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The Contribution of Nondual Śaivism of Kashmir to the Debate on *jīvanmukti*: A Thematic Perspective on the Question of Periodization¹

The notion of liberation is at the very heart of Indian philosophical discourse. The examination of its formation, from the Upaniṣads to later Vedānta texts (for instance, the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, 14th century), could provide a good starting point in order to establish some milestones of Indian philosophical thought. The paper focuses on Śaiva reasonings about liberation and, more precisely, on “liberation in this life” (*jīvanmukti*). It will give me an opportunity to show how the transformation of the notion, within the tradition of nondual Śaivism of Kashmir – from Tantras and Āgamas to the texts of Spanda and Pratyabhijñā, up to Abhinavagupta and his exposition of the Trika (10th–11th century) – reflects the way in which the tradition itself evolves, and how it positions itself in relation to the conceptions of liberation of other schools, earlier or contemporary, such as the Sāṃkhya, the Vedānta, or the Śaivasiddhānta.

There is no doubt as to the soteriological orientation of the quasi-totality of developed Indian philosophical systems – be they monist or dualist, as the Sāṃkhya – but the novelty of the Trika’s approach lies in its viewing, indeed reevaluating, *mukti* in the light of its metaphysics, showing that, for instance, on the level of the absolute, there is no liberation, inasmuch as bondage exists only on the empirical level. A view with Mādhyamika overtones, it is true, but freed from the eristic and negative character of the latter – bondage itself being resolved in the absolute freedom of the Self, a state of dynamic plenitude (among other names, Trika confers upon itself that of *pūrṇatāvāda*) that suffices to define liberation as freedom itself.

Thus, the Trika organizes under the heading of a “doctrine of freedom” (*svātantryavāda*) the elements of the immemorial dialog on

¹ This paper presents a synthetic and contextualized version of a major theme treated in my introduction to Bansat-Boudon/Tripathi 2011.

the liberated man. This freedom is the first *śakti* of the Lord, the *svātantryaśakti*, and with the introduction of the notion of *śakti*, the Trika affirms both its doctrinal coherence (the other systems do not have recourse to such a notion in order to describe liberation) and its taste for paradox – a way to shore up a counterfactual view of the human condition. In other words, there exists no liberation, but a freedom that plays at hiding itself. In this sense, emancipation is defined not so much as a motivated *effort* to undo bondage, as it is a positive *recognition* (*pratyabhijñā*) that one is already free – if anything, the paradoxical acquisition of a freedom that one has never lost. The doctrine speaks therefore of a freedom that is *hidden* rather than absent, and hidden without cause, in play, as it were.² Although this paradox is, in some way, common to most Indian radical monisms, this school affirms in particular that the recognition at issue takes the form of the “full deployment of one’s own energies.”³

Such speculations lead to a main feature of the Trika (which is, in some way, an innovation): its privileging the acquisition of *jīvanmukti*, even to the point of denigrating the older notion of “liberation at death.”

In this system, the only true emancipation, the only freedom to which one should aspire, is emancipation in this life⁴ – a notion that appears to follow from nondualism itself, if one understands by “emancipation” going beyond the contraries and reintegration within the One: there is no reason why a person, in this world, should not be as free as is Śiva, for he is not-different from him, provided that he undertakes the real labor of recognizing that truth. The existential difficulty of becoming Śiva may be read, in effect, between the lines of the doctrine of the four *upāyas*, “means” or ways of liberation – which doctrine includes, nevertheless, at least for a handful of individuals, either the possibility of the “non-means” (*anupāya*), that is, the absence of all existential difficulty in realizing one’s own identity with Śiva, or that of the quasi-instantaneous “way of

² The play (*krīḍā*) of the Lord is the manifestation of his *svātantryaśakti*.

³ Yogarāja’s *Paramārthasāravivṛti* [PSV] (second half of the 11th century) ad Abhinavagupta’s *Paramārthasāra* [PS] 60: *svātmaśaktivikasvaratā*.

⁴ See *Spandapradīpikā* [SpP] 1 (= ad *Spandakārikā* [SpK] I 1, in the textual organization of the *Spandanirṇaya* [SpN]): *iha hi jīvanmuktataiva mokṣaḥ*.

Śaṃbhu” (*śāṃbhavopāya*) – two means which do not require any particular effort on the part of the adept.⁵

Indeed, one has the sense that Kashmir Śaivism is one of the first systems to seek to *justify* doctrinally the notion of *jīvanmukti*. As such, the treatment of the notion and its representation as a philosophical issue constitute in their own way major contributions to the development of Indian thought.

The theme of abandoning karmic life is nearly as old as Indian civilization itself, and has given rise to a debate that is a persistent leitmotif of Indian intellectual history. The asperity of that debate might be due as much to a lingering suspicion that Brahmanism had already surrendered too much to Buddhist influence, as to the newly popular devotionalism and its reinvigorated sense of ritual, menaced by any abandoning of worldly life.

The menace represented by the abandonment of karmic life had been first manifest in the late-vedic critique of the efficacy of the sacrifice itself (see, for instance, *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* I 2, 10–11). That critique was at least partially disarmed by the notion of the four stages of life (*āśramadharmā*), relegating *saṃnyāsa* to the end of life, well after the householder had fulfilled his ritual destiny (including the procreation of sons). In the same way, the ideal of liberation (*mokṣa*) was superadded to the three ‘normal’ goals of human life, corresponding to this new ‘extra-human’ condition.

From a strictly philosophical point of view, the debates that are echoed in the Śaiva texts on the degrees of liberation relate to a narrower issue, rather more technical in nature: can liberation – accepted by nearly everyone at the time – be reconciled with karmic life, or must one wait for the end of life in order to accede thereto? That is, is the notion of *jīvanmukti* defensible?

Many scholars, Renou among them, have remarked on the Indian genius for synthesis, reconciliation – a spirit that refuses to regard any contradiction as final. In this sense, the tension between the life of the hermit and worldly life is not a recent phenomenon, nor a fatality – and the notion of *jīvanmukti* offers once again the opportunity to palliate it. The dynamism of Indian intellectual history

⁵ On the two other means, the “way of energy” (*śāktopāya*) and the “way of the finite soul” (*āṇavopāya*), see notably Bansat-Boudon/Tripathi 2011: 48-51, 193 (n. 858).

depends in large part on that dialectic, where compromises have been numerous (and not all congenial to Western fashions of thought), such as the interiorization of complex external rites, the Brahmanico-Buddhist amalgam, for instance, the “crypto-buddhism” of Śaṅkara in the heart of Hinduism, the notion of the “guru,” both ‘free’ and engaged.

The tension reflected in these Śaiva texts is thus far from original, but is nevertheless felt as irremediably crucial.

As far as the terms *jīvanmukti/mukta* are concerned, most modern interpreters consider them as relatively recent. To date, they have been noticed in several Advaita or Advaita-like texts of the epoch, such as the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (also from Kashmir, and presenting several Śaiva traits), the earliest layer of which might date back to the middle of the 10th century;⁶ and the *Ātmabodha*, traditionally assigned to Śaṅkara himself – though perhaps erroneously, according to some.⁷

The terms figure as well in Śaiva texts of the same period, as I will attempt to show, but their more certain dating should not hide the fact that the *idea* of *jīvanmukti* had long ago found its way into the conceptual apparatus of monists (of whatever stripe) – it is there in the *Gītā*,⁸ as well as in some older Upaniṣads, and recognized as such by Śaṅkara.⁹

⁶ For a synthetic, English-written account of W. Slaje’s ground-breaking studies on the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*’s various layers, see Hanneder 2006: 1-18; on the probable date of the *Mokṣopāya* (the earliest layer of the text), see *ibid.*: 35-55.

⁷ On the notion of *jīvanmukti* in the *dvaitavedānta* of Madhva (13th or 14th century), see Mesquita 2007.

⁸ See notably Dasgupta 1975, vol. II: 247.

⁹ See Dasgupta 1975, vol. II: 246; Oberhammer 1994: 15. Prof. Raffaele Torella has kindly referred me to the epic usage of *jīvanmukta*, or rather *jīvan ... muktaḥ*, to which Prof. Minoru Hara has devoted an article (1996). It is to be noted, however, that in the Epic the term does not occur as such, but rather as variations on a stock phrase, usually (in the *Mahābhārata*) in the negative: *na me jīvan vimokṣyase*, “You will not escape from me alive,” a phrase which expresses only the hero’s determination not (*na*) to let his foe escape (*muktaḥ*) alive (*jīvan*) from the battle. The locution is found in the affirmative in the *Harivaṃśa*: *jitaḥ ... jīvan muktaś ca viṣṇunā*, “vanquished, he was released alive by Viṣṇu.” The context here is clearly not “*mukti*” (as it is later understood) but the very worldly issue of a *kṣatriya*’s humiliation. M. Hara is of course justified in raising the question of the relationship between the philosophical and epic variants of the locution *jīvan muktaḥ*; it seems more appropriate, however, to see the two as distinct developments, different not only in context but in syntactic usage.

Even its technical interpretation is there: are “free while alive” those that ‘act’ no more, but are obliged to live out their *prārabdhakarman*, because (as indicated by Śaṅkara and others) a *karman* once set in motion is not easily annulled.

Yet, the contribution of the vast śaivite literature to the debate on *jīvanmukti* cannot be ignored, as has been mainly the case, not only by modern scholarship (at least beyond the field of Śaiva studies),¹⁰ but also by later Indian tradition, notably inspired by Vedānta, which is careful to avoid Śaiva reasonings on the issue of liberation.¹¹

Jayaratha (12th century), in the *Tantrālokaviveka* [TĀV], his commentary on Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka* [TĀ] I 21 – the concluding verse of the text’s introduction – observes that “the objective [of this treatise] is to confer emancipation in this life by recognizing the Self as such, by employing progressively such means as will be described in what follows,” and that this goal “although developed through the long sequence of verses that follow, is directly declared by the present verse (21), which begins with ‘Śrīśaṃbhunātha’.”¹² A truth confirmed in the last chapter, vv. 32-33a,¹³ as emphasized by Jayaratha.

Thus is reaffirmed that the theme of emancipation in this life is the thread of Ariadne stringing together the entire text – and I might add, the entire doctrine. In effect, the key notions of the system – “grace”

¹⁰ See Oberhammer 1994: 15, with reference to Śaṅkara’s commentary ad *Bhagavadgītā* VI 27: “Selon toute apparence, ce texte est la plus ancienne référence à la *jīvanmuktiḥ* et peut-être le seul passage où Śaṅkara emploie le terme technique de *jīvanmukta*.”

¹¹ When the *Jīvanmuktiviveka* invokes, in the 14th century, the authority of the *Paramārthasāra*, it is the first *Paramārthasāra*, that of Ādiśeṣa (hereafter referred to as Ādiśeṣa’s *Paramārthasāra* [ĀPS], 6th-7th century), that its author has in mind (vv. 77 and 81), though the *Paramārthasāra* of Abhinavagupta contains the same verses (vv. 70 and 83), slightly modified in the case of v. 70. Later tradition, it is true – Abhinavagupta included accords to the first *Paramārthasāra* the status of *śruti*. I have found references to Abhinavagupta’s *Paramārthasāra* only in works of śaivite tendency. On the two *Paramārthasāras*, see my “Introduction” to Bansat-Boudon/Tripathi 2011. See also e.g. Sastri 1941 and Danielson 1980 on the ĀPS, as well as Barnett 1910 and Silburn 1957 on the PS.

¹² TĀV I 21: *vakṣyamāṇopāyakrameṇa svātmatayā pratyabhijñānāḥ jīvanmuktipradatvaṃ prayojanaṃ ślokāntarāsūtritāṃ api śrīśaṃbhunātha ityādiślokena sākṣād uktam*.

¹³ TĀ XXXVII 32-33a: *itthaṃ dadad anāyāsāj jīvanmuktimahāphalam/ yathepsitamahābhogadātṛtvena vyavasthitam// ṣaḍardhasāraṃ sacchāstram upādeyam idaṃ sphuṭam//*.

(*śaktipāta*), the “means” or “ways” of liberation (*upāya*), the three impurities (*mala*), to cite only a few – enter into its soteriological project.

The imperative of emancipation in this life is not limited to the TĀ, nor to the phase of development of nondual Kashmir Śaivism of which Abhinavagupta’s treatise is the summation. Abhinavagupta relies on the authority of various Āgamas on the question of emancipation, and particularly on that of emancipation in this life – notably, the *Raurava*, *Svāyambhuva*, *Mataṅga*, etc. (I 46).¹⁴ The *Niśāṭana* is cited in TĀ I 50-51, as positing in unambiguous terms the distinction between liberation at death and liberation in this life: “He whose mind remains subject to dualizing thoughts becomes Śiva after the dissolution of the body; but the other [who is not so subject] becomes [Śiva] in this very life – such is the main teaching of the *śāstra* [viz., the *Niśāṭana*].”¹⁵

Again, reference is made, in the texts of this school, to other Tantras or Āgamas, notably the *Svacchandratāntra* [SvT], the *Mṛtyuñjit* (alias the *Netratāntra*), the *Kularatnamālā* and the *Kālikākrama*, profusely cited by the *Śivasūtravimarśinī* [ŚSV] and the SpN, works of Kṣemarāja. In some of these citations, the notion of *jīvanmukti* is explicitly formulated, notably: SvT VII 259b (in SpN II 6-7): ... *jīvann eva vimukto ’sau yasyeyaṃ ... bhāvanā sadā//*, SvT IV 398b (in ŚSV III 28): ... *dehaprāṇasthito ’py ātmā tadval līyeta tatpade//*, SvT X 372b (in ŚSV III 45): *tatrastho ’pi na badhyeta yato ’tīva sunirmalaḥ//*; and *Kālikākrama* (in ŚSV III 31): *sarvaṃ śuddhaṃ nirālambhaṃ jñānaṃ svapratyayātmakam/ yaḥ paśyati sa muktātmā jīvann eva na saṃśayaḥ//*, “He who sees all knowledge as pure, free of [external] support [viz., object], and having the nature of

¹⁴ In the context of treating *pauruṣajñāna* and *baudhajñāna*.

¹⁵ TĀ I 50-51: *vikalpayuktacittas tu piṇḍapātāc chivaṃ vrajet/ itaras tu tadaiveti śāstrasyātra pradhānataḥ//*. See also TĀV ad loc., which completes the citation: ... *vikalpahīnacittas tu hy ātmānaṃ śivam avyayam/ paśyate bhāvaśuddhyā yo jīvanmukto na saṃśayaḥ*, “He who sees himself as the unchanging Śiva, his mind free of dualities, because his being is cleansed, is ‘freed while living’; of this there is no doubt.” Even though the terms *jīvanmukti* ou *jīvanmukta* are not there found, Jayaratha’s commentary ad I 50-51 is explicit: *evaṃ vikalpo ’tra sambhavan muktāu vyavadhāyakaḥ iti na tadaiva muktiḥ, tasya punar asam bhave saty api dehe muktiḥ*, “Since dualizing thoughts, still possible, interpose themselves at the point of liberation, there is then no liberation; when they are no longer possible, there is liberation, even though the body exist.”

self-perception, [is now such that] his self is liberated while yet he lives. Of this there is no doubt.”

Here, a few remarks as to the dating of scriptural sources referred to by Abhinavagupta and his commentators in the context of *jīvanmukti* might be of some use.¹⁶

Sadyojyotis, who was active between 675 and 725 according to Sanderson 2006: 76, certainly knew the *Rauravasūtrasaṃgraha*, the *Svāyaṃbhuvāsūtrasaṃgraha* and the *Mataṅgapārameśvara*, which belong to the Siddhānta canon. The last work is later than the 5th century AD, as Sanderson 2006: 78 shows. We can also affirm with a fair amount of certainty that all these texts, as well as all other known scriptural sources, postdate the early layers of the *Niśvāsa*, which is probably the earliest of all known Tantras. Goodall and Isaacson (2007) have established 450–550 for the early *Niśvāsa*, thus 550 is a very likely *terminus post quem* for most of our sources (675 being the *terminus ante quem*).¹⁷

The case of the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* [MVT] is less straightforward, for Sadyojyotis’s references or allusions to it are not established beyond doubt. However, it is more likely than not that he indeed knew the MVT, whose date can be tentatively established before 675 (and after 550). The SvT, which is often considered relatively late,¹⁸ may also come from this period (6th–7th century). For the MVT knows and claims to be based on the *Siddhayogeśvarī-mata(tantra)* [SYM], whose short recension declares itself to be an abridged *Svacchanda*.¹⁹ Since the dating of the MVT is itself problematic and the SYM survives only in its short recension, we are not on firm ground here. Nevertheless, both the SYM and its near contemporary, the *Brahmayāmala*, of the Vidyāpīṭha canon, are likely to have been composed in or around the 7th century for various other reasons.²⁰ The *Brahmayāmala* also includes transformations of the cult of Svacchandabhairava,²¹ which suggests again that the SvT,

¹⁶ I am grateful to Dr Judit Törzsök for detailed discussions on the subject.

¹⁷ See Törzsök citing Sanderson in SYM: 14.

¹⁸ As pointed out by Goodall in a lecture titled “Tentative sketch of a possible relative chronology of some early Tantric works and authors, principally of the Śaivasiddhānta,” 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, September 1-5, 2009.

¹⁹ SYM: 16 and 262.

²⁰ See, esp., Hatley 2007: 200ff., establishing the period of composition of the *Brahmayāmala* from the 6th to the 8th century.

²¹ Hatley 2007: 223.

the scripture of that cult, predates the Vidyāpīṭha. As to the *Netra-tantra*, also referred to in the context of *jīvanmukti* by Kashmirian exegetes, Sanderson has concluded from iconographical evidence that it was composed between 700 and 850, probably toward the end of that period.²²

Concerning the *Niśāṭana*, the *Kularatnamālā* and the *Kālikākrama*,²³ the dating of these texts has been discussed much less extensively than the above mentioned titles. Given their Kaula and Krama affiliations, they are likely to be later than the above listed works of the Siddhānta and the Vidyāpīṭha,²⁴ possibly going back only to the 8th century or later. In any case, they must predate the Kashmirian exegetes of the tenth.

This tentative dating of the relevant scriptural sources indicates that not only the idea, but also the very terms *jīvanmukti*, *jīvanmukta*, etc., were present at an early date in the Śaiva tradition.

The figure of the *jīvanmukta* is also present in the more easily datable core texts of the Spanda and the Pratyabhijñā, all of which were composed within the span of one century, between 875 and 975.²⁵ It is only hinted at in the *Śivasūtra* [ŚS], particularly in the third section devoted (according to Kṣemarāja's exegesis) to the *āṇavopāya* (ŚS III 9ff., III 18–45), and it is the text's *Vimarśinī* that develops the idea, either through citations (notably *Kālikākrama*, in ŚSV III 31; see *supra*) or directly, as in III 42, which describes the state of the *jīvanmukta*.²⁶

²² Sanderson 2004: 273-293.

²³ On the *Kālikākrama*, see Sanderson 2007: 369f.

²⁴ On the Siddhānta and the Vidyāpīṭha canons, see, esp., Sanderson 2007: 233-234.

²⁵ See Sanderson 2007: 411, 418.

²⁶ ŚSV III 42: *śarīravṛttir vratam ityuktasūtrārthanīyā dalakalpe dehādau sthito 'pi na tatpramātrtā-saṃskāreṇāpi sprṣṭaḥ/ tad uktaṃ śrīkularatnamālāyāṃ yadā guruvaraḥ samyak kathayet tan na saṃśayaḥ/ muktas tenaiva kālena yantras* [perhaps an *aiśa* form for *yantram*, which appears in other citations of the same verse: TĀ XIII 231b, XXXVI 29] *tiṣṭhati kevalam//*. “In accordance with the sūtra ‘*śarīravṛttir vratam*’ (ŚS III 26) though he still exists in the body which is to him like a mere sheath, he is not touched even by a trace of [the conceit that this body is] the subject. It has been said in the *Kularatnamālā*: ‘When the excellent teacher teaches him correctly, he is undoubtedly liberated at that very moment; the ‘machine’ [viz., the body – the implicit image being that of the potter’s wheel] alone persists [viz., thereafter he inhabits a body merely moving like the revolving wheel of the potter].” Cf. the readings of the second hemistich in PSV 83: *muktas tatraiva*

But the term itself is employed in the SpK.²⁷ Even better, *jīvanmukti* is the real subject of the treatise, as both Utpalavaiṣṇava's SpP (9th–10th century) and Kṣemarāja's SpN (10th–11th century) emphasize,²⁸ and the *jīvanmukta* is described in the manner of the *śakticakreśvara*, “Lord of the Wheel of energies.” The term, in its Kaula acceptation,²⁹ figures both at the beginning and at the end of the treatise and is taken up also in PS 47 – as a way of reaffirming one of the fundamental traits of the doctrine: the inseparability of “energy” and the “possessor of energy” – *śakti* and *śaktimat*.

For its part, Utpalavaiṣṇava attacks dualistic conceptions of emancipation, which recognize only emancipation at death, as well as practices such as *utkrānti*, generally translated as “yogic suicide,” that aim at achieving such a death.³⁰

kāle 'sau yantravat kevalam vaset, and Parimala [PM] ad Mahārthamañjarī [MM] 66: tadaiva kila mukto 'sau yatra tiṣṭhati kevalam.

²⁷ SpK II 5: *iti vā yasya samvittiḥ krīḍātvenākhilam jagat/ sa paśyan satataṃ yukto jīvanmukto na samśayah//*. “Or he, who has this awareness, viewing the entire world as the play [of the Self], and constantly united [with it], is liberated while living; there is no doubt about it.”

²⁸ Utpalavaiṣṇava observes that, in the first verse, *jīvanmukti* is betokened in the very name of the divinity “Śaṅkara,” “maker” (*kara-*) of “felicity” (*śam-*), this last understood as the equivalent of *śreyas*, “[ultimate] goal,” itself defined as enjoyment (*bhoga*) and release (*apavarga*), and he continues by pointing out the major components of the exposé of *jīvanmukti*: SpK 30 [= II 5, in the textual organization of SpN], 10 [= I 10] et 51 [= III 19]. As well, Kṣemarāja, in his explanation of the first and last verses [SpN I 1], states that *jīvanmukti* is the goal of the SpK: *tatsamāveśa eva hi jīvanmuktiphala iha prakaraṇa upadeśyah*. “What is to be taught in this treatise is that absorption in the [Lord] has for its fruit liberation while living” (ad I 1); and, commenting on *cakreśvara*, he observes [SpN III 19]: *tataś ca prathamāsūtranirṇātasya śakticakrasya ... īśvaro 'dhipatir bhavet/ anena ca dehena maheśvaratvam avāpnoty eveti yāvat*. “Thus he becomes the Lord, that is, the Master, of the Wheel of energies described in the first *sūtra*. In other words, he attains the supreme sovereignty in this very body.”

²⁹ According to the Kaula, the *śaktis* are not *yoginīs*, as is the case in the Vidyāpīṭha and in the Bhairava-tantras, but internal energies. See Sanderson 2007: 402-403; 1988: 679ff.

³⁰ SpP 30 [= ad II 15, in the textual organization of the SpN]: *ye tv āhuḥ vinotkrāntiṃ kuto mokṣaḥ/ tannirāsāyāha – vinā svabhāvānubhavena puṃsaḥ kaivalyam utkrāntibalād yadi syāt/ atra 'pi pakṣe nanu mokṣabhāg udbandhanam yaḥ kurute pramūḍhaḥ//*. “In order to refute those who maintain that liberation cannot be achieved without committing ritual suicide, it is said ‘If one could achieve liberation by virtue of ritual suicide without experiencing one’s own true nature, then, from this point of view, would not the deluded one who hangs himself achieve liberation?’”

The question of *utkrānti* offers an interesting example of a change in the Śaiva conceptions of liberation, since Abhinavagupta condemns it as a “dualistic” practice, despite its having been taught in the MVT, otherwise an authoritative Tantra for nondualistic Trika. Although the notion is mentioned in older Tantras and Āgamas – MVT XVII 25-34, *Kiraṇatantra*, LIX 1cd and 28ab, SvT VII 314ab, *Matāṅgapārameśvarāgama*, *Yogapāda* VII 41-48, and in the *Ūrmikaulārṇava* (available in mss only), it is yet condemned as a dualistic practice in the TĀ (XIV 31-37), when it discusses the notion in the context of *jīvanmukti*. Placing himself under the authority of the *Ūrmikaulārṇava*, which denies to the dualistic practice of *utkrānti* any salutary virtue, Abhinavagupta tries to resolve the paradox represented by the fact that *utkrānti* is nevertheless taught in the MVT.³¹ The disapprobation here of “yogic suicide” is one with the view that becoming Śiva does not require the destruction of a body that is in any case not different from Śiva.

Finally, the notion of *jīvanmukti* is at play in *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-kārikā* [ĪPK] IV 12-16, and particularly in IV 12: “All this might is mine”³² (cited in Yogarāja’s commentary ad PS 33 and 51), and in the treatise’s conclusion (IV 16), of which Utpaladeva’s *Vṛtti* gives an explicit gloss: “He who by applying himself intensely to this enters into the nature of Śiva, becomes in this very life a liberated soul.”³³

Utpalavaiṣṇava’s sarcastic dismissal of the yogic notion of *utkrānti* (relayed by Yogarāja ad PS 60) testifies also to the sharp debates that must have taken place on the question of *jīvanmukti*, not only in Śaiva precincts, as we have seen, but also among the Advaitins, as, for example, Śaṅkara ad *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* [BĀU] IV 4, 6 makes clear. These debates proceed, in the first place, from the incredulity and skepticism that the notion arouses: given the iron law of *karman*, *jīvanmukti* offends common sense. The *jīvanmukta* is a walking paradox. And thus does the PS describe him as mad, a vagabond living a life of randomness – at least as the ordinary man sees him (vv. 69, 71). Both text and Yogarāja’s commentary are keen to stress that essential misunderstanding.

³¹ See Vasudeva 2004: 437ff.

³² *sarvo mamāyaṃ vibhava iti*.

³³ *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvṛtti* [ĪPvr] IV 16]: *etatpariśīlanena śivatāveśāt jīvann eva mukto bhavati* (tr. Torella p. 218).

Perhaps resistance to the idea of *jīvanmukti* is related as well to its implied evicting of *dharma* from the system of values, or at least to paying it only an optional respect: “Whether he performs a hundred thousand horse sacrifices, or kills a hundred thousand brahmins, he who knows ultimate reality is not affected by merits or demerits. He is stainless” (PS 70).³⁴ The scandal would be greater had the Śaivas not found a way to defuse it by relativizing their rejection of conduct universally admitted. Such could be one of the implications of the famous maxim describing the Śaiva brahmin: “Kaula within, Śaiva without, Vedic for worldly affairs – like the coconut, the essential is kept within,”³⁵ which is also a way of recalling the esoteric dimension of the doctrine. In the same spirit of reconciliation, Yogarāja (ad PS 40) refers to the pan-brahmanical authority of the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* in order to distinguish between ordinary and supreme *dharma*. Whereas ordinary *dharma* consists of sacrifice, good conduct, and the like, “the supreme *dharma* is to see the Self through discipline” (*Yājñavalkya-smṛti* I 8). Thus is the *jīvanmukta* justified in neglecting the lower *dharma* in pursuit of the higher one, that of his inner realization.

Alone among the texts of the system, it seems, the TĀ develops, in the context of emancipation, the original doctrine of double-ignorance: “spiritual” (*pauruṣājñāna*) and “intellectual” (*bauddhājñāna*) – and along with it its positive counterpart, the doctrine of double-awakening: “spiritual” (*pauruṣajñāna*) and “intellectual” (*bauddhajñāna*) (I 36ff.). If the rationale for these concepts is present in the Śaiva Āgamas, the terminology, which presents overtones of the Sāṃkhya, seems to be a creation of the TĀ. It is in this doctrinal context that appears a definition of *jīvanmukti* in the form of a striking image: “As soon as the expanse of ignorance affecting the mind is dispelled by correct insight, “liberation while living” is present on the palm of the hand.”³⁶

For its part, Abhinavagupta’s PS – at least as Yogarāja’s commentary ad 85-86 reads it – introduces a correspondence unknown to the TĀ, which is established between the two kinds of liberation –

³⁴ See also TĀ IV 248-253.

³⁵ TĀV IV 250: *antaḥ kaulo bahiḥ śaivo lokācāre tu vaidikaḥ/ sāram ādāya tiṣṭheta nārikelaphalaṃ yathā//*.

³⁶ TĀ I 44: *bauddhajñānena tu yadā bauddham ajñānajṛmbhitam/ vilīyate tadā jīvanmuktiḥ karatale sthitā//*.

seemingly consecutive: that obtained while living and that secured at death – and the two final “states of consciousness” (*avasthā*), the “Fourth” (*turya*) and “Trans-Fourth” (*turyātīta*)³⁷ – the latter appearing as a Śaiva innovation.³⁸ From the moment the “state of liberation” (*mokṣa*) found a home in life existential (*jīvanmukti*), the insertion of the latter in the pan-Indian schema of the four states, and its designation there as the “Fourth” obliged the promotion of the old “Fourth” – “liberation” universally understood as “liberation at death” – to a “Fifth,” or rather to a “Trans-Fourth,” position in the hierarchy of states having no name of its own, yet retaining something of its previous status.

As mentioned above, the term itself (*jīvanmukti* or *jīvanmukta*) makes some of its first appearances in tantric texts, whose aim was, among other things, to supersede the orthodox ritual system. As Sanderson (1995: 25ff. and 1988: 660ff.) shows, tantric doctrine and ritual attempted to demonstrate their superiority compared to orthopraxy in several ways, which included that tantrism presented itself as a more efficient means to the same end: on the whole, it proposed to liberate one through tantric initiation (even if liberation was not immediately fully effective). This meant that the average initiate could be considered liberated already in this life and did not need to make any particular effort for the attainment of *mokṣa* subsequently. Therefore it is not surprising that the term and the concept of *jīvanmukti* were not unknown to the early tantric tradition.

However, when nondualist Kashmirian exegetes make use of this notion, they tend to do so from the Kaula point of view, which is anti-ritualist.³⁹ Consequently, one is liberated in this world through internal realization, and ultimately through knowledge, rather than through ritual action. The *jīvanmukta* is a *jñānin*. This kind of liberation in life was in turn seen by proponents of the orthodox Brahmanical religion as a paradox, and it is on their behalf that the *avatara-ṅikā* ad PS 85-86 asks a question that could be summarized as follows: “How can one continue to act after enlightenment, without accumulating further consequences of those acts? In effect, liberation is possible only at the moment of death.”

³⁷ A correspondence already sketched in ŚSV III 25 and ŚS III 41.

³⁸ The term appears in some late Upaniṣads of tantric coloration.

³⁹ On the Kaula developments in general and their importance in the exegetical tradition, see Sanderson 1988: 692ff.

The fact that tantrism proposed more efficient means of liberation did not imply that arguments of the brahmanical orthodoxy were refused by Kashmirian exegetes. The Trika, as set forth by the PS and its commentary, employs a rather virtuoso strategy that uses the law of *karman* in order to subvert that same law. And so the last portion of the PS's commentary, from v. 89 onwards, multiplies references to the properly Mīmāṃsaka notion of *apūrva*⁴⁰ in arguments intended to establish not only the possibility of *jīvanmukti*, but its very legitimacy.

In parallel, the Trika is not loath to invoke authorities (*pramāṇa*) outside its own tradition,⁴¹ though, to be fair, its readings are usually favorable to its own theses. In the first place, the *Bhagavadgītā*, whose omnipresence in Yogarāja's commentary and in other texts of the system is perhaps intended chiefly to affirm how this-worldly asceticism recommended by the *Gītā* is, in fact, this-worldly liberation.⁴²

Similarly, several indices furnished by the PS and its commentary permit apprehension of the relation of inheritance that Trika sustains with Sāṃkhya on the question of liberation: the commentary to PS 81 (which paraphrases without attribution *Sāṃkhyakārikā* [SK] 67) and 83, where we find mention of the potter's wheel; the reutilization of Sāṃkhya notions of *kaivalya* (at v. 83, itself the reprise of ĀPS 81) and of *apavarga* (Yogarāja's commentary ad 33); the important role assigned to the *antaḥkaraṇa* in the process of liberation (Yogarāja's commentary ad 90-91, 92-93); the citation of SK 44 by Yogarāja ad 92-93.

It is true that Sāṃkhya and Trika start from the same postulate: liberation is not accessible by ritual (SK 1), but rather by discriminating knowledge (*vijñāna*, SK 2). There comes to the surface, in the usage that the PS makes of these Sāṃkhya notions, a Trika rereading of Sāṃkhya doctrine according to which the notion of *jīvanmukti*, or at least a type of this-worldly release that has not yet received that name, is already germinating in the SK, *in re* vv. 67-

⁴⁰ See, notably, Yogarāja's commentary ad PS 89.

⁴¹ For instance, the Śaiva Āgamas, such as the *Triśirobhairava* (cited TĀ XXVIII 320b-324a), and the *Gītā* (cited TĀ XXVIII 324b, and 325-326a) are put on the same level.

⁴² This is an attempt to translate into English the formula: "ascèse intramondaine," coined by Hulin (2001: 268) apropos the *Bhagavadgītā*.

68.⁴³ As such, the Trika proposes an interpretation of SK 67 that is not all that distant from that of Gauḍapāda. The *Gauḍapādīyabhāṣya* [GBh] on the SK, in effect, brings out the dynamic organization of the ensemble constituted by vv. 67-68: contrasting the ‘incarnate’ state of v. 67 with the ‘disincarnate’ state of v. 68 (*prāpte śarīrabhede*) – life and death in effect. Moreover, the liberation that occurs “when the body falls away” (GBh ad SK 67: *śarīrapāte*), is the liberation that v. 68 terms *kaivalya*, described as “total” (*aikāntika*), that is, according to the GBh, “necessary” (*avaśya*), and “definitive” (*ātyantika*), or, “which encounters no obstacle” (*anantarhita*) – the principal obstacle being the body, which no longer, in any way shape or form, afflicts the spirit, now liberated, of the departed. In sum, in the Traika reading, SK 67 refers to *jīvanmukti*, SK 68 to *kaivalya*, “absolute” liberation, in the etymological sense of “ab-solvo,” “loosen from.”

The Trika pretends however to ignore the appropriation of this gradation by the Advaita inspired by Śaṅkara. At the very most, one notices, especially in Yogarāja’s commentary, the vedāntic idea of *aśarīratva*, the “disincarnation” that characterizes the *jīvanmukta* in that he ceases to confuse his body with the Self.⁴⁴

Another element of the definition of “liberation” that Trika shares with Advaita, and which dissociates it from Sāṃkhya, is the notion of

⁴³ A rereading implicit in Yogarāja’s borrowing from SK 67, while commenting on the paradoxical condition of the *jīvanmukta*, as described by PS 81. This Traika rereading of liberation according to Sāṃkhya appears equally in the TĀ, notably in IV 212, which associates explicitly the notion of *kaivalya* with that of *jīvanmukti*, and in XXVIII 307-320 and TĀV ad loc. (in particular, ad 317, which cites also SK 67). Hirianna (1995: 116 and 1993: 297) finds as well allusion to the notion of *jīvanmukti* in SK 67-68.

⁴⁴ The term occurs in PSV ad 63 and 70. See PSV 83: ... *jñānajanitāṇavamāyīyakañcukasambandhe sati dehakañcukaṃ prabhavati svātmajñānopadeśenājñānajanitakañcukakṣayāt katham dehakañcukaṃ vinaṣṭaprāyaṃ paryante jñānino yantraṇaṃ kartum alam ...* “... the corporeal sheath is effective only so long as a relation with the sheaths of the [impurities] of deeming oneself finite (*āṇava[mala]*), and of regarding the world as objective (*māyīya[mala]*) that arise from ignorance exists. But since the sheath created by ignorance has already been destroyed by [the guru’s] instruction regarding knowledge of one’s own [true] Self, how can any such corporeal sheath, [even] moribund, effect any control over the knower of the true Self at the end?” The idea of *aśarīratva* culminates in the idea (which is as well an experience) that the universe becomes, as it were, the permanent body (*svāṅgakalpa*) of the yogin now freed from his transitory body; see, esp., Yogarāja’s commentary ad 87-88.

“felicity” or “bliss” (*ānanda*) that accompanies the experience of liberation. That Sāṃkhya has ignored this felicity is a reproach made by Śaṅkara ad BĀU III 9, 28, 7. The Trika does not confront Sāṃkhya directly on this point, but never ceases to stress the aspect of felicity, associating with it an aspect of experience that is absent from advaitic arguments: the “marvelous” (*camatkāra*), a notion that Śaiva metaphysics shares with Śaiva aesthetics.⁴⁵

Whatever may be the case with these similarities and differences, the Trika develops an original doctrine regarding liberation, of which a singular trait is the postulate that liberation in this life is inconceivable in the absence of the Lord’s grace, described here as a “descent of energy” (*śaktipāta*). It is this subordination of liberation to “grace” that, according to TĀ XIII 276b-279a, constitutes the superiority of the Śaiva path in relation to other systems.⁴⁶

It is true that Indian soteriologies have as their principle the abrogation of a condition deemed unhappy, and one can argue that they are all organized around a dialectic of servitude and liberation. Still, the way proposed by Śaivism is distinguished from other systems by the dynamism and discursivity of that dialectic. A quality that relates evidently to its notion of the Absolute (called Śiva), which the throbbing essence of its energy (*spanda*) predisposes to a series (limited in number, namely thirty-six) of manifestations, or *tattvas*. The geneses of finitude and of liberation operate, dynamically, by a progressive installation and disinstallation of the *tattvas*, by the emanation of diversity and its reabsorption, whereas *māyā*, introduced in the sequence of the thirty-six *tattvas*, is reinterpreted as a *śakti* responsible for the deployment of the phenomenal world. Thus does Śaivism interpret both Sāṃkhya and Advaita.

In conclusion, one can say without exaggeration that the Śaiva authors give us one of the first more or less complete accounts of an idea that had taken root for some time in Indian absolutist thought – but in no way deviate from the commonly received opinion as

⁴⁵ See Bansat-Boudon 1992.

⁴⁶ Silburn/Padoux 1998: 47. Others have seen, in other contexts, systems setting forth the dispensation of grace on the part of a merciful god; for instance, Hiriyanna (1995: 412-13), apropos the doctrine of Rāmānuja: “The word (viz., *prapatti*) points to a belief that salvation is obtained through free grace. It is described as *śaraṇāgati*, flinging oneself on God’s compassion ... In one of its forms described as ‘resignation in extreme distress’ (*ārta-prapatti*), it is believed to bring liberation immediately. A single moment of seriousness and sincerity is considered enough ...”

concerns the general character and importance of liberation itself, as shown by their constant references to prior discussions of this issue, and most notably to the *Gītā*.

The examination of those debates and interactions might help to approach the fundamental problem, that of the periodization of Indian thought, from a new angle. In effect, it might be legitimate to speak of transitions rather than of ruptures, even though the transition is more conceptual than chronological. Just as the Sāṃkhya is prolonged in other systems (notably, in the Trika, with the necessary adjustments), while it disappears as such, in the same way the metaphysics of the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* continue to influence subsequent reasonings.

An evident indication of the filiations connecting one tradition to another is the way the second PS (that of Abhinavagupta, 10th–11th century) presents itself as a rewriting of the first (that of Ādiśeṣa, 6th–7th century). Similarly, the earlier *Paramārthasāra* attempts to integrate both the perspectives (*darśana*) of Sāṃkhya and of Vedānta, rather than considering them as alternatives, unifying them within the rubric of a Vaiṣṇavism whose divinity, whatever his name (he is also called *brahman* or *ātman*), serves as unique principle – thus, in effect, privileging the nondual aspect of the doctrine and placing it squarely within the currents of early devotionalism. One may even wonder whether the first PS offers an occasion for apprehending the manner in which, at least conceptually, the transition between the two systems may have taken place.⁴⁷

Considering Indian traditions in general, it may be noted that many, mainly nondualist, adopt a similar strategy of identifying themselves: they proclaim doctrinal uniqueness by asserting their universality with respect to rival doctrines, but in such a way that the latter find a place within them as subsidiary moments. This is the claim the first PS, v. 65, makes (as do other Vedāntas, in doxographies such as the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*): “We consent to whatever [others], who are blind with greed, proclaim in their *Siddhāntas*, *Āgamas*, and *Tarkas*, since all that [testifies to the orientation of] their thought toward [our] doctrine, according to which everything is the Self.”⁴⁸ And even more, perhaps, it is the claim of the Trika, which it

⁴⁷ On the two *Paramārthasāras*, see n. 11.

⁴⁸ *yad yat siddhāntāgamatarkeṣu prabruvanti rāgāndhāḥ/ anumodāmas tat teṣāṃ sarvātmavādadhīyā//* (tr. Danielson). Note that the Abhinavagupta’s PS adopts a

makes into a *topos*. The Trika, in effect, considers all traditions as so many “levels” (*bhūmikā*) of lucidity, judged according to the levels of reality which they have been able to attain – that is, with a play on the word *bhūmikā*, it considers them as so many “roles” assumed by Śiva, the Actor,⁴⁹ with the result that the eleventh and highest level is said to be that of the Trika philosophers who maintain that the Self is both immanent in the universe and transcendent.⁵⁰

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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| ĀPS | Ādiśeṣa’s <i>Paramārthasāra</i> in: T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī (ed.), <i>The Paramārthasāra of Bhagavad Ādesesha, with the commentary of Rāghavānanda</i> , Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 12, Trivandrum 1911. |
| Bansat-Boudon 1992 | Lyne Bansat-Boudon, “Le cœur-miroir. Remarques sur la théorie indienne de l’expérience esthétique et ses rapports avec le théâtre,” <i>Cahiers de philosophie</i> 14 (1992), 135-154 [Repr. in Bansat-Boudon 2004, 88-123]. |
| Bansat-Boudon 2004 | Lyne Bansat-Boudon, <i>Pourquoi le théâtre? La réponse indienne</i> , Paris 2004. |
| Bansat-Boudon/ Tripathi 2011 | Lyne Bansat-Boudon and Kamaleshadatta Tripathi, <i>An Introduction to Tantric Philosophy. The Paramārthasāra of Abhinavagupta with the Commentary of Yogarāja</i> , Studies in Tantric Tradition 3, London /New York 2011. |
| Barnett 1910 | Lionel D. Barnett, “The Paramarthasara of Abhinavagupta,” <i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i> 42 (1910), 707-747. [Repr. Fremont 2003]. |

similar strategy in its v. 50 [PS 50]: *akartāpi siddhāntāgamatarkāṃś citrān aham eva racayāmi*. “... Though not an agent, it is *I* who compose the wonderfully varied Siddhāntas, Āgamas and Tarkas” (my transl.).

⁴⁹ See, esp., Kṣemarāja’s auto-commentary on *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* [PH] 8 (= *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayavṛtti* [PHvṛ] 8): *evam ekasyaiva cidātmano bhagavataḥ svātantryāvabhāsitāḥ sarvā imā bhūmikāḥ svātantryapracchādanonmīlanatāratamyabheditāḥ/ ata ekā eva etāvad vyāptikā ātmā*. “Thus, the divine one, whose essence is consciousness, in his absolute freedom, displays all these roles. And it is this freedom that, by opting for relative degrees of concealment or unveiling, makes these roles differ from one another [choosing in varying degrees to unveil or conceal itself]. Therefore, there is only one Self pervading all these roles.”

⁵⁰ In his PHvṛ 8, Kṣemarāja cites from an Āgama: *viśvottīrṇam ātmatattvam iti tāntrikāḥ/ viśvamayaṃ iti kulādyāmnāyaniviṣṭāḥ/ viśvottīrṇam viśvamayaṃ ca iti trikādidarśanavidāḥ*. “The Tāntrikas maintain that the *ātman* principle transcends the universe. Those who are followers of the Kula tradition, etc., consider the *ātman* principle as immanent in [or ‘constitutive of’] the universe. The Knowers of the Trika system, etc., consider it as both transcendent and immanent.”

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- ĪPK *Īśvarapratyabhijñārikā* in: Raffaele Torella (ed., and transl.), *The Īśvarapratyabhijñārikā of Utpaladeva with the Author's Vṛtti, Critical Edition and Translation*, Serie Orientale Roma 71, Rome 1994.
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- PHvṛ *Pratyabhijñāhṛdayavṛtti* in PH.
- PM *Parimala* in MM.
- PS *Paramārthasāra* in Bansat-Boudon/Tripathi 2011.
- PSV *Paramārthasāravivṛti* in Bansat-Boudon/Tripathi 2011.
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- SK *Sāṃkhyakārikā* in GBh.
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- SpN *Spandanirṇaya* in SpK.

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