Can Representation be Transformative? Resemblance, Suggestion, and Metaphor in Tantric Meditation

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Background

Not all tantras are monistic in their worldview. The paradigm and the specific philosophers from tantric literature that I am engaging here come from a non-dual Śaiva-Śākta paradigm. The key issues from tantric literature relevant to this conversation involve visualization or sustained meditation upon specific phonemes called 'mantras', geometric designs called 'maṇḍalas', or images of the deity. Tantric rituals and gestures help address the enactive domain of representation. Complex manuals define sign-reference systems to contextualize representation grounded on cognitive dualism. Mainstream discourse on representation dichotomizes schema and categories against experience, and although this approach helps us contextualize some sets of tantric representation, it tends to miss the target meaning. I apply a phenomenological and cognitive scientific critique of these positions onto the backdrop of tantric monist hermeneutics. Śiva or the absolute, in this paradigm, is a singular essence endowed with latent potential for higher-order consciousness and agency, with it being the all-encompassing pure consciousness that unfolds to blossom as manifold subjects and objects. This absolute consciousness is non-directional, non-representational, and the foundation for all that exists.

Briefly, representation here is not a second-order presentation of some-thing "out there," not a shadow truth lurking yet never totally given to us, nor a replica of something else. It is a 're-presentation' or 'presentation again'. In the context of meditation, it is a 'presentation again and again' of the particular image, concept, emotion, feeling, or state of the lack thereof. This 'presentation again' is also presentation afresh, and this is where the concept of *prati* in the recognition philosophy of *pratyabhijñā* resonates. Whether forming instincts or reflexes or acquiring learned behavior, repeated presentation of memories is crucial. In episodic memories, what is being recalled is not just a second-order presentation of an absent object; the experiences given are fresh and unique even when they are simply shadows from past experiences. Similar to the pain of remembered painful experiences, arousal at replaying pleasure, or salivation when thinking of

sour fruit, or even when conjuring something remote, these experiences are nevertheless lived and are as authentic as what they stand for.[1]

These representations, I argue, have the transformative power to alter the horizon of our experience and leave behind potent somatic imprints. This innate experience of non-dual tantras directly exposes the being-as-such and the luminous nature of purely latent consciousness prior to a subject-object conditioned structure. Tantras aim to merge the experienced world and experiencing subject in a non-dual state. Descriptions fail to express this state even when they describe it as a state beyond representation. Enactive modes of expression, gesture, or ritual participation closely capture a breach of the dichotomy inherent in the discourse of representation. We can compare this experience to what Piaget calls the "adualism" of the child in the early months where "there does not yet exist any consciousness of self; that is, any boundary between the internal or experienced world and the world of external realities" (Piaget 1969, p. 22). Tantric visualizations presuppose a reversal from the sign-reference paradigm to the most basic experience by means of repeating basic experiences and retrieving from commonsense experience, both inside and outside. For a broader philosophical dialogue, I will now discuss some schema and affect theories, then shift to simulation and animation to address how tantric "suggestion" or "indication" (saṅketa) functions beyond 'representing', to 'recognizing' reality.

Section I: Representation

Representation in Light of Non-dual Tantras
To engage how tantras aim to 'present again' the non-conditioned natal experience prior to culture and language, while using tantric culture and language to meticulously construct anticipated cognitive and somatic effects, we need a non-dual platform for representation where experience precedes language, where the mind can present something non-propositional and play it again or represent it. This representation does not always need to be propositional, and the mechanisms for representing emotions and feelings are not distinct from those of schemas and thoughts.

In general, presentation precedes representation. In the tantric world of meditation, it is rather representation that precedes the presentation of exalted modes of experience. In this absolute ground, in this recognition, the dissolution of the constructed coincides with the constructing ego. The fundamental premise is that even when the constructed character of concepts and schema that mediate experience are recognized, the experiencing as such is not erased and the visualizing subject retrieves their foundational ground. And this rejection of the dichotomies is not solely based on the absolute unitive experience, as even the most public practices of visualization breach the regular dichotomy imposed by representation. Take, for example, the deity image of Tripurā, which represents the deity,

and the deity herself represents different concepts depending on the visualizing subject: eros, the godhead, pure will, or an embodiment of volition, cognition, and action. If the deity image is in itself the representation of abstract concepts, the 'image in the head' is a representation of representation. Thoughts, concepts, impressions, schema, and images are all tools to represent something, but this is not always the case, as we also use external objects to represent something conceptual. Neither is it always the case that these images lack any propositional representation. Even then, tantras use both the symbols and signs for representation that may or may not resemble what it stands for. Furthermore, just as a word representing a thing also represents itself, an object or an image that represents something else can also represent itself.[2] Tantric representation underlies these and several other premises that will be addressed when the context arises.

The object and its representation cannot be identical. However, they cannot be diametrically different. If the concepts of the absolute or of the natal experience did not touch upon the fundamental modes of being and awareness, meditative discourse could never give an exposure to the truth. Relying on similarity and contiguity, tantric semiotics utilizes metaphor and metonymy for re-presenting experiences at the level the subject can objectify as originally presented in the non-dual state. Tantras apply various modes of representation to bring innate modes of experience to subjective awareness. A common mechanism is 'blending' different schemas and images in constituting new structure, suggesting an exalted state of consciousness. This process can be explained by applying conceptual blending as theorized by Fauconnier and Turner. It is in the mechanism of blending from different inputs and giving rise to new structure that Fauconnier and Turner trace the evolution of consciousness. Tantric mystical language applies both differentiation and assimilation in the mechanism of representation, and therefore both models are applied in tantric representation of X representing Y where difference is primary, as well as A resembling B where assimilation is primary. The correspondence between geometric shapes and the elements, for instance earth and solidity represented by a square, water represented by a circle, fire represented by a triangle, air represented by a hexagon, or the sky represented by a half circle, shows barely any resemblance. By using basic geometric shapes and different phonemes for mapping reality, tantras derive complex meaning from their symbolism, and someone unfamiliar with the internal sign system can easily be lost when it comes to deciphering tantric images and mantras.

When conveying esoteric experience and employing language to cultivate the semblance of experiences, tantras are bound to use the same cognitive mechanisms and the same tropes and images that are used when conveying more mundane experiences, as all our experiences are derived in the encounter with the environment, and all our experiences are somatically grounded. The only difference is that when tantras utilize imagery or

gestures to articulate something, the target is not 'out there.' There is nothing objective that resembles these images. The real objective is the transformation of experience. Tantras utilize sophisticated visualizations for both transforming everyday experience and directly encountering the absolute. In this regard, tantric visualization or mentally 'seeing' the image of Tripurā, for example, is not just to freeze other cognitive processes. It is about transforming the experience corresponding to both subject and object. The aspirant, as a consequence, should have a different attitude toward the world, toward other subjects, and toward the aspirant's own embodiment. The cognitive process that started with simple representation thus translates into behavioral alteration. This means that tantric representation is both about reconstituting bodily schemas and cultivating new ones by creating new memory "constructions" (saṃskāras). The discussion on 'indication' or saṅketa in the next section clarifies both the phenomenological and cognitive aspects of these constructions.

Cognitive psychology may not need to taxonomize mental states according to their semantic properties, as Stich (1983) has argued. Even tantric terminology for visualization, for instance 'retention' (dhāraṇā) or 'cultivation' (bhāvanā), affirm that visualization is not for representing something but rather to cultivate something new.[3] More explicit is the case of emotions, as the simulation of arousal or compassion is not merely picturing a surge of prior emotions but re-living them. If corporeal gestures remind us of specific emotions, they do not just represent them, because they are meant to arouse the actual presence of these emotions. This account concurs with Boghossian (1995): some representations composed of concepts have no phenomenal features while others such as sensations have phenomenal features that nonetheless lack a conceptual framework.

Tantric images are more akin to mnemonic devices than simple representations. These devices, however, do represent something even though what they represent can be private and what they stand for can change in different contexts. Even resemblance is not necessary between the represented and the representing. When the phoneme 'ra' represents fire, and fire is represented by a triangle, and this represents a vagina, resemblance is distant. What an 'image in the head' represents is not what exists out in the world even with clear resemblance, but a further representation of concepts and feelings. The practice does not progress with a recognition of difference but when simulations elicit real experience. Meaning in this sense is what is given to experience by means of practice where close correlation is hard to establish. Actually, tracing a thought correlate for each and every experience is as complex as establishing a neural correlate for each and every thought. Furthermore, fantastic images are not representations of something external, although they borrow nuance from the real world. At the same time, these images become cultural artifacts that transcend the established system of sign and reference, and

rather than representing something, they present themselves and gain their own subjectivity.

Furthermore, geometric forms, like abstract concepts, lack 'what it is like', a phenomenal quality. For example, there are no terms for feeling like a triangle inside a circle or a circle outside an octagon. By anthropomorphizing maṇḍalas, tantric visualizations enrich practice with phenomenal qualities. We then have something intentional that also feels like visualizing the same images. The schemas used merely for replaying certain concepts are now applied to generate a specific response to the stimuli. If arousal is central to the imagery of Kāmeśvarī, terror plays a central role in Mahākāla. The deities' images function to elicit emotions while being appraised as the manifold expression of the unitary foundational pure consciousness. Images presented to the mind are not references but signs that have their own meaning. Tantric visualization practices make conversation on 'mental imagery' being 'image-like' or 'language-like' moot because speech- and image-like properties are integral from the first emergence of an object, analyzed and differentiated in the course of visualization.

The grammarian Bhartṛhari introduced the concept of *paśyantī* to describe the most subtle form of speech equated with consciousness, allowing the argument that basic schema may not need to be exclusively image-like or thought-like. *Paśyantī*, the most subtle form of speech, has the approximation of both image and speech as integral properties. This speech cannot be fully objectified, as it is not fully separate from the subject. There is yet another concept on representation from Abhinavagupta, the eleventh-century polymath and foremost tantric philosopher: 'counter-image' (*pratibimba*). His theory incorporates 'after-images' or the subsequent imprints of what we directly apprehend, not just of visual perception but also of tactile or gustatory sensations (*Tantrāloka* III.24–46). Representation is a deeper cognitive mechanism that incorporates thoughts, emotions, and sensations. Penetrating deeper into consciousness to address basic sensations in light of representation, it is clear that representations are original, second-order presentations, or the repeated presentation of something presented before. Along these lines, if our judgmental consciousness (*savikalpaka*) represents what was initially presented in the pre-judgmental state, this is then a vivified coloring of what was first given in lines. This process brings images back to life and allows memories to be relived. This makes it thus an act of synthesis—reproductive rather than productive.

All of this boils down to how we interpret 'representation' when addressing tantric symbols and gestures. To address the type of language at hand and extend from assumptions in discourse on tantric language, I borrow from Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. 193):

> The link between the word and its living meaning is not an external link of association. The meaning inhabits the word, and language 'is not an external

accompaniment to intellectual processes.' We are therefore led to recognize a gestural or existential significance in speech. . . .

We therefore seek beyond parameters of meaning versus word, signifier versus signified to engage tantric symbolism, particularly because in tantras these symbols retain the potency to alter reality or create a new reality rather than reality transcending the realm of significance. Applying a dichotomy of internalism versus externalism does not take us further. Even the concept of significance underscores this dichotomy, as the mental referent and sign borrowed from the environment are two different entities. Tantras therefore use gestures and signs as stepping-stones to refer to refined modes of experience. Broad spectra of visualization rest on internally established correlations, for example the phoneme 'ra' representing a triangle, or the phoneme 'a' representing the inherent luminosity of consciousness. Any attempt to explain tantric representation with the same models used to explain everyday language will inevitably fail. When tantric symbols signify something, their objective is not accomplished by eliciting a 'stand for' relation. They are not meant just to refer to something but to actually 'present' something original, revealing direct modes of experience. In order to do this, tantras transform existing frameworks and introduce new categories, alter existing schema and apply new concepts to confront the cognitive mechanism of conceptualization.

When visualized, the object acquires additional value, new meaning. The act of visualization transforms common objects into aesthetic or sacred objects. Even with tantric objects borrowed from commonsense reality, the meditating subject intentionally superimposes additional value to it. Above all, the act of visualization is meant to transform the subjective states, reprogramming somatic responses. The visualized images become more vivid as the visualization practices become established and the subject's conviction deepens. Consequently, what is visualized and commonsense externality are blurred, and fictional imagery produces real effects. Subjects can feel arousal or experience burning rage by playing with their own fiction. The fundamental difference between visualization practice and daydreaming is that in the case of the first, subjects have total awareness and control over their states and are able to control, manipulate, and return to everyday consciousness at will. This enables freedom to experience the world, to recognize reality beyond their own impositions, acquiring freedom from earlier inhibitions and schemas, and reprogramming their own response to worldly stimuli. At the very least, this is what tantric freedom looks like.

Any episodic memory of a tragic event retains painful content and it hurts as we recollect. When the episodic and phenomenal aspects faint, we can have a mere semantic recollection from the past. Frege ([1892] 1997) demands that natural language has a 'stand-for' relationship with both

extensional properties or an external reference or truth conditions and *intentional* properties. Two expressions may have the same reference but different properties or propositions, for the sense that is expressed by means of specific expression is surplus to its merely representational property. While the 'stand for' relation in gestures and images still exists, what they stand for are experiences that are not in opposition to *intentional* properties. Terror or anger depicted in the imagery and somatic response to encountering these fearsome situations constitutes the first dyad. Visualization allows the subject to evaluate such situations, to transcend the instantaneous somatic response, and ultimately allows the subject to ground itself in the transformed mental state. In essence, the objective of tantric representation is not about information but transformation. And it is for this transformation that the subject claims a separate order, "as if" splitting itself from ordinary modes of body and emotion. In its resting, it abides in the non-dual state, not being separated as the body and the mind, even while experiencing reality from an all-embracing gaze.

Not all representations mirror direct experience. When a gap exists between experience and its representation, we encounter a propositional attitude. Then the meditation manuals describe '*x*' standing for '*y*', and cognitive devices function in this 'stand for' relationship. What is directly given to us in this context becomes the most distant copy of what is represented. The visualized image stands for complex images that in turn stand for different concepts, and they all stand for some elementary modes of experience. The image of Durgā, a conceptual blend representing different deities and their identifiable powers, stands for various tropes applied in conceptualizing space and time. And this chain can be extended as long as the subject visualizing the imagery establishes their intentionality. Representations then become private, as when what an image elicits at a given time is determined by the type of experience the subject is able to evoke. All images, all conceptualizations, collapse at the end. When the intended meaning is conveyed, only the experience remains in its pristine form.

The primary objective of tantric visualization is to shift awareness from the image to concepts that subsume other concepts, and to analyze those secondary concepts. We can compare this process with excavating sedimented layers. The goal is not just to reach to the bottom of the layers but to gain freedom for the subject from conceptual conditioning. If visualization is an exercise to explore the frontiers of the cognitive power of imagination and its affective role in transforming the scope of experience, tantric language is then a mechanism that allows the subject to deconstruct existing frameworks, liberating the subject from the restraints of conditioned experience. From the monistic tantric perspective, representation functions both ways. Each of the overwhelming volumes of tantra and its practice in the field relates to rituals. Rituals enact deep symbolism, vivid in dance

forms such as Navadurgā, Bhairava, or Kālī. Gestures are likewise central to tantric practice. Many of the tantric gestures, such as depicting fear and protection, giving, or threatening, are derived from embodied experiences. Both rituals and gestures enact meaning or corporeally act out meaning, wherein the whole body, and not just the mind, represents while also representing.

Gestures in themselves are meanings, for instance when they express shock or horror. But tantric rituals also provide narratives where sign-reference relation is explicit and the gestures used here have a layered meaning. Tantric rituals form a dialogue whether between the deity and the practitioner, between teacher and student, or between two practitioners. Semantic representation in these accounts only functions in the most external layer of cultivating experience. What they aspire to is the unitive experience that is corporeally felt and enacted by means of gestures. When the rituals animate, the dichotomy of external layers and inner core collapses. Tantric texts exploit this unitive experience to describe intersubjective relation in various forms. The meaning derived in the initial stage of practice grounded on sign-reference dichotomy collapses in the experiential modes of 'merging' (*samāveśa*).

Tantras focus on different experiential stages and shift meaning as the practice evolves. For example, the goddess Tripurā can represent eros as Kāmeśvarī or cosmic desire as the first pulsation of pure being. The cognitive representational domain of tantric symbolism is marginal when it comes to experience. For this reason, tantric traditions stress the personal teacher-disciple relationship, rejecting learning from manuals, similar to learning swimming or dancing. Nevertheless, tantric visualization starts from the propositional stages of representation, where narratives become central and the sign-reference system quintessential. Deciphering meaning itself becomes the central mode of visualization in this initial stage. For example, the goddess Tripurā, carrying a bow made of sugarcane stick and arrows made of flowers, represents different aspects of embodiment. The *Yoginīhṛdaya* (*YH*, I.53) deciphers the rope, goad, and bow and arrows that the goddess carries as volition, cognition, and action. Fluidity of meaning becomes vivid when we consult other texts that decipher the weapons as signifying passion, aversion, the mind, and the objects of the senses.[4] The objective here is not to recount fixed references but to provide the template for one's selected visualization. It is when experience that breaches the dichotomy of subject and object and is non-dual in nature splits apart and determines the horizons of subject and object that something appears as an object, the first representation. Basically, visualization practices reveal both tendencies. First, by retracing the original presentation we substitute *y* to reach to *x*, which occurs when analyzing what is represented in propositions. Next, we bracket concepts in order to trace the originally given experience. We need a semiotic model that addresses the expressed

propositional representation while simultaneously incorporating the most basic forms of presentation or mirroring.

Affective Domains of Tantric Representation
Tantric visualizations meticulously focus on representing emotions. It is because representing does not mean picturing or mirroring that the question of creating an exact likeness of an emotion does not even arise. What is the shape of the face or body of anger, after all? To represent an emotion would be, as we indicated above, to recreate, experience again—perhaps in a distilled de-individuated form—the same experience. Terror depicted in Bhairava, disgust in Cāmuṇḍā, eros in Kāmeśvarī, or vigor and heroism in Durgā are some of the emotions that deity images vividly portray. If none of these emotions surface in the heart and the subject is merely visualizing a propositional attitude that 'K represents desire', this is neither visualization nor representation but is rather like watching a drama and following the narrative but having no emotional engagement. A complex image represents a network of emotions and its propositional contents. In this case, one emotion or proposition becomes primary and other emotions or propositions are subsumed. Tantric meditations do not necessarily ask subjects to subsume their emotional state. The real challenge is grounding the self in the reflexive nature of consciousness while in such emotional states and aware of one's own emotional content. The way the image is interpreted, or the way the representation is established, affects the subject's psychosomatic state, and transformed mystical experiences rely on these interpretive mechanisms. Emotional being is as primary or even more fundamental than propositional content, both being finally subsumed within the subject's reflexivity.

Emotional simulations do not appear as representation in a common-sense understanding as long as they retain emotional content. To meditate on an emotional state is more than thinking about emotions. It evokes specific states to project intended value while experiencing them. Meditation thus 're-plays' emotions. The parameters in which emotions are replayed are determined by the subject's control over them, complemented by heightened reflexivity. If the six heads of Kubjikā relate to six different emotional states, the subject is experiencing a symphony of emotions as well as visualizing the image. Whether the visualized images are real is never an issue. As far as emotions are concerned, they are felt just the same. If the objective of visualization is to recognize the reflexive nature of consciousness identified with the self, the goal of playing with images is to empower the subject to recognize its foundational nature while also savoring its manifold expressions.

In tantric meditation, every emotional re-presentation in recollection is also a fresh presentation. We therefore need a system of representation that makes a twofold distinction, where some representations are re-lived and

others traversed. This occurs because representing emotions is not the same as representing *x* as *y*. Comprehending emotions like anger or arousal conceptually does not require re-living them. However, we do not want a vertical split between conceptual or sensory meditation content, as they are contiguous, with the potential to shift one into another. Initially some memories lack emotional vivacity or intensity and we may simply experience their semantic presentation. Some concepts repeatedly played out may cause somatic affect once they enter the subject's horizon and touch the emotional core, the felt domain of the self. The concept of simulation connects some aspects discussed above, as simulated emotions have the same affective role, even if the source is not real. Emotional simulation is equally central to visualization practice. We can encounter its vivacity in *bhakti* or love-oriented visualizations. In *bhakti* practices, the subject replays narratives and animates them to the extent that they become part of one's episodic memory. Religious experience, in this light, is constructed much like other experiences. The meditative objective is to explore emotional mechanisms rather than just animate religious emotion. Recognition of the constructed nature of experience allows the subject to gain freedom from all other constructions. Tantric discourse on visualization intends to gain the absolute freedom to abide in the reflexive nature of consciousness itself, independent of the conditions and content, including emotion, within the totality of self-awareness.

Rituals are the domains within which all the representations and simulations come to the surface. Starting with commonly agreed-upon symbols of representation, such as using substances with white, red, and dark colors to represent the three *guṇa*s, or displaying common gestures such as the display of the index finger (*tarjanī mudrā*) for power or dominance, rituals develop into the zones of abstraction. However, every ritual is unique in its application, based on the variation of the deity being worshipped or the anticipated result. Even the same maṇḍala or the same image of the deity will have a different affective role, guided by the intentionality of the subject performing the ritual. Representation in rituals thus negotiates fluid meanings and contexts. To represent complex meanings, tantras create a hierarchy of images, blending the imagery from different domains, or subsuming one image by another. Ritual worship and visualization both creates new imagery and deciphers them. The type of representation we are dealing with here is therefore unique, as complex private and public intentions are simultaneously at play. Clearly, visualization is not merely commonsense representation, but the simulation and presenting of the actual experience again.

I am introducing a category of *saṅketa*, roughly translated as 'indication', to address representation in tantras. Since the term is used for gestures as well as for metaphoric suggestion, it does not rely on the same dichotomies as do the terms representation or simulation. In the case of gestures, where

what is representing coexists with what is represented, for example fear being represented by a terrified face, *saṅketa* is a lived gestural indication (derived from √*kita* meaning 'dwelling'). When meaning is merely suggested by metaphor, or suggestion contains additional meaning to that which is apparent, as in *dhvani*, *saṅketa* is an indication with cognition as primary (where the meaning is derived from √*kita* meaning 'knowing').[5] Just as words can invoke complex orders of meaning, the first order likewise hints or suggests a higher-order meaning. We can address in this platform meaning as a continuum, as a gradual process that magnifies significance rather than a dividing sign from the signified or represented.

Section II: Suggestion

Saṅketa: *Representation, Resemblance, or Suggestion?*
Our cognitive life is filled with propositional attitudes. Any alternative to dualistic meaning theories has to confront the everyday cognitive life dominated by language and determined by the system of sense and reference. Mimesis gives us an alternative platform. As meaning emerges from embodied states, a vertical divide between sense and reference fails to capture the felt and the embodied aspects. A language of gesture, in short, is at the foundation of our use of language. I introduce the category of *saṅketa* at this juncture to bring expressed and expressing into a unified field while acknowledging the differentiated emergent structures without dividing represented and representing. If speech is an extension of gesture, an extension of bodily being, the philosophy of language to address speech can be grounded in the philosophy of gesture. *Saṅketa* does exactly that. *Saṅketa* is applied for gestural reference and also refers to metaphoric suggestion. More importantly, *saṅketa* covers the scope of *dhvani*, the secondary meaning that does not abnegate the primary or literal meaning.

The exposition of *saṅketa* in the *Yoginīhṛdaya* (*YH*) helps us bridge the gap between mimesis and propositionality. The most common application of *saṅketa* is for gestural expression,[6] subsuming meaning through the sign-reference relation within. Extending beyond corporeal gestures, any object, sound, word, or event can be *saṅketa* as long as there is a mutual agreement.[7] Even though *saṅketa* begins with corporeal gestures and physical symptoms, it builds from corporeal depths to incorporate propositional attitudes within. This extension of meaning is vivid in the ways *saṅketa* evolves from gestures and becomes a central mechanism of tantric hermeneutics for deciphering the meaning of mantras, geometric designs, and rituals.[8] But tantras envision the scope of meaning beyond gestures and propositions, as something deeper exists that is merely intimated, or 'said without saying'. A common example, "just shoot me before you leave," is neither a command to shoot nor permission to leave. Every mode of meaning is captured within *saṅketa*, as it captures within its fold even indirect suggestion (*dhvani*).[9]

The *YH* subsumes semantic meaning under 'indication' (*saṅketa*), as it is evident that the conversation upon the meaning (*artha*) of mantras comes in *YH* II.15–77, the chapter "Indication on Mantras" (*mantrasaṅketa*). The 'meaning' (*artha*) identified here is not presented in the paradigm of the vertical divide between sense and reference, as *artha* means both 'meaning' and 'what is meant', the external object. Returning to *saṅketa*, it grounds the intentionality (*icchā*) of a subject to relate a word to its meaning.[10] Tantric texts are written within the paradigm of *saṅketa*, where textual meaning is not simply conveyed but is mediated by a teacher, and the same text can be deciphered differently for different levels of aspirants. This is why Amṛtānanda, the commentator upon the *YH*, explains the process of writing the commentary as 'a process of giving form' or 'in order to reveal' (*vyaktīkartum*) (*YH*, Dīpikā I.5). This is similar to the literary use of 'suggestion' (*vyañjanā*), where a higher-order meaning subsumes other meanings. This reveals the higher-order meaning where what is literal is not negated but subsumed.[11] *Vyañjanā* describes indirect suggestion (*dhvani*) where the signs remain essential even after revealing their corresponding meaning, or when a sign can have both a literal meaning and something beneath not exhausted by correspondence. The objective of this hierarchical subsumption of meaning is not merely to describe the ineffable, as William James (1917) would have it. It brings to life the experience for those meditating accordingly.[12] The subject of *saṅketa* suggests something that cannot be directly described or that cannot be represented via common-sense representation.

The cognitivist/perennialist debate on mystical language teaches that every mode of experience relies on something constructed. Even 'ineffable' describes a concept, and all concepts are subject to construction. The paradigm of *saṅketa* is different. It is not just about representing. It is about presenting again. When describing *saṅketa*, Amṛtānanda explains the paradox of objectifying the non-objectifiable:

> An entity remains transcendent from the scope of sensory faculties for as long as the mind is not actively engaged there. Since the object of this [teaching] is always outside of the scope of the mind, speech, and sensory faculties, this is highly esoteric.[13]

Tantric exegetes engage with meaning first by penetrating the quagmire of construction while addressing original things, beyond replicas and mirror images. Their approach confronts the dichotomy of sign and reference and views meaning as seamlessly unfolding from corporeal expressions. The philosophy of 'recognition' (*pratyabhijñā*) is not a mere epistemic category to explain the reflexive mode of consciousness self-affirming itself. It is also devised to ground mystical experience. Recognition refers to the integral mode of consciousness where both memory and direct apprehension intersect. The same applies to visualization, albeit what is recalled here is

borrowed from the fictions of past visualization. This process of refining imagery through suggestion is not the penultimate goal. On the contrary, it is just a mechanism that allows the practitioner to explore the mechanisms of consciousness. The real freedom lies in recognizing the constructed nature of all conceptualizations. This is where the subject stands next to the luminosity of consciousness, encountering the presence of consciousness itself. Meditation presents this mode of consciousness repeatedly.

The real problem, then, is how can any language 'present' something afresh, something new, that is not already presented by other epistemic means? By adopting the 'recognition' framework, the emergent consciousness is not entirely new, since the most basic form of consciousness is given in every mode of consciousness prior to it being objectively conditioned. Tantras go one step further and argue that in every instance of consciousness there are both base consciousness and its emergence into objective form. One does not negate the emergent structure in order to trace original consciousness. For 'suggestion', language need not be entirely expunged of its referentiality to describe something non-conceptual. The words or symbols can be comprehended both in terms of negative concept and as the target, that which can be merely suggested. If *saṅketa* were to indicate the primordial form of consciousness, this would refer to its dynamic expression, not just revealing base consciousness. Amṛtānanda utilizes this philosophical framework in his commentary upon the *YH*: "I rest on the mode of consciousness that manifests in the distinctive forms corresponding to each and every entity with the character of space, time, and materiality."[14]

Saṅketa *and Schema*

The parameters in which *saṅketa* functions as a system of meaning are as follows: (1) exalted or refined experience is something that is always present but merely obscured due to misconception, not something new; (2) the framework by means of which we recognize reality needs to be replaced; and (3) meticulous construction by means of visualization practices can reprogram our body-mind complex and alter our cognitive framework as well as our somatic responses. In other words, freedom from both biological and cultural constructions in order to directly encounter base consciousness is possible. The altered framework anticipates new meaning to experiences while revealing the basis of each effulgent instance of consciousness. The argument is to redefine the schema by which we cognize the world and add new schemas to interpret our experience. This 'seeing as' (*bhāvanā*) or substituting the value for our experiences is synonymous with the process of 'assimilation' (*saṃhāra*), integrating new information into existing schemas. For example, when tantras assign new meaning for the existing objects, or when the ritual objects are 'viewed as' something else, a new value incorporates into the existing schema. Tantras also 'accommodate'

(*antarbhāva*) new schemas and alter the existing ones when they introduce 'geometric forms' (*cakra*s) and 'corporeal gestures' (*mudrā*s).

If schemas are basic units of knowledge that relate to all aspects of the world, tantras utilize schemas to assimilate new meanings, to alter and reshape existing ones. If schemas are to comprehend and interpret information, tantric visualization manipulates existing schemas and introduces new categories to our cognitive mechanisms of representation. Tantras are not only focused on 'representing' the basic mode of consciousness, as they intend to give direct exposure to this pre-conditioned state. This compares to Husserl (1983, p. 44):

> Every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily . . . offered *to us* in 'intuition' is to be accepted simply as what is presented as being, *but also* only within the limits in which it is presented there.

In the case of tantric visualization, it is not directed just to modify the structure of representation. Visualization practices are often identified as 'remembering'.[15] The consciousness that emerges as a consequence of visualization, being a synthesis of perception and memory, is irreducible to a singular form. As it is this synthetic consciousness that is being represented in visualization practices, the objective of visualization is to frame existing information in a new light, to transform judgment and layer new meaning, and not to erase it. Seeing a rock is not visualization; seeing a rock as the phallic representation of Śiva, for instance, is visualization. But this added value merely sees something differently. There is more to tantric representation. Manipulation of the schema sees things anew and brackets some information to focus on specific aspects while visualizing an entity. This shift of perception or seeing differently, tantras argue, opens up the possibility for subjects to confront their own subjectivity and their alignment with the world. Just as we can reeducate our taste buds and modify our perception of what is delicious and what is disgusting, or alter the aesthetic perception of one thing as appealing and another as repellent, the argument goes, we can likewise modify our judgment of pleasure and pain, or our evaluation of something as sacred or profane. All this is carried out by manipulating the schema. As a consequence, just as we can have an 'acquired taste' for something, we can also have an 'acquired gaze' for seeing reality afresh.

In agreement with constructivism, tantric philosophers maintain that everyday experiences are shaped by language and imagination. They also maintain that what is given in the mode of experience is not just what is experienced or objectified. The reflexive gaze (*vimarśa*) is constantly appraising experiences, making even the painful experiences worth savoring. Furthermore, tantric visualizations reframe the schema to train subjects to confront their own mental conditioning to allow them to liberate themselves from the prison of their mind. Even though there is no explicit reference for

whether concepts are image-like or language-like, tantric texts appear to acknowledge that concepts have both these properties.

If mantras exploit the language-like structure of conceptualization, maṇḍalas and other images assist in retraining the cognitive image processing. Tantras assign multiple 'meanings' (*artha*) for a single mantra to extend the cognitive limits of representation. In this sense, mantras and maṇḍalas function like mnemonic devices, cognitive templates that remind subjects of different objects. Tantric texts use single phonemes to represent different categories or various deities, and when they use complex phonetic structures or groups of such structures, these either refer to a layered reference or are acronyms representing various deities and other mantras. Essentially, these phonemes or images are templates that engage multiple cognitive functions. Visualization is an act of creating new structure, not just a 'standing for' relation for speech and form. It is in this act of creating new forms that the aspirant encounters the intricate nature of consciousness as creativity, where substantial transformation occurs.

In tantras, the category 'indication' (*saṅketa*) captures both natural and non-natural signs. Whether it is a "must stop" red traffic light or the gathering of clouds indicating rain, the term *saṅketa* captures them all. There is no categorical difference when it comes to *saṅketa* whether it is the physical symptom of sneezing for flu or tears for sorrow. Our common language is a subset of the entire paradigm of representation where corporeal modes, any form of signs, gestures, and speech, whether in terms of meaningful words or a screech for pain, are all *saṅketa*. Tantric discourse on gestures (*mudrā*) is particularly relevant for addressing indication. The gestures of threatening (*tarjanī*), of giving (*dāna*) or of fearlessness (*abhaya*), when applied in visualization, allow the subject to feel protected and blessed, not just to 'represent' specific concepts. Gestures evoke feelings directly, mirroring the cognitive states of the subject displaying these gestures. Just as with facial gestures, hand gestures are comprehended, for example someone calling, stopping, or showing the middle finger. Emotions and actions reciprocate the gestures without needing propositional attitudes to decipher them. If concepts mediate our reaction, they are more basic than semantic.

To conclude, there is no categorical difference between gestures and verbal expression, only that the latter gains complexity and propositional structure. Feelings and emotional states can function as gestures, suggesting physical and mental conditions. Tantric discourse on *saṅketa* includes every mode of representation, whether it is presenting again, reproducing early states of being, mirroring, copying, or simulating these modes.

Threefold Indication in Yoginīhṛdaya (YH)
The modes of representation in mimetic, iconic, or propositional forms are common to all tantric practices. Each of these modes can be traced in any

of the representations by means of the body, speech, and mind. The scope of bodily gestures extends beyond the body and encompasses the ritual objects and the altar. The practitioner acts out, re-lives, and by means of representation repeatedly plays out exalted modes of mystical experience. What begins from a sign-reference system, such as rice mixed with vermilion powder, a commixture of white seeds and red drops, suggesting the two principles of male and female, does not remain a propositional attitude but becomes lived and felt, blurring the boundaries of subject and object. When used in rituals, cups and ladles are no longer merely cups and ladles, butter and sesame seeds are not the offering, and fire is no longer just fire. Even the priest is not a priest but stands for the benefactor facilitating the ritual. By assigning new meaning to ritual acts, be it gestures displayed, worship of the circle of deities in the *cakra*s, or the performance of fire rituals, tantric rituals aim to present again modes of experience cultivated by sustained visualization, and not just to place new meaning upon existing signs.

For economy, I apply a single text, the *Yoginīhṛdaya* (*YH*), to discuss tantric representation. Tantric discourse on the *cakra* or the geometric forms in *YH* (chapter 1) relates to the discourse on body, in particular the significance of gestures. Even though gestures essentially are acted out, embodied, and belong to mimetic representation, the *YH* formulates these in light of monistic Śākta philosophy to re-live basic forms of unitive experience. The second chapter in the *YH* on the mantra is on speech. Beginning from propositional representation, the practice traces back to the elemental forms of mystical experience and affirms repeated presentation of experiences. By comprehending mental correlates, it is possible to understand the structure of the text. For example, the last chapter of the *YH* concerns ritual (*pūjā*). Amṛtānanda explains that the three chapters signify 'illumination' (*prakāśa*), reflexivity (*vimarśa*), and the fusion of both (*sāmarasya*).[16] The mind, in this structure, is the fusion of body and speech, and these three constitute the scope of representation. It is in the geometric forms (*cakra*), speech (*mantra*), and rituals (*pūjā*) that body and speech are meaningful and integral aspects of sign-reference relations. The maṇḍala extended in the external space thus relates to the surge of somatic experiences, with each nexus in a maṇḍala standing for a distinctive emotional and cognitive correlate, making the maṇḍala a mesocosm, a platform for reflecting the entire felt domain within the body:

> When the absolute potential that manifests in the form of the world with its own will [of consciousness] reflexively cognizes (*paśyet*) its own blossoming, that is when the maṇḍala or the totality (*cakra*)[17] comes into being.[18]

The gestures (*mudrā*), accordingly, evoke the elemental form of bliss and consciousness and dissolve dichotomies that determine commonsense experience. The objective, again, is to relive the unitive experiences cultivated through sustained visualization:

> When the power of reflexivity wills itself to play in the form of the world, it then becomes the power of action and it enjoys (*mud*) the world that is its own transformation, by the characteristics of the transcendental bliss and awareness, and it melts (*drāvaṇa*) in the form of being commingled, and so this attains the name of *mudrā* or gesture.[19]

Whether by visualizing and internalizing the ritual space by means of maṇḍalas or enacting and reliving ritualized experience by means of gesture, tantras meticulously reinforce the idea that we can repeat or 'present again and again' intimate forms of experience through ritualization. These experiences transform the subject's self-image as well as participation in the world. It is in the tantric practice that even copulation becomes a form of gesture; the partner becomes *mudrā*, as the sexual union here enacts divine copulation, the unfolding and enfolding of the cosmos.

The corporeal representation expressed in the first chapter of the *YH* provides the pretext for speech. The second section, the 'indication of mantras' (*mantrasaṅketa*), captures this expressiveness by means of layering meanings that stem from the syllables and evolve into propositional structure. Mantra is explicitly linked to mentation, thinking. There are three domains of this mentation: speech, subjectivity, and inter-subjectivity. The second chapter of the *YH* addresses the sixfold meanings (*artha*) of the mantric speech whereby two initial 'meanings' adopt the formal sign-reference system. The first, *bhāvārtha*, is the commonly understood word-meaning. The second, *sampradāyārtha*, relates to the speaker's specified meaning, as it is the given meaning within a closed circle. This is why the text says, "the traditional meaning rests on the mouth of the preceptor" (*YH* II.26). In other words, both common use and specific sense are categorized as literal meaning because they both follow the same sign-reference system. Tantric meaning systems are unique by granting phonemes complete meaning, similarly to sentences. What a mantra means, in this light, is additional to what the specific phonemes mean. Meaning cannot be exhausted by breaking words into phonemes and dividing even the syllables into partial phonemes (*ardha-mātrā*).

Distinct from representing the manifest world, two deeper layers of meaning (*artha*) relate to transforming the subjective schema. The metaphysical background is that consciousness is inherently differentiating while the course of visualization is to overcome this differentiation in both intersubjective and subject-object relationships. The course begins with first seeking oneness between the two dialogical subjects, for example teacher and student, or speaker and listener. And this extends to the absent subject, the third person, presented in the form of a deity. This is not a mere 're-presentation' but an in-between stage, as the subject is present and is consciously seeking oneness with what is represented, the second and third persons.[20]

Just as the preceding two exercises relate to imposing new meaning and altering the schema by means of which the subject actualizes himself and appropriates other subjects, the final two 'meanings' or modes of visualization relate to reducing the scope of subjective experience and eventually liberating consciousness from the limitations of subjectivity. The first step, explained in terms of *sarvarahasyārtha*, relates to magnifying subjective experience within an infinitesimal locale within the body, for example a triangular space inside the base *cakra*.[21] The aspirant then focuses on the final meaning, *mahātattvārtha*, wherein the subject merges into the absolute without referentiality. In terms of the *YH*, this is the state of

> Merging of the self in the essential nature that is both transcendent and immanent, that is devoid of aspects, very subtle and outside of indication, lacking any existing entity (*bhāva*), beyond the empty space, the absolute entity comprised merely of illumination and bliss.[22]

Meaning (*artha*), in this account, is about transforming experience. A real comprehension of meaning of mystical language is not possible without subjugating every mode of experience. Among six 'meanings' identified here, the four higher levels of meaning do not function in the same system of sign and reference but relate instead to altering the schema or manipulating the sign. The argument is that, as long as we seek meaning within the confinement of sign and reference, we cannot 'present' ourselves to the truth, and our experiences will always be representations or resemblances. Tantras, by deploying a complex system of suggestion (*saṅketa*), seek to restructure subjective experience, to comprehend meaning beyond mere reassignment of value upon objects.

The third 'indication' in the chapter on ritual worship (*pūjā*) corresponds to the realm of active engagement in the world and also relates to the mind. This is why the chapter begins with threefold ritual worship: the supreme form of ritual is abiding in non-dual nature, the second form of ritual relates to visualizing the *cakra*s internally, and only the final form relates to external worship. Both mind and body are accordingly framed within the ritual paradigm. If external rituals are the expression of the inner mental state, externality per se is the blossoming of the mind. The *YH* uses ritual to affirm this. By realigning bodily schema and assigning new meaning to the ritual objects that in themselves function as templates for the world of objects and things, the chapter on worship seeks to transform the way active participation in the world is experienced.

Fundamentally, individuation is a consequence of three layers of obscuration (*mala*) that delimit our volition (*āṇava*), cognition (*māyīya*), and action (*kārma*). Our being in the world, our embodied experiences, and our intersubjective engagement are all conditioned by these delimiting factors. The objective of tantric visualization is to reprogram habitual modes that schematize our consciousness and experience the world. Bodily state,

external gestures, or corporeal modes, in this light, do not contrast against mental modes. There is categorically no difference here between gestural expression and mental representation. At the end, the other, the transcendent, the deity being worshipped, is no different than the worshipping subject. Tantras therefore first confront the limitations imposed on our physicality by introducing a category of self-worship (*svātmapūjā*): "One who has worshipped himself by [accepting] the substances that please the sensory faculties."[23] Accordingly, accepting physical pleasure as part of self-recognition provides the foundation for proceeding with worship of the divine.

Even the phonemes or mantras installed in the body in the ritual act of 'grounding' (*nyāsa*) follow the same philosophy of representation. By establishing a complex ritual correlation between the body and syllables, the aspirant is supposed to 'see' the syllables while being aware of their limbs. For instance, if someone were to re-condition the body parts from head to toe in alphabetical order from A to Z, the subject should have his or her bodily awareness transformed into this phonetic structure. Through deep programming of the correlation between body parts and the phonemes, aspirants present the body parts to their mind by recalling different phonemes, similar to representing reality by means of language. The practice advances with finding a correlation between the body and the cosmos. It is then that the aspirants can assume their body and the entire existence of all categories to be their seat (*āsana*).[24] Against this backdrop, ritual worship relates to transforming commonsense experience into primordial consciousness:

> *Pūjā* is not what makes our mind attained by means of flowers etc. It actually is the submerging [of the mind] with total ardor in the supreme void that is expunged of all conceptualizations.[25]

Making libations into fire becomes a template for the following visualization:

> In the supreme effulgence that is eager to project and retrieve the world, one should offer in the face of the *kuṇḍalinī* the functions of the rays [of sensory faculties] by means of the mind. Making this state of being expunged of the mind as the ladle, [one should visualize] oneness between the states of subject and object, and what manifests in this churning [of the oneness between subject and object], that should be the libation object. Having repeatedly offered [this libation object] when the aspirant has the body comprised of innate bliss, he should worship the Śrīcakra as having the form of the expression of one's own consciousness.[26]

This also outlines the final objective of this sophisticated visualization, the oneness between subject and object: "One should live happily by contemplating the oneness between I-ness and this-ness."[27]

Take-Home Lessons about Ritual-Meditative Representation that Transforms
Selective reading to understand tantric representation is insufficient, as tantras relate to a wide range of rituals, dance, gestures, and, in particular, a variety of visualization practices. By mimesis, tantras do not just convey meaning but act it out. When we engage tantric semiotics, we come to realize that ritual objects and tools are extensions of the mind, and the altar is the extended body of the practitioner. By the use of images and maṇḍalas, tantras use iconic representation where 'stand for' relation becomes explicit. At the same time, articulated mantras and ritual narratives as well as over-coating philosophies provide examples for propositional representation. The big question is, what is the objective behind varied forms of representation in tantras? From the non-dual tantric paradigm, these representations relate to different stages of human consciousness: semantic representation relates to the external world where the objective is to reverse the gaze from outside to within or use what is represented, whether mantras or ritualized reflections, as devices to retrieve the mind from its outward flow. Representations reengage the schema and create or alter existing ones when playing with images. They reprogram our sign-reference structure and relive basic stages of human consciousness before differentiation into subject and object.

In tantras, the objective of this meticulous representation is to capture everyday consciousness, to uncover and engage with its most basic form before being semantically and culturally constructed, and it is not to progress toward externality. In essence it is about unlearning the ways we have trained our mind to respond, to interpret, and to experience certain events or things. To achieve these goals, tantras utilize existing signs and symbols and create new ones or provide new meanings for the existing ones. Finally, tantric representation is about the inner modes of experience. Rather than describing objects, they inscribe feelings and modes of being, reconstituting the parameters of subject and object. Most importantly, tantras are not developing new semiotics to describe reality but inscribing their worldview into our mind, to make us relive our primordial, original experience. The mechanism of 'indication' (*saṅketa*) is thus to recover unitive experiences and to gain freedom from the constructed nature of representation. This is in order to present, yet again, the blissful state of being and awareness.

Notes

1 – This is one of the core visualization (*dhāraṇā*) practices in the *Vijñānabhairava*. For instance, see verse 70 (recollection of sexual bliss).

2 – For Gotama, a word represents both the universal and the image as well as the external object (*vyaktyākṛtijātayas tu padārthaḥ* | [Nyāyasūtra

II.2.68]). Since *ākṛti* here is a mental representation, we can identify this as a schema. Philosophical concepts like this are presumed in contemplative discourse. For instance, when the Vyāsa commentary upon the *Yogasūtra* (III.17) addresses indication (*saṅketa*), it defines it as of the character of memory, where the word and meaning are mutually superimposed (*saṅketas tu padapadārthayor itaretarādhyāsarūpaḥ smṛtyātmakaḥ* |). In this context, the Vyāsa-commentary also itemizes the reference for a word, e.g. cow, as the word cow, the external object, and the present-tense consciousness of cow (*gaur iti śabdo gaur ity artho gaur iti jñānam. . .*).

3 – For a detailed analysis of *bhāvanā* and cultivation in light of visualization, see Timalsina 2015a and 2015b.

4 – For this reading, see *Bhāvanopaniṣad* 22–25.

5 – There are two separate verbal roots, $\sqrt{kita}$ *nivāse* and $\sqrt{kita}$ *jñāne*, from which the term is derived. *Saṅketa* = *saṃ* + $\sqrt{kita}$ + *ghañ*.

6 – *manogatabhāvavyañjanāya kṛto hastādiceṣṭāviśeṣaḥ* | (Jhalakikar, p. 904). Jhalakikar assigns this definition to dramatology. In fact, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata is historically one of the earliest texts that addresses hand and corporeal gestures in depth.

7 – The component of mutual agreement comes in Amṛtānanda's commentary on the *YH*: *yathā kṛtasamayau kāminīkāmukau yatra kvāpi vasataḥ evam asmin* (Dīpikā, *YH* I.6–7).

8 – For instance, the phoneme '*ka*' can mean Brahmā, or the phoneme '*ra*' can refer to the element fire. But the same phonemes can refer on other occasions to different deities, different weapons, and even some geometric shapes.

9 – If we explore the synonyms of the term *saṅketa*, the application of 'indicated' (*sūcita*) seems much closer to the concept of suggestion (*dhvani*). For example, Amṛtānanda initiates the text with the premise that his project is "to reveal the meanings that are suggested" (*sūcitān arthān vyaktīkartum. . .* [Amṛtānanda, *YH* I, Benedictory verse 5]).

10 – *idaṃ padam amum arthaṃ bodhayatv ity asmāc chabdād ayam artho boddhavyaḥ iti vecchā* | (Jhalakikar, p. 903).

11 – Sanskrit semantics rests on the threefold powers of speech: literal meaning (*abhidhā*), indication (*lakṣanā*), and *vyañjanā* or suggestion. While tantric texts acknowledge this tri-partite meaning system, they add new structures. But all of them are subsumed within *saṅketa*.

12 – William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917).

13 – *yad vastu yāvat tatra na manaḥ pravartate tat tāvatkālam atīndriyago-caraṃ bhavati | asya tu sarvadā manovāgindriyātītatvān mahāguhyat-vam |* (Dīpikā of Amṛtānanda on *YH* I.2–3).

14 – *deśakālapadārthātmā yad yad vastu yathā tathā | tattadrūpeṇa yā bhāti tāṃ śraye sāṃvidīṃ kalām ||* (cited in Dīpikā of Amṛtānanda, *YH* I.2–3).

15 – The application of 'should recollect' (*smaret* or *anusmaret*) is quite common in tantric literature when prescribing visualization.

16 – I derive this understanding from the statement: *yathā prakā-śavimarśasāmarasyarūpiṇī parā asyās trividhaḥ saṅketaḥ |* (Dīpikā on *YH* I.6–7).

17 – I am interpreting *cakra* as totality on the basis of Amṛtānanda's exposition: *cakrasya viśvamayasya*, of *cakra* that is of the character of the totality. Even the common use of the term *cakra* is for '*samūha*' or collection.

18 – *yadā sā paramā śaktiḥ svecchayā viśvarūpiṇī || 9 || sphurattām ātmanaḥ paśyet tadā cakrasya saṃbhavaḥ |* (*Yoginīhṛdaya* I.9cd and 10ab).

19 – *yadā vimarśaśaktiḥ viśvarūpeṇa vihartum icchati tadā kriyāśaktir bhūtvā svavikārabhūtasya viśvasya paracidānandalakṣaṇena modanena tadaikarasyalakṣaṇena drāvaṇena ca mudrākhyām āpannetyarthaḥ |* (Dīpikā on *YH* I.57–58).

20 – I have in mind two higher meanings (*artha*) prescribed in *YH* when discussing the programming of the subjective field. *Nigarbhārtha* relates to seeking oneness among the deity, the preceptor, and the aspirant (*YH* II.48). This takes subjectivity as plastic, something that can be manipulated, and something that can escape the embodied horizon and enclose the other. This expansion continues further in *kaulikārtha*, as in this the aspirant seeks oneness among the *cakra*, deity, mantra, the teacher, and the self (*YH* II. 51–52).

21 – *mūlādhāre taḍidrūpe vāgbhavākāratāṃ gate |* (*YH* II.69). *eṣā svātmeti buddhis tu rahasyārtho maheśvari ||* (*YH* II.72).

22 – *niṣkale parame sūkṣme nirlakṣye bhāvavarjite ||* (*YH* II.73) *|| vyomātīte pare tattve prakāśānandavigrahe | viśvottīrṇe viśvamaye tattve svātma-niyojanam ||* (*YH* II.74).

23 – *indriyaprīṇanadravyair vihitasvātmapūjanaḥ ||* (*YH* III.7cd).

24 – *ṣaṭtriṃśattattvaparyantam āsanaṃ pariklpya ca |* (*YH* III.93ab).

25 – *pūjā nāma na puṣpādyair yā matiḥ kriyate dṛḍhā | nirvikalpe mahāvyomni sā pūjā hy ādarāl layaḥ ||* (*Vijñānabhairava* 147).

26 – *mahāprakāśe viśvasya saṃhāravamanodyate | marīcivṛttīr juhuyān manasā kuṇḍalīmukhe ||* (*YH* III.109). *ahantedantayor aikyam unmanyāṃ sruci kalpitam | mathanodrekasambhūtaṃ vasturūpaṃ mahāhaviḥ ||* (*YH* III.110). *hutvā hutvā svayaṃ caiva sahajānandavigrahaḥ | svaprathāprasarākāraṃ śrīcakraṃ pūjayet sudhīḥ ||* (*YH* III.111cd).

27 – *ahentedantayor ayikyaṃ bhāvayan viharet sukham |* (*YH* III.201ab).

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