifters. All of these, like parasites, rely on the flesh and blood of living beings. The moment they find the openings in the subject's body caused by some impurities, these spirits enter within it. The world, being surrounded by disease and death in the manifest form, is a dangerous place to live. Since impurity lies at the heart of this suffering, healing and purity are interlinked. In this sense, *mantras*, associated with the breath, are the cleaning agents that enter from outside into the domain of the mind and traverse all the realms of spirits and deities.

There are other spirits born of the imbalance of bodily substances. *Āyurveda* texts attribute different diseases to the imbalance of three *doṣas*. Tantras assign *Bhūtas*, the spirits, to correspond to these imbalances.²⁵ Besides these spirits born of the imbalance of each of these, there are also *Bhūtas* born of the collective imbalance,²⁶ and Tantras describe the symptoms of those suffering from these afflictions. One suffering from the *Bhūta* born of *vāta* has an overwhelming attraction towards fragrance and lives in windy places. One suffering from the *Bhūta* born of *pitta* endures dehydration even with excessive drink, over-eats, and sleeps a lot. One suffering from the *Bhūta* born of *kapha* spits foam and eats banned substances. The one suffering from the *Bhūta* born of the collective *doṣas* demonstrates all of the above symptoms. The animate cosmos of Tantras relies on the assumption that mere physical entities cannot 'cause' an event such as illness, because causation requires a conscious subject. Although there are physical conditions behind disease, these are actually brought or inflicted by the *Bhūtas* that correspond to these imbalances. Tantric cosmology thus presumes a dialogue with the cause of disease, as there are conscious subjects behind the symptoms that are identified as disease. *Mantra* language becomes the tool of communication to mediate between these realms.

Besides the spirits listed above, there are *Śākinīs* that receive ritual worship and affect living beings. There are polluters (*Dūṣikā*) that cause blood poisoning, suckers (*Cumbikā*) that affect the relatives, and *Patralekhikās* that suck the life-substance. There are different *Mātrkās* that affect the flow of breath and cause different breath-related diseases.²⁷ For each and every faulty act, there is one spirit to cause one specific disease. While the sinister spirits born of the mothers of the higher order are often identified as 'sisters',²⁸ the mothers such as *Brāhmī* or *Māheśvarī* bring these spirits into balance and heal the ailing bodies.

In this Tantric cosmos heavily populated by spirits, there are billions of Vināyakas, all of whom have sprung forth from the toe of the Lord (NT 19: 62–4).²⁹ One affected by these spirits sighs loudly and grinds his teeth. One controlled by Bhūtas wants to kill and enjoys consuming flesh. One subdued by Rākṣasa runs out at night, drinks liquor, bites oneself, lives in isolation, and changes into the colour of copper. One subdued by Yakṣas drinks blood and enjoys liquor and meat. Different spirits have different origins. Just as Yoginīs are born of Piṭhas, Devas are born of specific sites listed as Kṣetras.³⁰ Śākinīs are the shape-shifters who take over animal bodies by deception.³¹ There are Śaivīs and Śābarīs that assume many forms and live on the flesh and blood of other beings. In the absence of a private or public offering, these spirits remain hungry and affect vulnerable individuals. Besides these, Bhūtas inhabit empty places, wells, and trees. There are mighty Yakṣas and those who seize (Grahas) the children. Unmādas cause one to shout and be afflicted with excessive anger and sexual desire. Ḍāvīs, who perform secret rites, can taste but lack the sense of smell. Rudraḍākinīs cause mood change by entering into an individual's mind. Dāmarīs devour the life-substance, ambrosia, from another's body. There are the killing Rūpikās and the Apsmāras that cause fainting; there are Piśācas that dwell in the cremation ground; there are Brahma-Rākṣasas, and there are the seizures that possess the spirits to fulfil their desires.³² In this graphically populated Tantric world of spirits, there is one spirit behind every single suffering.

The paradigm of NT is monistic in that the evil spirits tormenting living beings are emanations of Lord Śiva himself, and are not even evil in reality. This being the case, the problem is to reconcile the apparent contradiction between liberating and healing nature of Śiva and death and disease that are the phenomenal reality. This concern is implicit, when Śiva responds to Pārvatī that:

All those [spirits that are] eager to perform the sacrifice always accompany Bhairava. [They] all are mighty, relying on his strength and nourished by the vigor of his splendor. Those maintaining the great vow please the manifestation of the great Svachanda Bhairava that I have assumed with the gift of the higher beasts.³³

Accordingly, the world is a sacrificial altar. All creatures are under the domain of Lord Mahākāla and are subject to death, and thus may be the sacrificial beast offered to please the Lord. Mahākāla, however, accepts only the offering of the 'beasts' (*paśu*). The term *paśu* plays with its two meanings, the common usage as beast, and the etymological meaning, one who is bound. Since all sentient beings are constricted by passion, aversion, and delusion, all are *paśus* worthy to be sacrificed to the lord of time. The spirits who conduct the sacrifice are always searching for vulnerabilities so that they can enter the body, cause illness, and lead to death. In this depiction, these spirits are merely performing the command given

by Lord Svacchanda. The final remedy prescribed in Tantras is to recognise oneself as the Lord, because the spirits then abide by the order of this liberated being. Alternatively, the *mantras* of the higher order, such as that of Svacchanda, can expel the spirits (NT 19: 27–8), for when the mantras enter the body, the subject transforms into the divine form even when he has not actualised his true nature. In this sense, *mantras* are the inner pulsation of the self that protects the individual from being swept into the realm of bondage and suffering.

The role given to the spirits here is educational. By introducing the doctrine of Karma, NT maintains that *yoginīs* and spirits are not autonomous and hence unable to enter into another's body on their own. They cannot inflict pain and disease upon the masses through their own free will. Nonetheless, they hover nearby and look for loopholes so that, when the moment arises, they can penetrate the host body and consume the life-giving substances. The body, in its natural state, keeps rejuvenating itself. When the spirits enter and block the flow of these substances, one becomes afflicted with disease. In essence, disease is the external imprint of mental conditioning, and healing begins with a reversal of the limitation and pollution veiling the mind. Disease and death, in this depiction, are primarily mental, and only symptoms are seen in the body. The entire concept of pollution and purity rests on this vision of the effects of the negative spirits. All forms of weakness, impurity, and sin are considered to be the root of this infliction, so much so that even the shadow from an impure person can affect others. Touching, sharing clothing, or any substance of the impure person can result in infection (NT 19: 34–44). Even to be depressed, or feel melancholy, and stay in lonely places can invite an attack from the spirits. Impurity, therefore, is to be feared.

Bhūtas fulfil their desires by possessing the body of individuals with similar desires. Through the symptoms of the possessed persons, the healer can identify the specific spirit that is responsible and apply the remedies of mantras and potions accordingly:

Those [possessed by] hungry [spirits] have [the symptom of] excessive desire to eat. [These spirits] are destroyed by the application (*yoga*) of the *mantras*. [The seizures] that want sex are to be removed by the healer seated in [and showing the gesture of] grace with the use of *mantras* [and] the use of all the potions and spells (*tantra*). [The seizures] that want to kill are very powerful and invincible. Although this is the case {*tathāpi*}, there is no doubt that [they also] are destroyed with the power of the splendor of the mantras that embody the strength of Śiva and Śakti [and that are] revealed by the supreme Lord.³⁴

Desire, in this depiction, is a loophole that allows the spirits to enter into the body. It is therefore one's own mental conditioning that makes one vulnerable. The fire of misery, violence, sinful acts, cruelty, improper and impure acts, cunning, the lack of truth, and remorse, all are characteristics that make people weak.

These faults allow the spirits to penetrate into the body, cause disease, and eventually death:

The human beings that are bewildered by sufferings, tormented by the fire of poverty, accompanied by various forms of death threats, engaged only in sinful acts, cruel, outside of the [norms of] purity and good conduct, enamored of violence and wickedness, and lacking penance and truth are sealed by Yoginīs, Śākinīs, Dāvīs, Dāmarikās, Bhūtas, Yakṣas, and Apasmāras.³⁵

The list in NT further details that not being properly respectful to parents, having excessive sex, engaging in sex at inappropriate times, or having fear, also provide such loopholes (NT 19: 34–5). There are many rules regarding purity and sex. For instance, having sex at dusk or dawn, or desiring a teacher’s wife, provides the loophole (NT 19: 36–9). Spirits may possess those who stay awake at night, cry out loud, curse others with anger, or touch impure entities such as a corpse (NT 19: 41–3). Pollution, both corporeal and mental, is thus what is to be feared the most. The lengthy Dharmasāstra rules regarding purity make sense in light of this underlying belief system where impurity is credited for every single disease.

The terminology used to describe the entry of the spirits is noteworthy. Following the text, ‘Bhūtas and Mātṛs that are very powerful [and] “cast their gaze” (*dr̥ṣṭipāta*) through the loopholes of the shadows. [These spirits] become violent when they find the loopholes’.³⁶ Accordingly, these spirits ‘cast [their] terrible gaze’ (*raudrām dr̥ṣṭim pātayanti* NT 19. 47a), or, ‘they look by casting a terrible gaze’ (*dr̥ṣṭim sampātya bhīṣanām | paśyanti . . .* NT 19.49bc). The term *pāta*, ‘falling’, gives a physical motion to the gaze. Just like the emission of semen (*vīryapāta*), the falling of the gaze has generative power, as these deities manifest wherever they cast their glance. This seeing is not merely contact between sense and object resulting in absorption of the object, but rather it is to enter into the field of perception, transform into it, and eventually transform the field of perception into the essential nature of the subject. To be seen, in this paradigm, is to be the object, to be vulnerable.

Ritual healing

The lengthy discussion in Tantras on disease and spirits precedes the introduction of their graphic healing rituals, exorcism manuals, and various visualisations and talismans that all serve the purpose of protecting from the gaze of these spirits and deities, and expelling them. NT depicts these spirits and deities as the ‘family’ (*gaṇas*) of Śiva who is also addressed as the ‘Master of Spirits’ (Bhūtanātha). The healing rituals in this text centre around the specific emanation of Śiva known as ‘the Victor of Death’ (Mrtyuñjaya) or the ‘Lord of Ambrosia’ (Amṛteśa). In this

ritual paradigm, the healing process not only involves the removal of the corporeal symptoms of suffering, it also includes realisation of the self. The central *mantra* of the deity, *om jūṃ saḥ*, in this depiction, corresponds to the three eyes of Śiva, and the healing received through the *mantra* ritual is equated to the glance of Śiva. The empowered *mantra* grants protection from the suffering that reflects one's own *karma*. This belief on the healing aspect of *mantras* underlies the rituals of empowering the talismans (NT 15.2), libation into fire (NT 15.7–9), offering incense (NT 15.8–9), and more. That *mantra* healing is central to NT is vivid in the dialogue where Śiva states:

Beloved! When [these spirits] hear [the mantras] emerging from the five transmissions, they all [become] agitated and run off in [all] ten directions.³⁷

NT addresses the paradox wherein Śiva himself is the Lord of Death, Mahākāla, and also is the Victor over Death, Mṛtyuñjaya. Expressed in terms of the eyes of Śiva, the lord in this depiction embodies both death and immortality. The text inscribes the paradox within Śiva's body, assigning one of his eyes to the fire that burns the 3-fold world into ashes, with another containing the nectar that grants immortality. The monistic background of the text is explicit, for these two opposing aspects reside in Śiva in harmony. The healing nature of Śiva is expressed in the visualisation of the central deity: Mṛtyuñjaya is of the complexion of snowy mountain. He is adorned with white flowers, seated upon a white lotus, showing the gestures of granting boons and fearlessness, and holding a vase filled with ambrosia.³⁸ In this manifestation, Śiva is healing the cosmos.

NT also describes the ritual *maṇḍala* worship for conquering disease and death. This ritual consists of drawing a lotus with the placement of specific syllables and venerating a vase that contains the drawing of the lotus. Worshipping Mṛtyuñjaya in this vase and performing the fire ritual with offerings of ghee and sesame is prescribed for healing.³⁹ The text also highlights the use of specific substances, such as drawing the *maṇḍala* on *bhūrja* leaves using white camphor.⁴⁰ The drawing is placed inside the golden vase filled with honey and milk (NT 17.17–20). In one practice, the term *vausaṭ* is uttered for enlivening the eight petals of the *maṇḍala*, drawn during the recitation of the three-syllable *mantra*. NT describes that this design is used to make talismans for healing as well as for conducting healing rituals. In the course of the ritual, the ailing person is asked to inscribe his name on the lotus-shaped *maṇḍala* where the *mantra* letters are written, and this design is then placed inside the vase. The ritual vase is placed on top of a drawing that depicts the eight-petalled lotus. The text instructs the practitioner to visualise the flow of ambrosia from the top of head, soaking all the channels of the body.

Yogic healing in the Tantric context

Tantric yoga focuses literally on the union of the self with the energies (*śaktis*). This union results in the individual self recognising himself as Śiva. This understanding of yoga parallels the tradition of alchemy, where corporeal transformation is the focus. In the context of NT, the primary focus is the inner body, and the flow of vital energies through the subtle body results in higher perfections (*siddhis*) and self-realisation. Following this text, the meditation upon *cakras* and channels (*nāḍis*), various foundations (*ādhāras*), and different voids (*vyoman*) leads the practitioner to both corporeal rejuvenation and liberation.⁴¹ This subtle body interacts with *mantras*: they both are essentially comprised of vital energies (*prāṇas*), rely on breath, and manifest through sound. This alternate body that has the physical nature of breath, while remaining invisible, bridges the two realms of the visible and invisible. In his dialogue with the Goddess, Śiva describes this body as:

[Goddess] with beautiful hips! A yogi rejuvenates himself or the others and achieves a luminous body and becomes free from all the diseases, having known the body [comprised] of six cakras, sixteen seats, three focal points [of mindfulness], and five voids, associated with twelve ties and three [distinct forms of] energies, filled with the three paths of [the prāṇic] centers and associated with three channels, overgrown with the paths of ten nerves and the seventy two thousand constellations of the nerves [with] thirty-five million [nerves], inflicted with impurities, surrounded by diseases.⁴²

Disease and death, in this paradigm of NT, is the consequence of the disruption of the flow of vital energies through the subtle body. And, NT maintains that a yogin can revive these centres and transform his body through the practice of focused breathing accompanied by *mantras*. The goal of this yogic practice is to achieve the state of oneness, described metaphorically as the ‘mingling of fluids’ (*samarasa*) (NT 7.34, 7.49), resulting in the rejuvenation of the body.

Following NT, this *samarasa* occurs when the subtle channels are opened. In this practice, a yogin breathes through the *suṣumnā* that contains *amṛta* or nectar (NT 7.47). If we compare the application of the term *samarasa* in these instances with that in NT 8.40, it becomes clear that this inter-mingling involves both the body and the mind. This application of the term to embrace corporeal process while describing mental acts is vivid also in the practice of the gesture of *khecarī*. While the practice begins with expanding the breath to the state identified as *śakti*, it culminates with the entry into the highest state that is free from all the impurities (NT 7.37–9). As discussed above, the limitations of the body manifest in the flesh are the signs of mental conditioning. Going back to the key term *śakti*, NT defines it as the origin (*yoni*) of all deities and powers, and also as the state of reabsorption (*saṃhāra*) (NT 7.40–2). According to the text, the rejuvenating nectar flows uninterrupted when the mind of the yogin is fixed in this *śakti* state. The higher

meditative state is described as immersion in the ocean of ambrosia (NT 7.48). Being *samarasa* refers both to being in absorption and saturating the body with ambrosia. In terms of NT:

Having obtained [the state of] Śiva of the character of the self that is free from sufferings, [the yogin] should feel [this state just by] self-experience [alone]. One becomes immortal by obtaining the subtle abode of the Lord of nectar. At that moment {*tadā*}, this [yogin] transforms into the nectar [itself] and there is no doubt that [he] conquers death.⁴³

Central to these practices is the fixation of mind upon different centres of the body. This visualisation, called *dhāraṇā*, also relies on fixing the *prāṇic* flow. What makes the Tantric approach distinct from Patañjali's *dhāraṇā* is its substantial focus on the recitation of seed syllables or *mantras* that accompany mental focus upon different limbs of the body. Found in different forms of *nyāsa*, which is the installation of the seed syllables in the body, this reconfiguration of the body to parallel the body of the deity aligns with the understanding of intermingling (*sāmarasya*) as discussed in NT.

Although Tantras utilise some of the same categories that are prevalent in Patañjali's yoga system, these categories are differently defined. Their alternative interpretation of yogic categories underlies the Tantric cosmology. For instance, withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*) is interpreted as the 'retrieval of the vital energy, the breath associated with consciousness'.⁴⁴ Along the same lines, 'in whatever form the deity is vividly present in the mind of a *mantra* practitioner, to sustain [that image] is what is called meditation'.⁴⁵ Accordingly, *samādhi* is defined as the 'dissolution of mind within the pure being, eternal and free from defilements, while contemplating upon it'.⁴⁶

In the Tantric paradigm of NT, these yogic states cannot arise without the proper channelling of the vital energies. The term *prāṇa* describes various aspects of these energies, which are breath in its external flow, pulsation in its inner form, and speech in its most exalted form. The relationship of speech and breath that bridges the corporeal and mental domains provides the platform for Tantric yoga. This process relies on creating a specific mental state that communicates with the flesh through breath. Yogic transformation is therefore a two-way practice, where the body becomes the means for the mind to realise its essential nature, and mental states leave behind their imprints in the body. In both cases, speech and breath mediate. This Tantric interpretation of yoga also redefines the seat (*āsana*) from its literal meaning of corporeal positions. Along these lines, 'one attains the yogic state of *āsana* by taking support of the central flow of *prāṇa* which is distinct from both *prāṇa* and *apāna*, and seated in the power of consciousness'.⁴⁷

Tantric texts generally address yoga in the context of corporeal healing. The two healing techniques, one of using *mantras* and diagrams, and the other of practicing yoga, are essentially interconnected. The ritual healing performed in

the physical world with the geometric *maṇḍala* and the vase ritual thus parallels visualisation and *prāṇic* yoga, since they both relate to the visualised and felt domain of the body. In external rituals, there is a constant involvement of the energies of action, while in mental rituals of visualisation and meditation, the mind is engaged in an effort to transform volition from its confined and individuated state to the boundless and stainless Śiva state. In external form, the senses are fully engaged, although the modes of sensation are considered to be essentially revealing the self-nature. This active engagement of the body in the transformed ritual plane is the extension of bodily awareness to the outer domain where the visualised entity, the deity, interplays with the inner self that is confined within the flesh.

The 'body' in this discourse cannot merely refer to the flesh. The link established to multiple concepts by the term 'body' becomes a key to understand this process of transformation. The subjective shift from an ailing to a healed self, in this depiction, results in the physical transformation from disease to health. Corporeality, along these lines, is what is felt rather than what is transcendent to experience. That which transcends immediate experience interplays with that which is felt. And through the yogic process or the ritual paradigm, the individual is empowered to shift the experience from limitation to unbound self-realisation.

Healing the self, healing bodies

Central to the discussion above is that the body can not only be manipulated and reconfigured, but bodily awareness can also be altered. The Tantric concept of the '*mantra*-body' (*mantrakāya* or *vidyādeha*) describes this mentally constructed body. The understanding is that a new reality is generated through a repeated *bhāvanā*, which refers to both a focused attention and construction. Relying on this, the aspirant 'creates' a *mantra* body through the installation of *mantras*, seed syllables, and letters. It is in this *mantra* body that the sense of distinction between the body and the self collapses. Following Tantras, *mantra* is not merely a medium for divine communication or an expression of the divine, it is in itself a conscious subject. To repeat a *mantra* is to engage in dialogue with another self, and to embody a *mantra* is to let the other inhabit the body. This understanding is at the heart of Tantric healing, and some of these nuances are common to shamanic healing as well.

What is ailing and in need of protection in this light is the person in their limited self-identity. Although the initial process of healing is encoded in the body, what is being healed is the self. NT details that, although the self in reality is eternal and does not need protection, this self becomes enmeshed with different polluting factors (*mala*), and the healing process is to remove these impurities from the self. The subtle impurity gives the notion of limited self; the impurity caused by illusion gives rise to limitation to the sense organs, and the impurity pertinent to actions conditions one's actions by limiting motor organs.⁴⁸ The

notion of 'subject', or the emergence of 'person' depends upon the presence of these confining factors. In the realised state, there is no individuality, as consciousness in itself is free from the limits of subject and object. When there is no impurity, there cannot be any mental construct (*vikalpa*), and in the absence of mental constructs, there is neither birth nor death. The following statement reiterates the same theme that having mental constructs (*vikalpa*) is succumbing to disease and death, and the technique for liberation is identical to that of healing:

The self is omnipresent, subtle, devoid of *guṇas*, free from actions and any movements. However, there are threefold *āṇava*, *māyīya*, and *kārma* impurities. Due to association with those [impurities], the self {*sa*} is defiled, not autonomous and devoid of powers. Therefore, it is due to the obstruction [caused by] three impurities that the self {*asau*} is [considered] impure. Otherwise, there is a contradiction. How could the self which in itself is free from impurities engage in pleasure? A pure [self] cannot be engaged in pleasure. Enjoyment and the world are mental constructs alone. One who is bound constantly transmigrates. Since [this impure self] is transmigrating and [thus] bound, it is not free from defilements.⁴⁹

In the Tantric paradigm, the world is Śiva's playful creation and the individual selves are Śiva himself. Both bondage and liberation are just a play of consciousness. In this self-imposed bondage, there exists a dichotomy between the two categories of the self and the other, divine and human, or suffering and liberating. This distinction allows the possibility of divine grace, although who is receiving grace and who is gracious, in fact, is essentially the same self. When one realises this unity of the selves, one assumes one's own previous powers of unbound volition, cognition, and action.⁵⁰ In this altered paradigm, the self is Śiva. The protection through *mantras* as prescribed in NT also relates to this 3-fold paradigm. In the subtle state of volition, the individual self receives protection through initiation, as this helps the individual shatter the notion of duality. At the next level, the level of cognition, the individual self (comprised of ego, cognition, mind, and the five sense organs) receives protection and does not stray from the self-nature. In the third level, the power of action is manifest in the body and the active energies heal the body from various diseases (NT 19.161–71).

A question arises: after all, if the individual selves are in essence Śiva, why do these spirits inflict pain? NT maintains that it is through suffering that the persons recognise their essential nature. The tormenting spirits, according to NT, function according to the role given by Śiva himself, to let the individuals recognise their true nature. As the text suggests:

These [Yoginīs] are free from passion and aversion, greed and delusion. They kill the beasts for the sake of the sacrifice to the supreme Lord. [It is] not that [they kill] with greed or for the sake of killing, or with the violent desire. They

only maintain the order of the supreme Bhairava. Beasts are created for his sake by the self-manifest [Brahmā] himself. Beasts are useful for sacrifice to the Lord or otherwise are of no use. Oh [goddess] with [such a] lovely face! [They perform this act] just for the grace to these beasts, and they destroy the collection of sins and liberate [the beasts] from [their] sins.⁵¹

These Yoginīs, accordingly, unite the individual selves bound in the world with the supreme Śiva by liberating from the bondage embedded in volition, cognition, and action through the 3-fold yoga (NT 20.9–10). The text justifies the acts of the Yoginīs by saying that they ‘unite [the individuals with Śiva] and do not kill with force’ (NT 20.10), and also that ‘By destroying the roots, these [Yoginīs] eliminate all three impurities. The body that lacks the three impurities is not reborn’.⁵²

The text makes both explicit and implicit connections between psychological conditions and physical symptoms. Terms such as ‘impurity’ or ‘bondage’ function here not only to describe the metaphysical aspects, but also to acknowledge their manifestation in the body. Disease, in this depiction, stems from metaphysical limitations and the imprint is visible in the body. Yoginīs that cast their gaze and inflict suffering are the energies that bridge the state of pure consciousness and the state of being bound in the body. The use of the terminology of ‘impurity’ (*mala*) and the description of liberation in terms of being free from impurities (*nirmala*) further correlates physical conditions such as illness to bondage in the world. The pure state, thus, contains both the psychological and somatic traits:

As long as the supreme energy endowed with the qualities of omniscience etc. [and] that expands starting from the feet does not surge free from impurities, for that duration, the self is not pure. In the Śaiva [tradition, the self] is considered as bound till that time.⁵³

This wider interpretation not only encompasses the demise of the body but also includes the loss of self-awareness within the ambit of death. This discussion leads to the conclusion that if there is no consciousness of death, there is no death. This realisation is conceived of as liberation from defilements (*anāmaya* NT 8.27). When the self-nature has not been revealed, Yoginīs and Mātṛs find their unbound energies hindered, and their discontent leaves an imprint in the body in the form of disease. These very deities become instruments for accomplishing tasks for the self-realised beings. In the non-dual Tantric paradigm, there is no exorcism or expelling the spirits, as the self encompasses all that exists. The spirits, in this depiction, are merely the mirror images of non-recognised mental conditioning. When the essential nature is realised, these spirits find their harmonious abode in the self, Śiva nature (NT 19: 25–30). NT describes this process as entering into the self-nature. This process involves visualising the subtle body comprised of *cakras* and various channels (NT 19: 31–4).⁵⁴ The application of *mantras* and *yantras*, potions and incense, chanting, and displaying various gestures, all of these are

categorised under the physical (*sthūla*) yoga and are essential to healing practices that are efficient only in light of the realisation of the subtle forms of yoga that describe the metaphysics of bondage and liberation.⁵⁵

Based on these presuppositions, Tantric healing techniques are identical to the method of self-realisation. In order for an individual to achieve the state of liberation, he has to focus his mind in the state of no mind, transcending the limits of subject and object. With this practice, the mind is 'mingled' (*samarasa*) with the highest bliss, with both *aham* and *anya*, the self and the other, being dissolved (NT 8.40). In this state, there is no object upon which the mind can focus, and thus it is freed from objects. Eventually, the mind is freed even from the concept of this freedom from the support (*ālambana*). The mind, in this state, is not fixed upon either inner concepts or external entities, and this state of mind that is free from subjective and objective constructs is identified as absorption (NT 8.41–4). The Lord Amṛteśa is identical to this specific mental state. In *samādhi*, the nature of Amṛteśa permeates the body and the senses of a yogin, and by breathing in this state, he liberates himself from all diseases (NT 8.46–8).

This presentation also brings to light the changing notions of the body and the self. The shift in the awareness of body and self is crucial to both healing and self-realisation. The dynamism of self-awareness and embodiment that is detailed in the Tantras does not reduce the self to somatic states, but rather, it is presented here to dismantle the boundaries between the clinical and subject bodies. Suffering, in this light, comes to the forefront of embodiment. As much as our existence is immediately given to us, our somatic situations are also immediate to us. It is in the moment of suffering that the self awakens, in the sense that it recognises its limits and returns to the inner self. The body, the distillation of *karma* or the heap of passion, aversion, and delusion, is thus a means to recognise the self and also an end to experience healing. The philosophy of the recognition of the self as Śiva described in terms of *pratyabhijñā* is the pretext for this Tantric paradigm, as it is within the body that the self actualises its limits and regains its transformed experience. What has been altered in this process is the experience, and the self, following the non-dual Tantras, can be distilled to this very experience.

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Notes

- 1 For discussion on this constructive aspect of Tantric Body, see Flood (2005).
- 2 For the emergence of the concept of *pūrṇāhantā*, see Dyczkowski (1990).
- 3 Some of the key phenomenological concepts discussed in this article rely on Nagatomo (1992) and Merleau-Ponty (1979).
- 4 For this dual-role of Māṭṛkās, see the *Vimarsīnī* commentary in the *Śivasūtra* 1.4.
- 5 See also the meaning of the term *tantra* from the root \sqrt{tan} , to weave.
- 6 Most noteworthy is the Bön ritual exorcism and other healing methods. While remaining one of the indigenous practices from Tibet, Bon has several peculiarities that make it possible to draw an interconnectedness with wider South Asian Tantric systems. See Beyer (1973); Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1975); Norbu (1995); and Snellgrove (1967).
- 7 I am using Walsh's classification as a working definition, as he is aware of intricate problems of defining shamanism (Walsh 1995). In doing so, I am distancing myself from Eliade's romantic presentation of shamanism (Eliade 1964).
- 8 For the categorisation of elite and folk Tantras, see Urban (2003). For 'soft-core' and 'hard-core' Tantras, see White (2000, p. 24) and White (2003, pp. 13–22).
- 9 For treatment on Yoginīs and other deities affecting the spiritual realm, see White (2003); Dhawan (1997); and Dehejia (1986). For the folk deities in India related to disease and healing, see Stewart in Lopez (1995, pp. 352–66, 389–97). For introduction to the Goddess tradition in India, see Hawley and Wolff (1996). For *mantras*, see Alper (1991); Timalsina (2010); and Padoux (1990).
- 10 For the triadic expression of experience in Tantra, see Muller-Ortega (1989).
- 11 For the concept of body as cosmos, see White (1996). For the Nāth doctrine of *piṇḍa-brahmāṇḍa*, see Timalsina (2008).
- 12 See *Spandakārikā* 2.1–2, and the *Nirṇaya* commentary thereon.
- 13 Merleau-Ponty (1979, p. 182).
- 14 For the classical Advaita treatment on seeing as creation, see Timalsina (2006). My essay in progress, 'Holographic Limbs in Hindu Myths and Images' treats the symbolism of eyes.
- 15 The text, *Śivadṛṣṭi* is exemplary for the application of vision to describe self-recognition, as this is the seminal text of Trika Śaiva philosophy, with Utpala borrowing from this text in his exposition of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñā*.
- 16 Kṣemarāja gives various etymologies of Netra while commenting upon *Netratantra*. The most common among them is the *nayana* (carry), from the root \sqrt{ni} , and *trāṇa* (protect), from the root \sqrt{tra} .
- 17 For the concept of touch in Abhinavagupta's philosophy, see Skora (2009).
- 18 The three-body system appears to have been evolved relying on the concept of three states of consciousness, primarily discussed in the *Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad*. For variant notions of body, see White (1996). The concept of five sheaths comes from the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* 2.2–5; 3.1–6.
- 19 For the Tantric concept of Cakras, see White (1996). For an exposition of the five-*cakra* system, see Heilijger-Seelens (1994).
- 20 For the role of Dākinīs and other deities with similar roles, see White (2003).

- 21 Two pertinent texts for Tantric exorcism and the categorisation of various spirits are *Kriyākālaguṇottara*, *Tantrasadbhāva*. I have primarily relied on Kṣemarāja's reading of these texts.
- 22 For further discussion on *bhūtas*, colloquially the Bhūts, see Smith (2006), particularly 472–530. The application of five principle elements in Tantric ritual purification is at commonplace (Flood in White 2000, pp. 509–20).
- 23 *caitanya ātmā* | *Śivasūtra* 1.1.
- 24 For the ritual of *Mṛtyuñjaya*, see *Śrīvidyārṇavatāntra*. For the ritual of *cheating death*, see Walter in White (2000, pp. 605–23).
- 25 Both NT and *Kriyākālaguṇottara* (KKG) describe the Bhūtas as being born of *vāta*, *pitta*, and *śleṣma*.
- 26 NT 19:31, 172–4.
- 27 These Mātṛkās are identified as *Ucchuṣmā* and *Nakradūṣī*, *Urdhvaniḥśvāsikā* and *Adhoniḥśvāsikā*.
- 28 These sisters (*Bhaginīs*) are considered to be born of portions of the Mother goddesses such as *Brāhmī*.
- 29 Just like seven Mothers are worshipped to pacify the effect of the secondary Mātṛkās, *Gaṇeśa* is worshipped to pacify the *Vināyakas*.
- 30 For discussion on *pīṭha*, *kṣetra*, and similar other Śākta centers, see Dyczkowski (2009, vol. 1, pp. 480–737).
- 31 One of the shape-shifters is *Rudra-Śākinī*, who lives in dangerous places and knows the minds of others.
- 32 NT 2.13–16 and the *Uddyota* thereon.
- 33 *yāgārtham udyatāḥ sarve bhairavānucarāḥ sadā | tacchaktyā balinaḥ sarve tattejobalavṛmhitāḥ ||*
mahāpaśūpahareṇa toṣayanti mahāvratāḥ | mahābhairavarūpaṃ yat svacchandaṃ kṛtavān aham ||
 NT 19:13–14.
- 34 *bhoktukāmā jighāmsanti naśyante mantrayogataḥ | ratikāmās tv anekaiś ca sarvais tantrais tathausadhaiḥ || mantriñānugrahasthena protsāryā mantrayogataḥ | hantukāmās tu ye proktā durādharṣā mahābalāḥ | tathāpi pārameśena mantratejobalena te | śivaśaktiprabhāveṇa naśyanty atra na saṃśayaḥ ||*
 NT 19.179–81.
- 35 *... manujāḥ duḥkhamohitāḥ || dāridryānalasantaptā nānāmṛtyubhayānvitāḥ | pāpaikaniratāḥ krūrāḥ śaucācārabahiṣkṛtāḥ || himsāpaiśunyaniratās tapaḥsatyavivarjitāḥ | yoginiśākinībhiś ca dāvyā dāmarikādibhiḥ || bhūtair yaḥśair apasmāair mudritāḥ... | NT 16.9d–12ab.*
- 36 *chāyācchidreṇa bhūtās ca mātaro balabattarāḥ | dṛṣṭipātaṃ prakurvanti labdhacchidrā hi himsakāḥ || NT 19.46.*
- 37 *pañcaśrotovinirbhinnāḥ śṛṅvanti hi yadā pryē | tadā sarve vidravanti palāyante diśo daśa || NT 19.33.*
- 38 NT 3.18–22.
- 39 This ritual is detailed in NT 17.1–20.
- 40 The other substances mixed are milk, *rocanā*, and *kuṅkuma*.

- 41 For discussion on *cakras*, see Woodroffe (1973). For various centers within the body, see NT, ch. 7; White (1996, pp. 218–62).
- 42 *ṛtucakraṃ svarādhāraṃ trilakṣaṃ vyomaṇḍalācakaṃ || granthidvādaśasamyuktaṃ śaktitrayasamanvitam | dhāmatrayapathākṛāntaṃ nāḍitrayasamanvitam || jñātvā śārīraṃ suśroṇi daśanāḍipathāvṛtam | dvāsaptatyā sahasrais tu sārḍhakoṭitrayeṇa ca || nādivṛndaiḥ samākṛāntaṃ malinaṃ vyādhibhir vṛtam | sūkṣmadhyānāmṛtenaiva pareṇaivoditena tu || āpyāyaṃ kurute yogi ātmano vā parasya ca | divyadehaḥ sa bhavati sarvavyādhivivarjitāḥ || NT 7.1cd–5.*
- 43 *icchājñānakriyārūpaṃ śivam ātmasvarūpakam | nirāmayam anuprāpya svānubhūtyā vibhāvayet || amṛteśapadaṃ sūkṣmaṃ saṃprāpyaivāmṛtibhavet | tadāsāv amṛtibhūya mṛtyujin nātra saṃśayaḥ ||*
- NT 7.50–1.
- 44 *cittātmaikyadhṛtasya prāṇasya syāt saṃhṛtiḥ sthānāt | pratyāhāro jñeyas caitanyayutasya samyag anilasya || Prapañcasāraṇtra (PST) 19.21.*
- 45 *yo manasi devatāyā bhāvaḥ syād asya mantriṇaḥ samyak | saṃsthāpayec ca tatrety evaṃ dhyānaṃ vidanti tattvavidāḥ || PST 19.22–3.*
- 46 *sattāmātraṃ śuddhaṃ nityam api nirañjanaṃ ca yat proktaṃ | tat pravacintya ca tasmīnś cittalayaḥ syāt samādhir uddiṣṭāḥ || PST 19.23–4.*
- 47 *madhyamaṃ prāṇam āśṛitya prāṇāpānāpathāntaram | ālambya jñānaśaktiṃ ca tatsthaṃ caivāsanaṃ labhet || NT 8.11.*
- 48 Tantras identity these impurities as *āṇava*, *māyīya*, and *kārma malas*.
- 49 *vyāpakaḥ puruṣaḥ sūkṣmo nirguṇo niṣkriyo 'calaḥ | kintv ānavas tathā kārmo māyīyas trividho malaḥ || tatsaṃbandhāt sa malino hy asvatantro 'py aśaktimān | aviśuddho hy asau tasmān malatrayanirodhataḥ || nirmalo vā kathaṃ śakto bhogeṣv etad viruddhyate | śuddho bhogī na siddhyet tu vikalpo bhoga ucyate || vikalpamātraḥ saṃsāraḥ paśoḥ saṃsaraṇaṃ sadā | saṃsāryasya ca baddhasya nirmalatvaṃ na yujyate ||*
- NT 19.145–48.
- 50 The three energies credited for these powers are Aghorā, Ghorā, and Ghoraghoratarā. These energies rely on the Aghora Mantra, discussed in the *Svacchandatantra*.
- 51 *rāgadveṣavimuktās tā lobhamohavivarjitāḥ | yāgārthaṃ devadevasya paśūn vai prokṣayanti tāḥ || na lobhena na hiṃsārthaṃ na caiva hi jighāṃsayā | mahābhairavadevasya śāsanaṃ pālayanti tāḥ || tadarthaṃ paśavaḥ sṛṣṭāḥ svayam eva svayambhuvā | paśavaḥ patiyāgārtham upayuktā na cānyathā || eṣām anugrahārthāya paśūnāṃ tu varānane | mocayanti ca pāpebhyaḥ pāpaughāṃś chedayanti tān ||*
- NT 20.5–8.

52 *Body, Self, and Healing in Tantric Ritual Paradigm*

52 *mūlacchedena teṣāṃ hi jighāṃsanti malatrayam | malatrayaviyuktasya śarīraṃ
na prarohati ||* NT 20.18.

53 *yadā tu paramā śaktiḥ sarvajñādiguṇānvitā | āpādādivikāsinyā na vikāsyeta
nirmalā || tāvan na nirmalo hy ātmā baddhaḥ śaive tadocyate |* NT 8.31–32ab.

54 This process is described as *sūkṣma* yoga. The *sthūla* yoga refers to the application of *mantra* and *mudrā* and this includes various rituals.

55 This method is described as *mantravāda*, the doctrine of *mantras* (NT 19:58–64).

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