



Discerning Philosophy in the Uttarāmnāya Liturgies of the Newars

Pongsit Pangsrivongse¹ 

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Abstract Although the Kaula literature of the Newars did not give rise to a systematic philosophical school like that of their Kashmiri counterparts, I will argue in this article that philosophical thinking can be detected in Newar ritual texts. I do this by translating and analysing the unpublished *Kālīsūtra*, an important hymn found in Newar Uttarāmnāya liturgies whose transmission and composition will also be touched upon. This hymn indicates that the cult of Kālī in Nepal had a distinct ontological stance tending towards a non-dualism which was world-affirming while also seeing consciousness as the ultimate reality. Several key conceptual strands of the *Sūtra* such as the relationship between transcendence and immanence, reality and cognition and the divine and the body will be elaborated upon. In the process, I will show that the *Kālīsūtra*'s philosophy brings into sharper focus doctrines already present in the canonical Krama and thus displays many affinities with the Pratyabhijñā, a school which shares its cultic backdrop.

Keywords Śākta philosophy · Krama · Liturgies · Stotra · Non-dualism · Newar religion

✉ Pongsit Pangsrivongse
pongsit.pangsrivongse@orinst.ox.ac.uk

¹ Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

It is well known that both the Valleys of Kashmir and Kathmandu were active centres of Śaiva patronage in the medieval period where almost the entire array of cults from this tradition flourished, often in competition with one another.¹ However, whereas the Tantric Śaivism of the former is celebrated for giving rise to one of the most sophisticated non-dualistic systems of Indian philosophy known as the Pratyabhijñā, the Kathmandu Valley did not produce any systematic Tantric philosophy to speak of. This is not to say that the Kathmandu Valley was not responsible for any literature of its own and the vast array of liturgical material as well as home-grown Tantras² which gained a relatively widespread following shows that the Valley was a centre for literary production of a different kind. In this article, I will demonstrate that although ritual literature does not offer an explicit and systematic philosophy, by closely examining non-prescriptive material in Newar liturgies of the Uttarāmnāya, a Kaula school of Tantrism focused on forms of Kālī, we may detect an undercurrent of philosophy or in the very least “pseudo-philosophy” or “pre-philosophy”. To limit our scope amongst the thousands of Newar liturgical material available, this speculation will be done in relation to just one text—the *Kālīsūtra*—a hymn which appears in several Newar Uttarāmnāya liturgies. On account of its importance, which will be discussed later, we may argue that this hymn is a useful tool for unlocking ideas implicit in Uttarāmnāya ritual more broadly. A careful reading of this material against the backdrop of wider Tantric literature will enable us to tease out the strands of philosophical thinking in Newar ritual texts and may reveal that the positions taken by the *Kālīsūtra* are not entirely different from the type of non-dualism advanced by the Pratyabhijñā.

The reason why I see this line of comparison as permissible is because the Kashmiri Pratyabhijñā and the Newar Uttarāmnāya in fact arose out of the shared cultic backdrop of the canonical Krama. A number of scholars, especially Sanderson (1992, 2007),³ have shown that the Pratyabhijñā, although couched in the language of non-sectarian Śāstric discourse, is part of the larger project of systematising the theology of Trika and Krama scriptures. Particularly relevant to us is the fact that the key proponents of the Pratyabhijñā—Somānanda, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta and Kṣemaraja—were initiated into the Krama lineage.⁴ In fact, three of the

¹ See Sanderson (2009) for an overview of the religious landscape in Kashmir and Sanderson (2007) for the texts available to and produced by Kashmiri Śaivites. Evidence for the entire scope of Śaiva traditions being present in the Kathmandu Valley is backed by how the texts of all major streams of Śaivism—Atimārga (Pāsupata), Mantramārga (Saidhāntika, Bhairava, Śākta and Kaula divisions), lay Śaivism and even the archaic Bhūta and Gāruḍa Tantras—can be found in the Valley’s archives. A brief look at the published editions of any of Tantras from any of these traditions will suffice to show that manuscripts from the Kathmandu Valley are most often than not the key witnesses for their compilation.

² Two popular Tantras that are most likely a product of the Kathmandu Valley are, for instance, the *Parātantra* and *Hāhārāvatāntra*. See Sanderson (2004, p. 370, fn. 60) for the Newar origin of the former while the latter’s composition in the Kathmandu Valley is discussed in Dyczkowski’s entry for this Tantra in the Muktabodha Online Catalogue. Meanwhile, the number of homegrown and mostly unpublished *paddhatis* can be gauged through a quick search of the NGMPP which records of some of these MSS colophons in catalogue entries.

³ Sanderson (1992, pp. 307–308, 2007, pp. 384–385).

⁴ See, for instance, Torella’s Introduction to his edition of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (2002, p.9).

principal Krama texts harnessed by the Kashmiri exegetes⁵—the *Jayadrathayāmala*, the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka*, the *Kālikulakramasadbhāva*—are also widely reproduced in Nepal and cited in its liturgies. Significantly, our principal witness for the *Kālīsūtra*—the thirteenth century *Kālikulakramārcana*—extracts many of its instructions for various rites from these same sources.⁶

Although the chasm between the scriptural background of a school of thought and its philosophy as logically presented by exegetes can be very wide in Indian traditions, in terms of the Pratyabhijñā, the kernel of its systematic thinking seems to already be evident in Krama scriptures. Indeed, both Törzsök (2014) and Sanderson (1992) argue that amongst the many Śaiva scriptures that were understood to be non-dualist by exegetes, it is mainly those of the Krama that show this ontology in earnest.⁷ This is so much so that Sanderson believes that the Krama was a decisive factor in the formation of the Pratyabhijñā itself.⁸ Moreover, in certain post-scriptural Krama works that deal with both ritual and philosophy, the relationship between non-dual ontology and the ritual process is explicitly laid out, prompting us to ask ourselves whether it is even necessary to speculate on the philosophical outlook of liturgies.

For instance, a text like the Anonymous *Mahānayaprakāśa*⁹ makes the relationship between ritual and philosophy clear by showing that the phases of worship of the Krama's pantheon (the six ancillary *cakras* of the Krama (the Pañcapīṭha, Pañcavāha, Prakāśa, Ānanda, Mūrti and Vṛnda) followed by the *kramas* (sequences) of Sṣṭi, Sthiti, Saṁhāra and Anākhyā) directly represent the phases and the factors of cognition as consciousness is projected towards the external object and eventually returns to its absolute and non-dual ground in the supreme Kālī. However, the *Mahānayaprakāśa* is a Kashmiri work most likely inspired by the Pratyabhijñā¹⁰ while none of the Newar Uttarāmnāya liturgies that I am aware of openly mention the equivalences between phases of worship and phases of cognition. Furthermore, unlike the situation in South India where the influence of Pratyabhijñā was widespread,¹¹ there are no Newar works that I am aware that are steeped in terminology exclusive to Pratyabhijñā while the texts of this school are not recorded in any pre-modern Newar manuscripts. Therefore, we must turn to

⁵ Sanderson (2007, pp. 251–252) has a list of these sources.

⁶ For instance, it cites the *Kālikulakramasadbhāva* in relation to the Cakrakṛdā rite and the *Jayadrathayāmala* as the source for part of its Prāyaścittavidhi. Its shared material with the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* is discussed later in this article in relation to the latter's *maṅgalācaraṇa*.

⁷ Törzsök (2014, p. 217) and Sanderson (1992, p. 307, fn. 89).

⁸ Sanderson (1985, p. 91).

⁹ Sanderson (1988, p. 696).

¹⁰ Sanderson (2007, p. 311).

¹¹ The presence of the Pratyabhijñā in South India is attested by the considerable transmission of Pratyabhijñā manuscripts there. For the faithful transmission of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* in South India, see for instance Torella's edition of this text (2002) and his discussion of the manuscript sources of his edition. Meanwhile, Torella (2014) describes the popularity of Abhinavagupta's *Vimarśinī* in the south. Added to this are homegrown South Indian commentaries on Pratyabhijñā literature such as the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāśūtravimarśinīvyākhyā* [see Sanderson (2007, p. 98), fn. 209]. We may also note the survival of the Krama in the South as practiced by the Brahmins of Malabar known as the Raudra-Mahārtha Sampradāya as studied by Karasiński (2021).

Newar liturgies themselves and not material from elsewhere to understand what these liturgists may have had in common with more systematic forms of Śaiva non-dualism.

The *Kālīsūtra*'s Significance and Its Possible Transmission History

Paddhatis are predominantly concerned with the practicalities of ritual and therefore their mostly prescriptive material gives little insight into doctrine or philosophy. However, non-prescriptive material does feature in Newar *paddhatis* in the form of short pronouncements on the nature of reality (*tattvopadeśa*) or in the form of hymns (*sūtra* or *stotra*) extolling the deity which are chanted in the course of worship. The six-versed *Kālīsūtra* is such a hymn and is selected because of its presence in several texts, including the *Kālikulakramārcana*, arguably the most important extant Krama liturgy written in the Kathmandu Valley. We may accord this status to the *Kālikulakramārcana* on account of it being not only the most comprehensive Krama *paddhati* known to us, covering all the steps of routine and occasional worship but also because it is the oldest known Krama work from the Valley. Its significance is bolstered by the authorship of Vimalaprabodha, who was the preceptor of Arimalla (r. 1200–1216), the first King of the Malla dynasty.¹²

Firstly, it is important to note that the *Kālīsūtra*'s appearance in Newar liturgies shows its transmission and compositional history to be by no means straightforward. In the *Kālikulakramārcana* itself, the six verses of the hymn are not found together but are present at two points in the text. The *Kālīsūtra*'s first verse acts as the *Kālikulakramārcana*'s *maṅgalācaraṇa* while its five remaining verses are chanted during arguably the most important and elaborate rite of the text, the Mahāśivarātrividhi where it is explicitly named *Kālīsūtra*.¹³ The fact that Vimalaprabodha refers to it by means of a discrete title shows that these five verses were most likely not his composition. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the work begins to appear as a single hymn of six rather than five verses in a liturgy known as the *Guhyakālīnirvāṇapūjāpaddhati*. This is a *paddhati* which was written, according to its colophon, in 1380 CE during the reign of King Jayasthitimalla, and is one of only a few liturgies to share the exact same pantheon, sequence and *mantras* of worship as the *Kālikulakramārcana*. In this liturgy, the hymn which is also called the *Kālīsūtra* occurs at the conclusion of the entire ritual sequence.¹⁴ Its appearance as a six rather than five-versed work is also attested in later manuscripts such as a collection of hymns known as the *Stotrasaṃgraha*—possibly an eighteenth century compilation on account of its script and paper material—where the six verses are called the *Śrīkālīkādevīnityastuti*.¹⁵ This perhaps proves that by the time of the reign of Jayasthitimalla, which was over a century and a half after the

¹² For the date of Vimalaprabodha, see Sanderson (2007, p. 282, fn. 168) and Petech (1984, pp. 81–82).

¹³ “*kālīsūtram uccaran*” in *Kālikulakramārcana*, NGMPP Microfilm No. A 229/9, f. 63r1.

¹⁴ Its location in the *Guhyakālīnirvāṇapūjāpaddhati* (NGMPP Microfilm Reel No. B 32/8) is ff. 35r1–36r1.

¹⁵ In the *Stotrasaṃgraha* (NGMPP Microfilm Reel No. A 988/32), the hymn is found in f. 40v1–8.

Kālīkulakramārcana's composition, a redactor had decided to create a single hymn out of the *Kālīkulakramārcana*'s *maṅgalācaraṇa* and the five-versed *sūtra* found in its Mahāśivarātrividhi. This was in a way a natural step because the subject matter, symbolism and style of these two verse segments are already highly consonant. It is also in the spirit of the cohesion of its message that I have decided to present this hymn in its six-versed version in this article while keeping in mind its possible origins as a five-versed work.

Moreover, additional proof that the hymn could have originally been five-versed is attested in several liturgies of Siddhilakṣmī in which the *Kālīsūtra* is chanted in the course of worship without its first verse. These manuscripts include the *Siddhilakṣmyadhivāsanasthaṇḍilārcanavidhi* and *Siddhilakṣmīkramasthaṇḍilārcanavidhi*.¹⁶ It is unsurprising that Kālī-oriented material is found in the liturgies of this goddess because there is evidence to suggest that the two deities have been connected since early years of the Tantric Kālī cult and, in Nepal, both are said to be the central deities of the Uttarāmnāya or Northern Transmission of the Kaula.¹⁷ Another layer of complication is added to the hymn's compositional history since the *stotra*'s second and sixth verses (if we are to count them according to the six-versed version) also appear in slightly altered form as the *maṅgalācaraṇa* of the *Devīdyardhaśatikā*, *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* and *Yonigahvara*,¹⁸ three early important Tantras of the Krama. To elaborate, verse 2, *padas* a–c of the *Kālīsūtra* is almost identical to *padas* a–c of the *maṅgalācaraṇa* of these three Tantras while *pada* d in these Tantras somewhat resembles *pada* d of verse 6 of the *Kālīsūtra*.¹⁹ In short, it seems that this *maṅgalācaraṇa* contains the five-versed version of the hymn in kernel form. This very same verse also serves as the first verse of the Mahāśivarātrividhi chant of another liturgy written by Vimalaprabodha as yet unmentioned in secondary literature known as the *Parvatrayavidhāna* and appears as a line in a hymn to Siddhilakṣmī in two other *paddhatis* known as the *Siddhilakṣmyārātrikavidhi* and *Siddhilakṣmīkoṭyāhutiḍinakṛtya*.²⁰

Since the *Devīdyardhaśatikā*, the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* and *Yonigahvara* are considerably older than the *Kālīkulakramārcana*, this gives rise to the possibility that the five-versed version of the *Kālīsūtra* itself was originally composed as an

¹⁶ See *Siddhilakṣmyadhivāsanasthaṇḍilārcanavidhi*, NGMPP Microfilm No. B 198/21 (ff. 89v3–90r5) and *Siddhilakṣmīkramasthaṇḍilārcanavidhi* NGMPP Microfilm No. A 249/6 (ff. 166v7–167r7).

¹⁷ For instance, Sanderson (1988, p. 685) notes their connection in the *Jayadrathayāmalatantra* while Sanderson (2004, pp. 367–372) discusses their dual worship as part of the Newar Uttarāmnāya. This is also explored in Dyczkowski (2000, pp. 17–19).

¹⁸ See v. 1 of Lamichhane's editions of the *Devīdyardhaśatikā*, and *Kālikākulapañcaśataka*. For its appearance in the *Yonigahvara*, see Dyczkowski's notes in his edition of the *Manthānabhairavatantram*, *Kumārīkāhaṇḍah* (2009, Volume I of Introduction, p. 680) while his translation of this verse is also given in fn. 41 of this article.

¹⁹ The verse is recorded as follows in Lamichhane's edition of the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka*:
yām sântakāgnikuharoṭhitabhāsvarūpām somārkavahnitripathodaramadhyasaṁsthām
ciccetyacittaviṣayākṣaviṇabhāvām sadbhāvabhāvavikalām praṇamāmi kālīm ॥(2)

²⁰ *Guhyakālīpūjā* (*Parvatrayavidhānam* of Vimalaprabodha), NGMPP Microfilm No. B 32/18 (f. 6r2–3), *Siddhilakṣmyārātrikavidhi*, NGMPP Microfilm No. B 199/09 (Exposure 46, l. 1–3) and *Siddhilakṣmīkoṭyāhutiḍinakṛtya*, NGMPP Microfilm No. A 250/01. An edition of the *Parvatrayavidhānam* is found in the author's DPhil thesis (2023).

elaboration upon a single verse with its beginning and ending mirroring this canonical *maṅgalācaraṇa*. This would mean the hymn's compositional history roughly underwent the following steps: (1) its appearance as a single verse *maṅgalācaraṇa* of three or more canonical Tantras of the Krama, (2) its expansion into five verses as found in the Mahāśīvarātriividhi of the *Kālīkulakramārcana*, (3) the combination of the *Kālīkulakramārcana*'s *maṅgalācaraṇa* with these five verses to form a six-versed *Kālīsūtra* as found in the *Guhyakālīnirvāṇapūjāpaddhati* and later Newar material.

Although we can only provide a conjecture of the hymn's compositional history, we can confidently maintain its significance for the Newar Uttarāmnāya tradition. Thus, its presence in one form or another in multiple liturgies, its appearance at crucial points in the important *Kālīkulakramārcana* and its shared material with the core Tantras of the Krama allow us to argue that the *Kālīsūtra* can be used to examine the philosophical stance of Newar ritual texts. Moreover, since to my knowledge, the hymn as a whole has been neither published nor referred to in secondary literature, our edition and translation below will contribute to available sources on the Krama in Nepal.

Edition and Translation of the *Kālīsūtra*

Having discussed the importance of the *Kālīsūtra* and its witnesses, we can turn to the hymn itself. Our transcription of the hymn below is taken from two manuscripts of the *Kālīkulakramārcana* whose readings for it are almost identical.²¹ Since certain compounds describing the goddess are highly ambiguous, some of my translation remains speculative. The ellipsis in meaning will be elaborated later on in the analysis of the philosophy of the *Sūtra*. Its verses are as follows:

*yā candre bhūtabhinnā ravihavisadane gotracandrais ca rudrair
hṛnnābhau kandacake tridahanakuhare dvādaśaikenā saṁsthā |
sṛṣṭisthairyāntakartrī trikalakhakhayutām sarvatattvaikavṛttim
tām kālīm naumi nityaṁ paramapadamayīm satsadānandadātrīm ||(1)
yā sāntakāgnikuharotthitabhāsvarūpā somārkavahnitripathodaramadhyasaṁsthā |
ciccetyacitta²² viśayākṣavilīnabhāvā sṛṣṭisthitipralayakāraṇatattvarūpā ||(2)
jñānātmikā sakalabhāvavibhāgabhinā ānandananditasadāparamārthalīnā |
nāḍīkalākalitavigrahamantrarūpā saptadaśākṣaragatā khalu chidravarṇā ||(3)
vidyāśatākṣaravarā kulakarmacaṇḍā trailokyalampaṭavarā kulasaṁghasiddhā |
ekā hy anekagaticakravaraprapūjyā satsaṅgasiddhavarabhairavapūjītā²³ yā ||(4)
kālī kalākalitakālakalormivāhā śrīcakramadhyaniḥayā navabhedabhinnā |
pūrṇā śaśāṅkakalitā kulabhānurūpā vijñānasiddhivaravahnikulaprasiddhā ||(5)*

²¹ *Kālīkulakramārcana*, NGMPP Microfilm No. A 148/10 (f. 1v1–3 and ff. 31r6–31v4) and *Kālīkulakramārcana*, NGMPP Microfilm No. A 229/9 (f. 1v1–4 and ff. 63r2–64r1).

²² ciccetyacitta] Em., ciccetacitta *Kālīkulakramārcana* MSS. I have emended the MSS' *ceta* to *cetya* since the former has no meaning and in conformity with the way this compound appears in the critical editions of the *Kālīkūlapañcaśataka*, *Devīvyardhaśatikā* as well as the edition of the verse of the *Yonigahvara*.

²³ *satsaṅgasiddhavarabhairavapūjītā*] A 148/1, *satsaṅgasiddhavarabhairavapūjītā* A 229/9.

*ālambakhecarapadā paramapracāṇḍā cakrakrame gaditamantramahārthavelā |
satsaṅgayoganiratā kulasiddhidātrī svābhāvabhāvavikīparām praṇamāmi kālīm ||*(6)

She is present in the moon (Sṛṣṭikālī) as divided into the Five (Kālīs), in the sun (Sthitikālī) and the abode of the oblation (Saṃhāarakālī) as 17 and 11 (Kālīs), (found respectively) in the navel, in the heart and in the root wheel (*kandacakra*), present in the void of the three fires (Anākhyakālī) as 13 (Kālīs) and as the enacter of emission, maintenance and dissolution. I always pay homage to her who is joined with that which is the void of the void of the three *kalās* (Bhāsākālī), the sole activity of the *tattvas*, consisting in the supreme realm, granting the true and eternal bliss. She is one whose own nature is the light arising from the void of the Fire of Time (*antakāgni*), dwelling in the centre and interior of the three paths of moon, sun and fire. She is one in whom the states of cognition (literally “states of the sense and sense object”) arising from mind (the cogniser), object of thought (the cognised) and thought (the means of cognition) are dissolved while having the form of that reality which causes emission, maintenance and dissolution. She has the nature of knowledge and is split into the divisions of phenomenal reality (*sakalabhāva*) yet always resides in supreme reality delighted by joy. She is one whose form as *mantra* is made of the *kalās* and whose physical form (*vigraha*) is made of the *nāḍīs*,²⁴ present in the seventeen-syllabled *mantra*,²⁵ and indeed has the nature of the “opening” (*chidra*). She is the most excellent one hundred-syllabled *mantra*, fierce in relation to the deeds of the *kula*,²⁶ that excellent one who is greedy for the three worlds, established by the congregation of the *kula*. She is one yet also to be worshipped in the best of *cakras* whose paths are multiple and revered by the best of

²⁴ The reason why I interpret this compound in this way is because firstly, we have already seen how the goddess’s physical manifestation in the body is the linked to the *nāḍīs* in v. 2 but secondly, it would make sense to associate the goddess’s form as *mantra* with the notion of *kalā*, a highly polyvalent term which nonetheless has a technical meaning when applied to language in a Kaula context. As Padoux explains in the entry for this term in the *Tāntrikābhidhānaśa* (Vol. II, pp. 69–70), *kalā* which conventionally means “digits” can represent either the power of the divine expressed through speech as the sixteen vowels including the *anusvāra* and *visarga* (sixteen being the number of digits of the moon) or as both the sixteen vowels and twelve consonants (the traditional number for the digits of the sun), thereby symbolising the totality of language.

²⁵ At various points in the *Kālīsūtra*, the goddess is associated with the key *mantras* of the cult—the nine-syllabled, seventeen-syllabled and one hundred syllabled *mantras*—which are used separately or as a group in the various rites of the Krama. In the *Kālikulakramārcana*, these *mantras* are especially important in the worship of the Five Kālīs since the three conclude the worship of each phase where the chanting of the seventeen-syllabled *mantra* is followed by the one-hundred syllabled *mantra* and then the nine-syllabled. The nine-syllabled *mantra*—KHPHREM MAHĀCANDAYOGĒSVARĪ—is the same for all Five Kālīs. However, each Kālī has a separate seventeen and one hundred-syllabled *mantra*. The most important seventeen-syllabled *mantra* in the tradition seems to be that of Bhāsā, which is KHPHREM MAHĀCANDAYOGĒSVARĪ with its conjuncts separated [see Sanderson (2007, fn. 46, pp. 306–307)].

²⁶ I have refrained from translating the term *kula* since in Kaula literature, it is purposefully polysemous and serves to map the macrocosmic onto the microcosmic. It can therefore refer simultaneously to the “clan” or “family” of human and divine worshippers, the cosmos and the body of the individual.

Bhairavas, *siddhas* and those of good company (*satsaṅga*).²⁷ That Kālī propels the waves of the digits of time effected by *kalā*, whose abode is the centre of the blessed *cakra*, split into the nine divisions (of syllables). She is manifest as the full moon, possesses the form of the sun of the *kula* and is celebrated by the *kula* as the excellent fire of the fulfilment of knowledge. She is one whose state is both that which is with support (the phenomenal world) and that of the farers of the void, supremely fierce, the shore of the Mahārtha²⁸ which is proclaimed as *mantra* in the sequence of *cakras*. She is committed to union with those of good company and bestows the magical attainments of the *kula*. I pay homage to that Kālī, the supreme one in whose self rests both existence and non-existence.

Unpacking the First Verse of the Sūtra

Before moving on to an analysis of the implicit philosophy of the *Kālīsūtra*, we should first unpack the meaning of the first, highly esoteric verse which will be important for our understanding of the other verses. This can only be done by making reference to the wider cultic context of the Krama since the subject of the first verse is the Five Kālīs who are the core pantheon of the Krama. The Krama's sequence of routine worship according to the *Kālikulakramārcana* involves 11 ancillary phases of worship (the Pañcapīṭha, Pañcavāha, Mūrti, Prakāśa, Ānanda and six *cakras* of 64 *yoginīs* that are in other sources often combined into the Vṛndacakra²⁹) which culminate in propitiating the central Kālīs. In wider Krama literature, these central Kālīs are either four or five in number depending on the tradition followed.³⁰ The *Kālikulakramārcana*'s system has five Kālīs (Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti, Saṃhāra, Anākhya and Bhāsā) who are each located at the centre of a pantheon of ancillary Kālīs. In the scriptural and exegetical literature, these five are often ascribed roles discernable from their names that are either cosmic or associated with the phases of cognition from the emission of the object of cognition to its identity with supreme consciousness represented by the last Kālī.

Certain words in the first verse of the *Kālīsūtra* act as common codes for numbers while the symbols of the moon, sun and fire (often collectively known as *tryagni* or "three fires") in some Krama texts are symbolic of Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti and Saṃhāra. By pairing these veiled terms together, we see that the verse is an oblique exposition of the basic arrangement of the *cakras* of the five Kālīs. The reason why we can definitively understand the *tryagni* as representing the three Kālīs is because such a link is made explicit at two points in the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* (vv 4.3–7 and vv.

²⁷ I have interpreted *satsaṅga* in this way as this would allow us to have the three traditional classes of Kaula worshippers in the same compound, namely the *mānavaugha* (human congregation), *siddhaugha* (*siddha* congregation) and *divyaugha* (divine congregation).

²⁸ This is one of the names of the Krama. Others include Mahānaya, Devīnaya, and Kālikula.

²⁹ The reader will note a difference in the *Kālikulakramārcana*'s sequence of routine worship to that of the *Mahānayaprakāśa*. A discussion of the sources for these different sequences is found in Sanderson (2007, pp. 319–320).

³⁰ The *Kālikulakramasadbhāva*, for instance, teaches the sequence of five Kālīs while the *Kālikulapañcaśataka* teaches four [See Sanderson (2007, pp. 306–307)].

7.36–39) where the three Kālīs are imagined in a column with Sṛṣṭi at the top represented as the moon, Sthiti known in this scripture known as Avatāraka as the sun and Saṃhāra at the base as the Fire of Time. We know the *Kālīsūtra* to be indebted to or at least strongly connected with the *Kālīkākulapañcaśataka* due to their shared verse. Therefore, although the symbolism of the three fires is polysemous in Tantric literature,³¹ we can lean towards this particular reading. The first coded association in the verse is between *candra* (Sṛṣṭikālī) and the numeric code *bhūta*. Since *bhūta* can mean the (five) elements and commonly denotes “five”, we can understand this association as a reference to the five ancillary Kālīs in the Sṛṣṭikālīcakra. These five are known as the Pañcayoni and are located on five petals around Sṛṣṭikālī. Next is *ravi* (Sthitikālī) who is linked to *gotracandra*. *Gotra*, often denoting 16, and *candra*, which can mean 1, add up to make 17, which is the number of figures in the Sthitikālīcakra if we are to include the central Sthitikālī herself (these 16 figures surrounding Sthitikālī are known as the four Yuganāthas and the twelve Rājaputras). Meanwhile, *rudra* is a well-known code for 11 and is paired with *havisadana*, literally the abode of the oblation or another term for fire. These 11 figures of the fire are quite clearly the ten deities of the Saṃhārakālīcakra (known as Saṃhārīṇīs in the *Kālīkulakramārcana*) alongside the central Saṃhārakālī.

The three Kālīcakras represented by the three fires (Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti, Saṃhāra) are said by the *Kālīsūtra* to be located in the heart, navel and root *cakra*. Since these three bodily locations are aligned as a column with the heart at the top and the root at its base, they presumably correspond to the vertical arrangement of Kālīs described in the *Kālīkākulapañcaśataka* 7.36–39 with Sṛṣṭi at the top (heart), Sthiti in the middle (navel) and Saṃhāra at the base (root *cakra*). A fourth location—*tridahanakuhara*—is also given in this verse, which must correspond to Anākhyā. This is consolidated by the fact that this Kālī is said to be present as thirteen, given in uncoded form as *dvādaśaikaena*, which is a reference to the ubiquitous formulation of 12 Kālīs of the Anākhyacakra who surround Anākhyakālī. Her location as the “void of the three fires” also conforms with the Krama idea that each of the Five Kālīs is subsumed by the succeeding Kālī and that the succeeding Kālī supersedes the power of her predecessors. Thus, for instance, after the worship of each *Kālīcakra* in the *Kālīkulakramārcana*, we are told to envision that Kālī dissolving into her successor as denoted by stock formulas such as “*layam kūr्याt*” or “*layam naye*”. Anākhyā is thus the void or point of dissolution of the moon, sun and fire since the three preceding Kālīs successively dissolve into her. Moreover, the descriptor *sṛṣṭisthairyāntakartrī* (the enacter of emission, maintenance and dissolution) arguably applies to her as well because transcending the three that precede her, she has absorbed their three cosmic functions.

However, since the *Kālīkulakramārcana* preaches a system of five Kālīs, we would also expect the presence of Bhāsākālī in this verse. We may argue that the verse is neatly split so that the qualifiers of the first four Kālīs are declined in the nominative agreeing with the relative pronoun *yā* while all descriptors of Bhāsākālī are declined in the accusative, becoming the direct object of *naumi* and conforming

³¹ This is discussed in the entry for *dhāmatraya*, a synonym for *tryagni* in *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa* III, pp. 227–228.

to *tām*. Accordingly, the description *trikalakhakhayutām* should apply to Bhāsā. Following the principle that each Kālī dissolves into her successor, I interpret this compound to mean that Bhāsā is “the void of the void of the three Kālīs” or the point of dissolution of the void of the three Kālīs. We have already seen the use of *tridahanakuhara* (the void of the three fires) as a descriptor for Anākhyā. If we interpret *trikala/trikalā* as a reference to Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti and Saṃhāra, then *trikalakha* (this can be translated as the “void of the three *kalās*” with one of the many meanings of *kalā* in Tantric literature being the cosmic or creative power of the divine³²) must be the equivalent of *tridahanakuhara* (Anākhyā). Since Bhāsā transcends and absorbs Anākhyā, she can be described as devoid *even* of that void (*khakha*). This doubling of apophatic language (void of the void) may seem strange and redundant at first sight but is actually a common feature in the Krama and will be discussed in detail below. Meanwhile, the three other descriptors attached to Bhāsākālī in this verse merely emphasise her supremacy.

The Tenets of Śaiva Non-dualism Contained in the *Sūtra*

Now that we have deciphered the *Sūtra*’s first verse which acts as a foundation to the arrangement of its pantheon, let us return to the possible philosophical position of the *Kālīsūtra*. I hope to show here that despite the distance—in geography and genre—between the systematic formulation of Śaiva non-dualism epitomised by the Pratyabhijñā and the Newar *Kālīsūtra*, we can nonetheless find the key tenets of the former in this short hymn. Before demonstrating how this is the case, we may succinctly remind ourselves of how the philosophy of Śaiva non-dualism is distinctive. This can be done first by distinguishing it from its dualistic counterpart—the Śaiva Siddhānta—and then by contrasting it with a more well-known type of monism—Advaita Vedānta—to discern its particular variety of non-dualism. The distinction between the Pratyabhijñā and the Siddhānta is brought into sharp relief in their understanding of cosmology. Sanderson (1992) very aptly summarises the dualistic position as “the doctrine that (1) Śiva, (2) souls and (3) the rest of reality, mental and material, are essentially and eternally distinct from each other. According to this view, Śiva is only the efficient cause (*nimittakāraṇam*) of the universe. Its material case (*upadānakāraṇam*), that out of which it is fashioned, of which it consists, and into which it dissolves, is not Śiva but *māyā*”. Meanwhile, in contrast, the Śaiva non-dualist “holds that it is Śiva alone, as a single autonomous and omnipotent consciousness, who is manifest in the form of individual souls, *māyā*, and its products.”³³

To home in on the Pratyabhijñā position, there is the active affirmation that Śiva is to be wholly found in all of creation. This hallmark doctrine is known as *sarvasarvātmavāda* or the existence of all things in one another, a term already used

³² The Kālīs Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti and Saṃhāra may reasonably be described as the *kalās* (creative power) of the supreme Kālī since they are this Kālī in her active mode of engaging with the cycle of creation and destruction of the cosmos (see the entry for *kalā* in *Tāntrikābhīdhānakōśa*, Vol. II for the connotation of this term).

³³ Sanderson (1992, pp. 282 and 288).

by Pratyabhijñā's earliest proponent, Somānanda.³⁴ Torella captures this doctrine thus in the introduction to his edition of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*: "In this universe where everything is penetrated by Śiva, nothing remains in the margins, all is mirrored even in the humblest thing and the whole nature of Śiva is present in it".³⁵ This distinguishes the Pratyabhijñā from Advaita Vedānta, a school which maintains that ultimate reality as Brahman is entirely quiescent (*śānta*), partless (*niṣkala*) and unchanging. In doing so, it must impute the multiplicity of the universe to the concept of nescience (*avidyā*). Instead, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* and its commentaries, uphold the oneness of the divine while also accounting for difference in the universe. This is achieved by arguing that the Lord, being supreme consciousness, is by his very nature dynamic and possesses complete freedom (*svātantrya*) to assume whatever form he so wishes.³⁶

The essential tenet of non-dualism described above—that the divine is both the efficient and material cause—is arguably reflected in the *Kālīsūtra*. As per this classical non-dual Śaiva stance, the *Kālīsūtra* states that the divine both wills the differentiated universe to come about and is also the very substance out of which the universe is created. In her guise as the efficient cause of the universe, Kālī is described as "having the form of the reality which causes emission, maintenance and dissolution" (*sr̥ṣṭisthitipralayakāraṇatattvarūpā*). She is thus the one who impels the cosmic cycles. However, it is Kālī and not some other phenomena that undergoes transformation into the differentiated universe as suggested by how she herself is "split into the divisions of phenomenal reality" (*sakalabhāvavibhāgabhinnā*) and is "the sole activity of the *tattvas*" (*sarvatattvaikavṛttiṃ*), rendering Kālī the universe's material cause as well. Moreover, mirroring the unique flavour of monism of the Pratyabhijñā, we also see the suggestion in the *Kālīsūtra* that the divine is equally transcendent and immanent. The *Kālīsūtra* therefore portrays Kālī as bridging dichotomies such as the singular and the multiple, the gross and the quiescent and absence and presence. She is, for instance, described as "singular yet to be worshipped in the best of *cakras* whose paths are multiple" (*ekā hy anekagaticakravarapūjyā*) in v. 4; "one whose state is both that which is with support (the phenomenal world) and that of the farers of the void (utterly transcendent)" (*ālambakhecarapādā*) in v.6; and "the supreme one in whose self rests both existence and non-existence" (*svābhāvabhāvikiparām*). In this way, we can understand the *Kālīsūtra* as propounding a non-dualism which attempts to reconcile unity and diversity. It therefore shares the same ontological basis of qualified non-dualism as the proponents of *sarvasarvātmavāda*.

³⁴ See pp. 14–16 of the Introduction of Torella's edition of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (2002).

³⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁶ See Ratié (2011, pp. 668–680) for an extensive discussion on how the Pratyabhijñā thinkers distinguished their non-dualism from that of Advaita Vedānta and ibid., pp. 643–662 on the ontological status of difference and illusion in the Pratyabhijñā, a feature which renders its type of monism unique.

Apophatic Language and the Symbolism of Fire

At this point, it is also worth noting that the *Kālīsūtra* proclaims its non-dual ontology in another manner that holds currency in both a wider Krama and Pratyabhijñā context, namely the pairing of apophatic language with the symbolism of “fire”. The characterisation of Kālī through terms such as “cavity” (*kuhara*), “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) and “void” (*kha*) is a common feature of Krama literature and is found in abundance in a text like the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* where we frequently find supreme reality described through such descriptors as *śūnyasamjñitam* (“known as empty”), *śūnyaśūnyataram* (“more empty than the empty”), *khasvarūpā* (“possessing the own nature of the void”) and *khamadhyasthā* (“situated in the middle of the void”).³⁷ With her designation as “more empty than the empty”, we can see the scriptural roots of the double apophasis found in the *Sūtra*’s first verse where Kālī is said to be “joined with void of the void” (*khakhayutā*). At a more superficial level, the function of this apophatic language is simply to denote the ineffability of the divine. In other words, the supreme Kālī is so beyond conceptualisation that it is more accurate to refrain from making any positive assertions and to characterise her through the language of absence.

However, in a Krama context and within the *Kālīsūtra* itself, this apophasis is more importantly there to make a point about non-duality. This point becomes clearer when we examine verse 2 and the pairing of apophasis with the metaphor of the Fire of Time, another common trope in Krama scripture.³⁸ Kālī is described as “one whose own nature is the light which arises from the void of the fire of time” (*antakāgnikuharoththitabhāsvārūpā*). This symbolism is used because such a fire, which occurs at the end of an aeon to destroy the universe as part of cyclic creation and destruction, is traditionally conceived as burning so relentlessly that it leaves no trace of its fuel. When applied to the supreme Kālī who, as we have seen in verse 1, causes the dissolution of all realities as she successively transcends them, this metaphor clearly denotes how the goddess absorbs the phenomenal universe into herself until no trace of it remains. In light of this, the description of her as “*kuhara*” therefore implies that this fiery dissolution is such that she creates a void beyond which and besides which there are no other phenomena. The metaphor suggests that in ultimate reality, in the total absence of anything else, Kālī is the non-dual ground of the cosmos.

By viewing the metaphor in verse 2 in this way, we can begin to understand another otherwise cryptic descriptor. In verse 4, she is described as *trailokyalam-paṭavarā* (greedy for the triple world). The term *lampāṭa* usually has a negative connotation denoting “greedy”, “lustful” or “covetous”. When understood against her earlier characterisation as the Fire of Time though, we understand her greediness for the triple world in the context of the conflagration that is ever eager to consume its fuel in the form of the three worlds and to absorb this fuel into itself. This understanding of the term *lampāṭa* is also backed by its usage or the usage of equivalent terms in the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* where, for instance, Kālī is referred

³⁷ See for instance *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* vv. 2.33–34 and 5.21.

³⁸ For examples of this metaphor in the Krama, see Wenta (2021, p. 729 and fn. 18).

to as “covetous of consuming the *tattvas*” (*tattvagrāsanaḥlupā* in v. 2.31) and “greedy solely for consuming the universe” (*viśvagrāsaikalampaṭām* in v. 2.71).

The prevalent symbolism of fire in Krama scripture also came to influence the discourse of the Pratyabhijñā. However, in this school, this concept of Kālī as fire is intimately linked to the activity of consciousness in order to serve the purpose of a systematic idealist non-dualism. In terminology that is comparable to that of the *Kālīsūtra*, Kṣemarāja, for instance, explains that consciousness is fire on account of its habit of consuming the universe (*citir eva viśvagrāsanaśīlatvāt vahniḥ*). By this he means that just as fire assimilates its fuel into itself, the knower, in the act of cognition, also absorbs into his awareness the fuel of the external object (*prameyendhanam*).³⁹ In its supreme mode, however, this consciousness is akin to an unquenchable conflagration that “consumes whole” (*alamgrāsa*) and “violently cooks” (*haṭhapāka*) the phenomenal world so that even the latent traces (*saṃskāra*) of otherness are destroyed.⁴⁰ In this state of liberation, ultimate non-duality is achieved through the obliteration of the distinction between the knower and the object of knowledge.

Non-dualism and Consciousness

As already alluded to above, the ontology of the Pratyabhijñā is an idealistic non-dualism in which all reality is not only the same as the divine but also identical to it in the form of supreme consciousness. The differentiated world we perceive is only this consciousness manifesting itself as multiple and other. This idealism had its roots in Krama literature where statements identifying consciousness with reality are already prevalent.⁴¹ We may also argue that a similar idealism shapes the philosophy of the *Kālīsūtra*. This is seen in how Kālī is both predicated as having the very nature of awareness (*jñānātmikā*) in verse 3 and as being the basis of differentiated cognition (*ciccetyacittaviśayākṣavilīnabhāvā*) in verse 2. The latter compound is somewhat elliptical. I will offer several possible interpretations of it in this section but begin with the way Dyczkowski has translated the compound as it appears in the *Yonigahvara*. As already mentioned, verse 2 of the *Kālīsūtra* closely resembles the first verse of this Tantra. Dyczkowski reconstructs this verse from *Yonigahvara*, which he states is very corrupt in the sole surviving manuscript of the scripture, by comparing it to the first verse of the *Devīdyardhaśatikā*.⁴² He records the compound we are concerned and his emendation of it as follows:

³⁹ These descriptions are found in *Pratyabhijñāhrdaya*, Sūtra 14 and autocommentary.

⁴⁰ The terms *alamgrāsa* and *haṭhapāka* are widely used in Pratyabhijñā literature. For the context of their usage, see, for instance, *Pratyabhijñāhrdaya*, Sūtra 11 and autocommentary.

⁴¹ A discussion of the presence of such statements in the Krama, especially encapsulated in the *Jayadrathayāmala* (3.15.250cd–62), can be found in Törzsök (2014, pp. 217–220).

⁴² See Dyczkowski’s notes in his edition of the *Manthānabhairavatantram*, *Kumārikākhaṇḍaḥ* (2009, Volume I of Introduction, p. 680) where the translation of the entire verse is as follows: “(I bow to her who is) established in the centre of the (reality that) contains the three paths of the Moon, the Sun and the Fire and whose state is one in which consciousness (*cit*), the object of thought (*cetya*), the mind (*citta*), the objects of sense (*viśaya*) and the senses (*akṣa*) have dissolved away”.

“ciccetyacittaviṣayākṣavilīnabhāvām [k: cicceta- -virīnabhāvām]”.⁴³ We should note that like us and in line with the critical editions of the *Devīdyardhaśatikā* and *Kālikākulapañcaśataka*, he has emended *ceta* to *cetya* (see fn. 19). He translates the compound as a genitive *bahuvrīhi* qualifying Kālī meaning “(she) whose state is one in which consciousness (*cit*), the object of thought (*cetya*), the mind (*citta*), the objects of sense (*viṣaya*) and the senses (*akṣa*) have been dissolved away’. He thus splits “*ciccetyacittaviṣayākṣa*” into five different components. I tentatively propose below a second interpretation in which this segment of the compound can be understood as referring to the traditional triad in Indian epistemology of knower, means of knowledge and object of knowledge.

The way I cautiously understand the compound in question is to interpret it as a locative *bahuvrīhi* pertaining to Kālī with a possible *vigraha* as follows: “*ciccetyacittabhyo/ciccetyacittasambandhino viṣayākṣasya vilīnā bhāvā yasyām sā*”.

This would give it the meaning of “she in whom the states of cognition resulting from/connected to the cogniser, object of cognition and means of cognition are dissolved”. The reader will notice the awkward position of the past passive participle “*vilīnā*” which technically should be placed as the first member of compound (*vilīnaciccetyacittaviṣayākṣabhāvā*) but a jumbled word order of this kind is not uncommon in scriptural Tantric literature. Meanwhile, I have understood “the states of sense-object and sense” (*viṣayākṣasya bhāvāḥ*) to mean phenomenal cognition since terms that designate states of union (often denoted by words such as *saṃyoga* or *saṃnikarṣa*) between sense-object (*viṣaya* or *artha*) and sense faculty (*akṣa* or *indriya*) connote an individual act or moment of cognition in Sanskrit, for instance, such widely used terms as *viṣayendriyasamṃyoga* or *indriyārthsamnikarṣa*.⁴⁴ The three other components of the compound—*cit*, *cetya* and *citta*—I interpret as referring to the cogniser, object of cognition and means of cognition. This would follow logically since in most Śāstric Indian views of epistemology, the three necessary factors for a moment of cognition to arise are the *pramātṛ* (knower), *prameya* (object of knowledge) and *pramāṇa* (means of knowing). *Cetya*, assuming that our emendation is permissible, is an unambiguous synonym of *prameya*. Although it is difficult to discern the nuance between *cit* and *citta*, my reason for distinguishing them in the above way is because in common usage *cit* more strongly signifies the mind or conscious agent itself while *citta* can denote a discrete thought or thought process. If taken in the way I understand it, the compound implies that Kālī is the substratum for the individual act of cognition and the cognitive factors that make that cognition possible.

There are of course other ways of breaking down this compound and it would be possible to maintain the interpretation of *cit* as the cogniser while viewing *cetya* and *citta* as respectively paired with *viṣaya* and *akṣa* (in the sense of *cetyam eva viṣayaḥ* and *cittam eva akṣam*) thus rendering the meaning “she in whom the states of knower (*cit*), the object of knowledge as *cetya* (the thing to be cognised) and the means of knowledge as *citta* (thinking) are dissolved”. This is arguably closer to

⁴³ The parentheses indicate the original reading of the manuscript which he has emended.

⁴⁴ We should also note that the Krama has its own vocabulary to describe sensory contact with the term *melāpa* being used for instance in the *Kālikakramasadbhāva*.

Dyczkowski's interpretation. A final alternative, especially if we do not amend *ceta* to *cetya* as I have done, is to understand *ceta* as an altered form of *cetas* or a shortened form of *cetana/cetanā* for *metri causa*. In doing so, we might see this triad as denoting different levels of consciousness or the cognising subject similar to the manner in which Kṣemarāja distinguishes between *cit/citi*, *cetana* and *citta* as different stages of the descent of consciousness from supreme reality to limited subject.⁴⁵ With such an interpretation, we could still maintain the meaning of *viśaya* and *akṣa* as the two other components of cognition (the *prameya* and *pramāṇa*). We might summarise by saying that despite the different interpretations of this compound and no matter which we select, they all seem to suggest the common idea that Kālī absorbs into herself all the different factors of cognition since she is non-dual consciousness itself.

This idea that all cognition is absorbed in the divine as supreme consciousness found in Krama literature and the *Kālīsūtra* is also the doctrinal foundation of the Pratyabhijñā. Unlike its mystical expression in Krama literature though, the Pratyabhijñā develops this non-dual idealism in a philosophically rigorous manner by which it can engage with other Śāstric schools. This is done by harnessing the various arguments of the Vijñānavādins against the Sautrāntikas in the refutation of the real existence of external objects (*bahyārtha*) and the establishment of mind only, especially as witnessed in the fifth chapter of the *Jñānādhikāra* of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā*.⁴⁶ The final position of a single supreme consciousness against the Buddhist position of radical ontological diversity is meanwhile achieved by appealing to the necessity for a synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) between the cogniser and object of cognition in order to explain the phenomenon of memory, something which they argue the Buddhist concept of *samskāras* fails to account for.⁴⁷ The unification of the factors of cognition in the supreme Kālī is also turned into a systematic theology by Abhinavagupta, one of the Pratyabhijñā's key proponents. We see this in his explanation of the concept of the twelve Kālīs in the *Tantrasāra* and *Tantrāloka* who are explained as twelve in number because they represent the different phases of cognition as it projects outwards and returns to its non-dual ground (*Srṣṭi*, *Sthiti*, *Samhāra* and *Anākhyā*) applied to the three factors of consciousness (*pramāṭr*, *prameya* and *pramāṇa*).⁴⁸ In this way, the supreme Kālī, according to Abhinavagupta, undergirds each of these twelve, making her the basis of every moment of cognition. In short, what we again see is a line of thought derived from Krama literature and systematised by Kashmiri exegesis but also conspicuous in a ritual setting in the *Kālīsūtra*.

⁴⁵ This is found in Sūtra 5 and its commentary of the *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya* in which *cit* is equated with supreme consciousness itself, *cetana* is understood as this consciousness in its state of non-dual awareness and *citta* is its contracted form as phenomenal cognition.

⁴⁶ A detailed summary and discussion of the contents of these arguments can be found in Ratié (2011, pp. 307–361 and 442–465).

⁴⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 109–167 for an explanation of the doctrine of *anusamdhāna*.

⁴⁸ For a description of how Abhinavagupta undertakes this exegesis, see Sanderson (1995, pp. 70–75).

The Goddess and the Body

We further observe the non-dualism of the Krama expressed in the *Kālīsūtra* through identification between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic. This is most evident in the way the *Sūtra* locates the functions of *Sṛṣṭi*, *Sthiti* and *Samhāra* which are represented as the moon, sun and fire in the body of the worshipper. In this way, the individual's body becomes a locus for both the universal cycle of creation and dissolution as well as the cosmic triple fire. In relation to verse 1, we have already shown how the *Kālīsūtra* identifies the *cakras* of *Sṛṣṭi*, *Sthiti* and *Samhāra* with the heart, navel and root *cakras* of the body. This identification between the divine and the body is again affirmed by locating these three goddesses in a different triad of human anatomy. In verse 2, we are told that the supreme *Kālī* is “present in the centre and interior of the three paths of “moon”, “sun” and fire” (*somārkavah-nitripathodaramadhyasaṁsthā*). The *tripatha* commonly denotes the three channels of the body—the *idā*, *pingalā* and *suṣumnā*—while these channels' identification with the symbols of the moon, sun and fire is a widespread one in Tantric literature. It is, for instance, already present in the *Svacchandabhairavatantra*,⁴⁹ a strata of Tantric literature that is older than the Krama. These channels are also arguably the feature of human anatomy that throughout time is the most heavily associated with feminine power.⁵⁰ However, in the *Kālīsūtra* itself, these channels do not only signify macrocosmic elements but also unequivocally correspond to the three *Kālīs* since the synonymity of moon, sun and fire with *Sṛṣṭi*, *Sthiti* and *Samhāra* is already made in verse 1 and because, in this compound, the supreme *Kālī*, who is understood as nothing but the unification of these three *Kālīs*, is said to dwell at the centre of these channels.

Practices aimed at realising that the cosmic powers of the three *Kālīs* are already present in the body were seemingly prevalent in the Krama. A famous example of this is found in Kṣemarāja's explanation of the liberatory practice known as the *kramamudrā* which he cites from the canonical but now lost *Kramasūtras*.⁵¹ Kṣemarāja glosses this term by stating that it is an activity which causes the external

⁴⁹ *Tāntrikābhidhānaśāstra*, Vol. III, pp. 125–126 (entry for *tripatha*).

⁵⁰ The idea of locating the divine feminine in the bodily channels immediately brings to mind the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* which even in early Saiddhāntika scriptures is already associated with the *śakti* of the Lord present in the *nāḍīs*. It is, however, *kuṇḍalinī*'s association with the *suṣumnā* and her rise along this central channel that will come to dominate Tantric literature on this subject and to take on soteriological connotations (for a survey of *kuṇḍalinī* and her relationship with the *nāḍīs*, see the essay on *kuṇḍalinī* in *Tāntrikābhidhānaśāstra* II). Although *Kālī* is never directly identified as *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Kālīsūtra* or even at other points in the *Kālīkulakramārcana*, other descriptions in this text make it clear that they are to be aligned. Thus, in a section where a semantic analysis is applied to *Kālī* in the *Tattvopadeśavidhi*, *Kālī* is said to be supreme (*parā*) because she is situated at the *dvādaśānta* (*dvādaśānte sthitā yasmāt tasmāt kālī parā smṛtā*), the *dvādaśānta* traditionally being held to be the point twelve finger-widths above the aperture of the cranium which is the summit of the *kuṇḍalinī*'s rise. Moreover, *Kālī* is linked to the function of the *nāḍīs* in this part of the *Kālīkulakramārcana* since she is also described as “the one who unites the ingoing and outgoing breaths” (*prāṇāpānavivāhikā*). It should be added that alongside her association with the *dvādaśānta*, *Kālī* may alternatively be associated with *śoḍaśānta* (see the *Kramasadbhāva* 3.46ab and *Yonigahvara* 23–24), another symbolic location associated with the peak of the subtle body.

⁵¹ *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, *Sūtra* 19 and autocommentary.

sequence (*krama*) in the form of the three cosmic functions of *Sṛṣṭi*, *Sthiti* and *Samhāra* to be sealed (*mudrayati*) in the self. The identification between self and cosmic powers allows the worshipper to be penetrated (*samāviṣṭa*) by what he assumed to be external to him and to realise that these cosmic powers are no different to the operations of his own internal consciousness. Thus, by aligning the inner and outer, even when his awareness is extroverted, he can still dwell in non-duality. The process of locating the macrocosmic and the divine in the human body encapsulated by the *Kālīsūtra* also becomes a recurrent theme in the ritual sequence of the *Kālīkulakramārcana*. This is, for instance, seen in two ritual steps which form part of the preparatory rites (*paripāṭi*) before the sequence of routine worship, namely the *Ātmapūjā* and the *Sanyāsadyānavidhi*. In the former, the Krama's 11 ancillary *cakras* are deposited into different parts of the body and then imagined as subsumed into the Five *Kālīs* while in the *Sanyāsadyānavidhi*, different parts of the adept's body are divinised and transformed into the body of the goddess.

It should also be noted that the *Kālīsūtra* contains yet another epithet linking the goddess to the body but one with more archaic connotations. This is the description of the goddess as *chidravarṇā* (she whose appearance is “*chidra*”). In conventional usage, the term *chidra* simply means a hole or an opening and thus we might assume that this is another apophatic description of the goddess synonymous with *kuhara* or *kha*. However, *chidra* also has a more technical sense associated with the sinister activities of female spirits in the earliest strata of Tantric *yoginī* literature. As Törzsök explains, “in exorcistic contexts, this word denotes the vulnerable point through which a spirit enters someone's body or through which the evil eye (*dr̥ṣṭipāta*) can be effective.”⁵² This word is used interchangeably with other terms such as *marman* or *dvāra*. Although possession by *yoginīs* was a fate to be avoided at all costs in the period of such texts, the positive possession by the goddess was eagerly courted later in the Kaula. As Sanderson has shown,⁵³ in a Kaula milieu, the outer signs of possession were observed during initiation to indicate that the initiate had received the goddess's descent of power (*śaktipāta*) and was thus a fitting candidate for Kaula worship. It is thus perhaps with this sense that we see *Kālī* counterintuitively extolled as *marmaghātinī* (“the piercer of the weak points”) in many Newar liturgies and it is also with such an understanding that the epithet *chidravarṇā* presumably belongs. This makes the use of this descriptor in the *Kālīsūtra* another reminder of the role of the body as a vessel for transformation rather than something to be repudiated.

Conclusion

To conclude, what this article has hopefully shown is that the *Kālīsūtra* possesses certain philosophical positions and that its philosophy can be identified as a specific type of non-dualism. This non-dualism has both idealistic and world-affirming characteristics in that it sees reality as no different to consciousness but also refuses

⁵² *Tāntrikābhidhānakośa*, Vol. III, p. 257.

⁵³ Sanderson (1995, pp. 88–89).

to abnegate phenomenal experience and the human body. I have therefore argued that the ontological stance of the *Kālīsūtra* is thus not so different to that of Pratyabhijñā. This is not surprising given their shared Krama scriptural substratum. The *Kālīsūtra* by and large reflects the doctrines found in Tantras such as the *Kālikākulapañcaśataka* but brings these doctrines into sharper relief by distilling them in a short hymn of six verses. Moreover, insofar as the *Sūtra* reflects the viewpoints of the liturgies in which it so prominently features, we may state that the Uttarāmṇāya *paddhatis* of the Newars were not just texts concerned with the mundane practicalities of ritual performance but are indeed guided by some philosophical thinking.

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Conflict of interest The author states that there is no conflict of interest

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