



# Developing and Understanding Mantra: A Movement from Veda to Tantra

Stephen Brown, 2004

Advised by D.R. Brooks, Ph.D.

Department of Religion

**T**his paper examines the use of mantra in two separate but parallel traditions: śaivism and śāktism. “Śaivism” refers to traditions that follow the Hindu god Siva, while “Śaivism” refers to traditions that worship Sakti (lit. power), the goddess consort of the Lord Siva. Both of these systems reside within a meta-category known as Hindu tantrism. Hindu Tantrism itself is a refinement of and a response to the ideas advanced by upaniṣadic and yogic philosophy. The upaniṣadic philosophy is historically paralleled to Buddhism in what is known as India’s axial age from 600 to 100 B.C.E. Yogic (lit. to yoke or control) philosophy is a tradition which takes the intellectual advances of the upaniṣads and layers upon them a series of physical and meditative practices.

Śaivite scholar Paul Muller-Ortega once said “The mantra is not an arbitrary set of syllables, and no amount of secondary meaning built onto a set of arbitrary syllables will make it a mantra. The mantra is a powerful vehicle you hop on and ride straight into enlightenment.” This statement is rooted in a discussion of the opposing views of southern śākta tantrism and the “Kashmiri” Śaiva tantrism on the issue of what a mantra is and how it functions. Muller is arguing that the southern śākta tradition of using mantras with no “intrinsic” meaning and literally “layering” meaning upon arbitrary syllables as a form of mantric practice is distant and perhaps even inexplicable from the “Kashmiri” Śaivite perspective. Rather, the Śaivite mantra is thought to be literally a manifestation of śiva consciousness that functions as a vehicle to ascend into the heart of śiva. This is the very thesis I will test: What exactly is the nature of the Śaiva mantra theory and practice? Does Śaiva philosophy directly suggest the mantra is a tool itself empowered, or does it actually believe it is the understanding of the mantra that functions to create freedom consciousness? As a matter of clarification, this is not an attempt to understand the “sonic” nature of reality, described by Andre Padoux as “vāc”, with its multiple layers of realism.

Rather, this is meant to be a detailed study of Mantra and an investigation of mantra as a specific sort of tool for expanding consciousness.

## Developing and Understanding Mantra: A movement from Veda to Tantra

Padoux quotes the *Principals of Tantra*: “From the mother’s womb to the funeral pyre, a Hindu literally lives and dies in a Mantra.” This quote is likely, as Padoux says, a “pompous” one. It strikes me as being filled with the religio-centrist and religio-jingoistic attitude common to all early and much modern scholarship on eastern religion. This statement can easily be interpreted in at least two ways: first, as an insulting commentary on the “simpleton” Hindu, content to say the functional equivalent of “open sesame” at each moment of their lives in a false belief that they control their world; second, and I think perhaps more instructively, this statement reveals the tendency of the Indian mind to rely on an efficacious praxis which appears to the outsider to be an inane set of meaningless utterances, known in the tradition as mantra.

## Veda Mantra

The Veda are initially a set of stories and “myths” written as hymns to be sung. As Vedism ages and the language of the Veda becomes too culturally distant to be meaningful to those hearing it, there develops a highly philosophical system of sonic significance attached to the verses that make up the Veda. It seems clear in reading the content of the Veda that they are in fact telling a story, and not one necessarily designed to function “mantrically” on an obvious level. Whether or not the development of mantraśāstra [science of mantra] is contemporaneous with the reduction of knowledge of Vedic language is a highly debated point. There is undoubtedly a “sonically” affective sound in the recitation of the Veda; what is less clear however, is whether this is a function of the Veda acting as poetry or Veda acting as mantra. The Veda comes to be spoken of as the sonic mirror of the cosmic

structure of the universe. The recitation of the Veda at a certain moment seemingly shifts from a series of hymns sung to praise and pacify a set of marauding war-gods to a set of mantras sung to ritually advance the creation and maintenance of the universe. Vedic mantra evolves from an explication of and story about what Eliade calls *in ill tempore* (in the beginning time) to an enactment and bringing about of that *in illo tempore*. This is mantra at its infantile stage, slowly defining and building itself from a set of pre-existing but not necessarily related building blocks.

### Upaniṣad/bhakti/yoga

Subsequent to the Veda, Mantras take on two basic forms. There is the familiar “om / dative nominal / word of praise” or some combination thereof, i.e. “Om Namah śivāya”. Also quite common is the considerably less formulaic descriptive mantra which usually combines a list of attributes of the deity supplicated and a proclamation of devotion or a request of some sort of boon. These represent a second stage in mantric development. These mantras are specifically designed to be intoned [audibly and inaudibly] and are intrinsically empowered; this stands in contradistinction to the Veda which is empowered by a connection to the “justified and ancient.” It is in this period [known as ‘classical’ Hinduism] that mantras assume their modern form. It is during the upaniṣadic and yogic revolution that mantra is first used as a meditational tool. Mantra comes to be described as *individually* soteriological through its use as a meditational tool. The mantras of yoga develop into tantric mantra, which takes these forms as well as a quintessentially tantric third: the bija mantra.

### Tantra

The bija (lit. seed) mantra is a series of syllables which have no apparent meaning to the uninitiated. The difference between śākta and śaiva uses of these bija mantras may not be quite as broad as our introduction implied. Both traditions use these apparently incoherent strings of syllables as meditational and ritual tools. The bijas themselves are so difficult to understand that the greater discussion lies in how they are used and talked about in these two traditions respectively. The śāktas, as stated earlier, have a tradition of layering a series of meanings onto each of the particular syllables of their many mantras, the foremost of which in the śrīvidya, a tradition prevalent in South India, is the kādi śrīvidya: “क ए ई ल ह्रीं ह स क ह ल ह्रीं स क ल ह्रीं.” An example of this is the syllable “hrīm̐”: it is said to represent the earth and its goddess bhūvaneśvarī; hrīm̐ also represents a portion of the gāyatrī: dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt. It is also understood as breaking down into four individual characters each of which represents a state of consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

Are we to here suggest that the śaivas do not elaborate on the meaning of their seed mantras? No, in fact, they often associate the syllables with many of the same deities and elements as their śākta counterparts and have a tradition of nuancing mantras greatly. What then is the difference? The difference is in the application

and discussion of mantric meaning. For the śākta, it is in fact, the meaning layered upon the syllables that is the key to the practice of the mantra. The practice of reciting the mantra is literally placing the mantra on the body (nyāsa) and then placing each of the attendant deities and concepts on those places of the individual syllables with each repetition of the mantra “ka e I la...etc.” In the śaiva philosophy, these mantras are described and given extensive subtle meaning. The key to grasping the śākta/śaiva separation lies in two words: practice and philosophy. In the *practice* of the śrīvidya the attendant meaning and understanding of the mantra takes precedence as the actual vehicle of accomplishment, much like the negative dialectic in Nagarjuna’s Buddhist path, one must become a “philosopher king” to achieve enlightenment. In śaivism the discussion of the symbolism of mantra is relegated to *philosophy* and systematically isolated from the practice. In fact, in the śaiva tradition, it is the actual mantra and its inherent power that is the vehicle, not a highly intellectualized endeavor to build the theological worldview onto a set of syllables seen in the śrīvidya.

### Mantra in the General

How can the preceding discussion be tied back into a greater understanding of mantra? It can be used to inform our discussion of how mantra develops from songs sung to empowered mantras used for liberation. Padoux makes the claim that mantric development from story-telling songs to incoherent syllabic combinations can be seen as a historical evolution towards the innermost or silent (tūṣṇīm) mantra because of the proclivity of yogic and tantric traditions to vaunt the silent and innermost recitation of mantras as the highest form of recitation.<sup>2</sup> However, the silent and higher forms of mantra are not a “late” development. In fact the concept of multi-valent mantric practice is quite well defined by the late upaniṣadic or early yogic period. Not only are the ideas developed but the traditional preference for the silent is well established.<sup>3</sup> I cannot presume Padoux’s intention for that particular claim, but I think it pushes hard into the traditional tendency of sympathetic scholars to say “x is a movement towards the increasingly subtle.” In fact, I think quite the opposite is the case. The evolution of less and less grammatically coherent mantras does not indicate a move towards silence and an increase in subtlety, but I posit rather that it suggests a movement towards a more advanced concept of the function of mantra and an increase in the “realism” and gross function of mantra. In the Vedic period the mantra moves the universe invisibly and the ritual in which it is used provides the sacrificer with a set of [often] intangible results. The yogic and tantric revolutions bring about a set of mantras that violently<sup>1</sup> and immediately go about transforming the mind, body, and subtle layers of the reciter’s being. To quote Douglas Brooks on the matter: “Hindus resort to the unseen only under duress.” The movement of mantras can be seen as mirroring this greater traditional movement towards concretizing experience and results in a replicable and reliable way.

## Grasping at the structural and theoretical straws of mantra

Important in improving our understanding of mantra, is delineating where each of these mantras get their respective authority. The Veda derives its authority by proceeding from the mouth of god. It is referred to as the śruti, the heard. These Vedas were transmitted by the lord to the Maharsis who transmitted it to the Brahmins, who transmit it back to god in their chanting. So here, the authority of these “mantras” is placed not only long ago and far away, but its use is limited to the Brahminical caste. This mantra is cast into an inevitable cycle of sonic circularity. That is to say, the mantra in the Vedic sense is not a vehicle, it is not a tool, it is not itself *efficient*; rather, it is a set of intonations uttered by a set of officiants, the first of which is god, the latest of which are his [caste preferred] descendants. Here then, the mantra can be seen as an exclusive religious privilege, used to restrict access to religious power socially.

The mantra of upaniṣadic and later Hinduism derives its authority by proceeding from *efficacy* in application. The mantra may be said to come from some god i.e. “this very mantra was given to swami x by the lord x himself.” The tantric mantra gains meaning by, as Muller-Ortega puts it “...[tending] automatically to move to its own source.”<sup>4</sup> Here not only does the mantra come *from* śiva, it is in fact the substance *of* śiva, and thus closes in increasingly smaller concentric circles on itself [and increasingly larger concentric circles to encompass itself]. Additionally, these mantras are themselves efficient and are not caste and birth restricted. The mantra here can be given to the initiated, or the uninitiated by way of hearing, or may spontaneously arise in the mind of an individual this is known as a svabhava [self-becoming] mantra.

Padoux claims that the illocutionary power of mantra is not inherent but rather socially bound. He says “mantras, the uses of which are strictly codified, have, mutatis mutandis, no other efficacy than that ascribed to them by the Hindu, Jain, or Buddhist

traditions to which they belong and within the ritual prescribed by these traditions.”<sup>2a</sup> This claim is somewhat unsalutary, however. Mantra is certainly in many cases ritually linked and specific to a moment in a ritual; however, mantra is not an exclusively ritual tool. Mantras can be used as interruptive protectorates, meditative tools, greetings and hundreds of other purposes. The practice of mantra best known in the west is the recitation of mantras [jāpa] as a self-sufficient practice. Mantra repetition, while clearly a practice, cannot necessarily be cast into the set of actions known as “ritual.” This all goes towards replying to Padoux’s argument that mantra is culturally bound. The theory of mantra, especially when considering the possibility of the svabhava mantra, suggests that the mantra must have some self-possessed efficacy and intention beyond the things thought and said about it.

On the issue of appropriating mantra Padoux says:

*We should never forget... (1) Mantras are efficient forms of speech within a particular tradition, where speech is conceived of within a particular mythico-religious framework. If we pluck them from this cultural milieu, which is their nourishing soil, is “the luminous bud of mantra,” as A. Avalon used to say, likely to survive” One may well doubt it. (2) We must remember that mantras, even in their higher, supposedly redemptive forms, are always part of a precise and compulsory ritual context, outside of which they are useless and powerless. A mantra may be a liberating word but only in accordance to precise and binding rules.*<sup>2b</sup>

Padoux here attempts to reduce mantra into something less self-efficacious than in fact it is. I don’t want to take up a discussion of whether or not the west can reasonably appropriate mantra, but I do have issue with his basic claims here. Mantras are not only valid in a particular mythico-religious framework. The west is the perfect example of this fact. There are two mantras that are very well known in the west, both of them referred to as mahāmantras “oṃ namaḥ śivāya” and “hare rāma hare rāma rāma rāma hare hare

hare kṛṣṇa hare kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa hare hare.” The first of these is a śaiva mantra that is given to each and ever person who goes to a Siddha Yoga program, in programs lead by Shivananda instructors, and in the teachings given nightly throughout the globe by a variety of modern gurus. The second, a vaiṣṇava mantra, is used by dozens of groups, but is best known as the popularly intoned initiator mantra of ISKCON a.k.a. the “Hare Krishnas.” In the Siddha Yoga case this mantra is given freely and with little more prescription than to use it as an implement of concentration or as a metrical controller for the breath in meditation. While the tradition has a series of advanced rituals based on the use of this mantra, is the initiation of a general mass into the mantra somehow inane because it is not attached to a strict set of ritual prescriptions? One would be forced by the simplest logic to say no. The tradition believes the mantra to have a life of its own. They understand the mantra to be capable of entering the mind and heart and voice of the initiate<sup>3</sup> and forcing it into a higher plane of consciousness and automatically beginning to open the doors of perception of the higher self.

The mantra is not a culturally bound set of words any more than love is limited to a specific instance of experiencing it. Padoux’s fault here is not being wrong, but rather being incomplete. It would be absurd to claim that mantra does not arise from culture, and that there is not a set of prescriptions about how mantras are to be utilized. However it would be equally absurd to claim [as Padoux does] that these are the only the functional characteristics of mantra. Mantra is a complex, multi-valent, linguistic and sonic tool to open consciousness to the experience of the heart of the universe, the individual self.

### The śaiva Mantra

मध्यजिह्वे स्फारितास्ये मध्ये निक्षिप्य  
चेतनाम् ।  
होच्चारम् मनसा कुर्वस् ततः शान्ते  
प्रलीयते ॥

*If one maintains the mouth widely open, keeping the inverted tongue at*

*the center and fixing the mind in the middle of the open mouth, and voices vowel-less ha mentally, he will be dissolved in peace.*  
VBT 81

### Is the śaiva mantra qualitatively different from other forms of mantra?

It is with some difficulty that we move into the second portion of our study, the śaiva aspect of mantra. We will focus exclusively on śaiva bija mantras. There are clearly a large set of mantras employed by the śaiva tradition which are not seed (bija) mantras, not the least of which is the well known “oṃ namaḥ śivāya” mantra. However bija mantras, being the most esoteric and important mantras in śaivism [to say nothing of a dearth of philosophy which is accessible on linguistically bound mantras], will effectively provide us with a basis for discussion of śaiva mantra.

Here we will address the question: what is the śaiva perspective on mantra, and how does mantra function in the śaiva system? Undoubtedly a good number of our previously expressed ideas about the freedom and self reliance of the mantra are rather mitigated and qualified by the strict ritual structure of śaivism. However, both Alper and Padoux stake a claim in their respective articles in the volume *Mantra* which is ultimately reductive. They want to claim that mantra can *only* be understood as limited, and can *only* be used in rule-bound environments, however the philosophical perspective of the Tantra simply does not support this thesis. The Tantra is rife with a set of comfortably unresolved controversies on any number of subjects, not the least of which is mantra. The Tantra wants to have it both ways. They want mantra to be an exclusively insider and ritual tool for specific application and implementation; yet, at the same moment, they want that same mantra to have the possibility of spontaneously entering the heart of an individual. This very fact is encoded into the tantric world-view. The Tantra claims the world to be the substance, the perception of the substance, and the enaction

of the perception and substance of that universe. As a result, the omnipresence of consciousness and its manifest forms of śiva and śakti leaves all limitation subject to change, and all experience of limitation subject to expansion. In his explication of the bija mantra sauḥ, Abhinava seems to suggest that the very practice of mantra can be free and natural in a sense, even though he is casting it in a specific ritual dimension. He says:

*... The nature of these three phonemes is that they are composed of three states of repose, respectively, in the knowable object (s), in the process of knowing (au) and in the knowing subject (ḥ). The Depending upon which state of repose one selects, the pronunciation extends as far as that phoneme alone. A threefold pronunciation therefore occurs.*

*Commentary on the paratrimśikalaghuvṛtti vs21-24p17.*

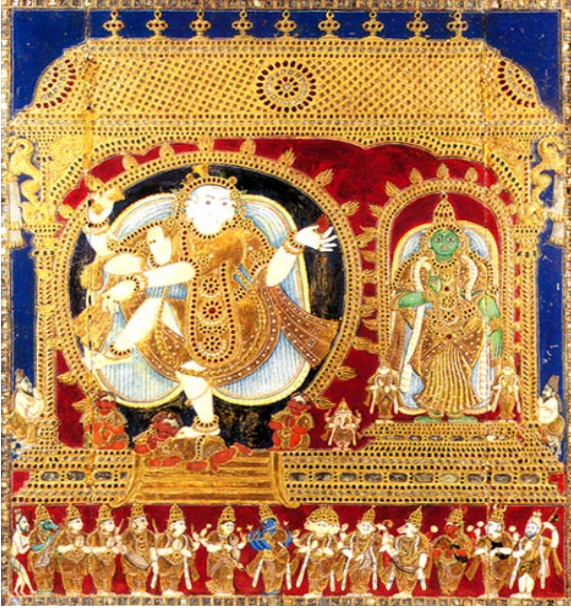
While the ritual contemplation of this mantra is an obvious dimension of what Abhinava is teaching, I think another level can be seen as well. This passage describes the mantra as expressing three levels of reality and reality-perception. These three levels of knowing and being are understood as coinciding and interexpressing. This is based on the interdependence of the three expressions “I will,” “I know” and “I act,” each of which co-arise in the proclamation of another. That is to say, one cannot make the statement “I know” without also invoking both “I will” and “I act.” Even the knowing is itself an act, the act is dependant on knowing, the knowing itself arises from the will to know, which is itself an act. The interconnectedness suggests a well woven web with no clear entrance and exit points. This sauḥ mantra is not only a mantra designed to bring about enlightenment, it is in fact an expression of the nature of the universe. The S is the contracted form of Sad, referring to knowable objects, or the manifest world. This S is linked to the sheath of mayā, which is the potential of manifestation. The Au represents the process of coming to know the nature of an object, the systematic reproval such that one



Shiva as the Supreme Lord with Parvati the Supreme Goddess and Manifest Shakti.

comes to know the true nature of that object, which is without aspect other than being. The ḥ represents the perspective, or rather the assumption of the perspective of Bhairava. This visarga, or emanation, ejaculation, pulsation, of Bhairava, is the playing with and manipulation of the S and Au as an experientable state.

Seeing this mantra thusly, as an expression of the natural state of the universe, we can also open doors on how it is, in fact, naturally empowered. The idea here is that not only can one open doors of perception with the mantra, but that doors of perception continuously open and close as a function of the nature of reality, and as such the nature of reality mirrors the mantra in the same way that the mantra mirrors reality. This is also mirrored in the nature of the individual. This state is expressed in kṣemarāja's pratyabhijñāhṛdayam sutras 3



Shiva Nataraja: A Medieval Temple Painting.

and 4:

तन्नानुरूपं ग्राह्यं ग्राहकं भेदात् ३  
चित्तिं सम्कोचात्मा चेतनो ऽपि संकुचित  
विश्वमयः ४

*The universe is manifold because of the differentiation of reciprocally adapted objects and subject.*

*The individual experient, in whom citi or consciousness is contracted has the universe as his body in a contracted form.*

PBH 3-4<sup>5</sup>

As a result of this coincidence of fact, nature thus acts as a mantra in one's experience of the world, constantly pulsating with the emissional power of śiva. This then causes the exact result expressed in the function of the mantra, consciousness feeds back on itself. The consciousness of the world pushes itself into the individual's experience causing an infinite expansion of consciousness. As kṣemarāja says in PBH vs. 15:

बललाभे विश्वमात्मसात्करोति १५

*When he acquires the inherent power of universal consciousness, the yogin assimilates the universe into himself.*

PBH 15<sup>6</sup>

The initiation described by this experience is in fact that highest form of initiation. This is recognized by the śaivas as the highest state of initiation, the so called samsiddhika "spontaneously perfected" state

where one is initiated by the śakti present in the heart as the true nature of the individual. Here the nature of the universe as manifest śakti interacts with the inner-knower such that the understanding and experience of the world as the emissional (visarga) power of śiva is spontaneously recognized. This spontaneous recognition is expressed as an expansion of the inner core, or the heart of the yogin. The final state of experience resulting from the expansion of that heart is described by kṣemarāja and expresses the connection between mantra and nature and individual in the final verse of the PBH:

तदा प्रकाशानन्द सार महामन्त्र वीर्यात्मक  
पूर्णाहन्ता वेशात्सदा सर्वं सर्गं संहार कारि  
निज संविदेवता चक्रेश्वरता प्राप्तिर्भवतीति  
शिवम् । २० । ॥

*Then, as a result of entering into the perfect I-consciousness or self, which is, in essence, consciousness and bliss, and is of the nature of power of the great mantra; there accrues the attainment of lordship over the wheel of the deities of consciousness which brings about all emanation and reabsorption of the universe. All this is the nature of śiva*

PBH 20<sup>7</sup>

So then perhaps this example of Abhinava's description of a particular mantra suggests the potential understanding of the mantra as innate and natural. Here we see that both dimensions of the mantra are at least recognizable in this passage, in that it is both ritually bound and it is unbound as it is the expression of pure śiva consciousness bursting forth.

### Śaivism and the science of mantra

Mantra must be seen as fitting into the greater structure of śaiva perspectives on language. Śaiva philosophy holds the experiential world and our convention of language used to describe it as being of the same substance. The entire world is seen as emanating forth from Śiva. The visarga described in the mantra sauh as pulsating and vibrating and emitting initially takes the form of light. As the pulsation (sphuratta) of

this light slows it moves from a photic emanation to a sonic emanation, a sounding forth of the cosmic or supreme word (parā vāk). This sounds at the moment of creation and extends through and beyond the present moment. The supreme word is said to descend successively through four stages: parā, paśyantī, madhyamā, and vaikhari. A brief discussion of each will be illuminating to our understanding of mantra.

### Parā

This is the state of undifferentiated śiva which descends into manifestation and yet remains unchanged and undifferentiated. This state is both that in which all other states manifest and that which becomes differentiated to create the manifold universe. Parā vāk is the very substance of the highest reality, and is luminous and pure consciousness. The nature of this parā vāk is that of an infinitely pulsating sound which creates by its very nature a variety of sounds. These sounds are then associated with language which are strained through the multitude of human consciousness to form conventional meaning in the form of phonemes which develop into language. As such, not only is the world of the substance of this undifferentiated, pulsating tone, all knowledge and understandings which use language are inevitably linked with this the highest possible plane. As such, all convention is given by Abhinava a transcendental correctness and realness. This level of parā is the very potential from which all sounds and manifest objects move, it is the ontological root of expression. So, it is precisely as Padoux says "parāvāc, from the standpoint of language as well as of manifestation, should not be regarded as an initial state of speech but as the basis of paśyantī, Madhyamā, and Vaikhari, which alone are actual stages."<sup>6a</sup>

### Paśyantī

This stage is literally the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural form of the root paś meaning "to see." It implies the first manifest stage of the transcendent form of speech. Paśyantī expresses the tendency of consciousness to "see" objects. It signifies the first level of

what could be called conventional duality. In this stage the mind tends away from itself, but there is not in fact an object for it to attach to, nor is there actually a differentiation in the unmitigated sounding forth of the parāvāc in the form of syllables and the like. This stage however, is both the key to freedom and the key to being bound in the tantric perspective. Paśyantī could perhaps best be described as ‘curiosity.’ This curiosity has both conventional and transcendental vectors. As a conventional vector, paśyantī can be seen as the motion towards a set of differentiated objects outside of one’s self. On the Transcendental, this very same level of curiosity can be seen as the desire and vehicle that moves towards the undifferentiated experience of consciousness. It would also be instructive to view this level as human will (iccha) supporting action and knowledge. As such, paśyantī is the level of human cognition and shows light upon the manifold experience of the differentiated world and on the luminous form of the single pointed vision of the goddess.

### Madhyamā

This stage is best described and translated as the middle. This stage represents a move away from differentiation. Here phonemes emerge and form words. The formation of words allows for the first time for the development of cognitive conceptualization and experience. It is here that one actually experiences their differentiation proposed in the level of Paśyantī as a set of concrete cognitive objects. However, these objects are not actually real as they do not have physical substance. Here exists the experience of real objects. Because the conventional experience of cognition is actually an experience of objects refracted and projected on the screen of personal perception, the day-to-day experience of human life takes place at this stage of middling. Harnessing the middle is harnessing the buddhi, manas and ahamkara to pursue an ascension of cognition into the supreme word. So we can see here that this level tends both towards transcendence and away from it at the same moment.

### Vaikharé

This stage is referred to by Padoux as “the non-supreme energy.”<sup>6b</sup> This is the level of physical and concrete manifestation. Here the delusionary power of speech causes the bringing about of a world bound and caught in the snare of absolute physicality. This physically manifest world is, for all of its delusional substantive form, actually only the contracted form of the supreme word.

### And again, Mantra

So we can see, even in this very basic discussion of speech, a number of tendencies that mirror the visarga or emmissional and spanda or vibrational aspect of the supreme consciousness. The pulsation of consciousness is seen as constantly expanding and contracting on a photic, sonic, and gross level. Mantra, as specifically chosen bits of speech, best represent this tendency of the very texture of reality (and unreality) to open and close upon itself. By using mantra, one can harness the tendency of sonic reality to force his own awareness towards the experience of an undifferentiated consciousness.

### Conclusions, implications, and ideas.

Our argument finds itself all too comfortably eschewing rules and ritual context. The ritual and rule complication is irrefutable and central to the tradition. The Tantra proposes a highly ritualistic universe and espouses a path which is highly ritually bound. I have found here an excellent point of entry into another study: what exactly is the ritual dimension of Tantra? Padoux and Alper both speak *ad nauseum* about this decidedly ritual bound understanding of mantra but never actually explicate that dimension. Does this suggest an all too common manifestation of the insider/outsider problem? The explication of an initiation based tradition by non-initiates seems to leave something to be desired. The texts of śaivism are intentionally ambiguous and encoded with a series of complex schemes available only to insiders. The secrecy of the sauḥ mantra is deftly

exposed by Muller in *Triadic Heart*, and appears to open up through a complex lens of ritual prescriptions that are not entirely obvious. Perhaps this suggests an inaccessibility of these ritual prescriptions to the modern world, in the disappearance of an initiated elite to show the ritual prescriptions. As a final suggestion, perhaps it is the case that the ritual dimension is intentionally obscured not to make it secret, but to confuse those who believe there is in fact a secret to the mantra, that is to say, to weed out the deluded. Shall I find a world where the mantra is in fact self-sufficient? Only time will tell.

- 
1. Brooks, Douglas. *Auspicious Wisdom*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 1990. p 90-100
  2. Feuerstein, Georg. *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*. Boston, MA: Shambala Publications, Inc. 1998.
  3. Muller-Ortega, Paul. *The Heart of Self-Recognition*. Unpublished, 2003. X 3
  4. Muller-Ortega, Paul. *Triadic Heart of Siva*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. 1989. p 83
  5. Padoux, Andre. “What Are They.” Mantra. Ed. Harvey Alper. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.
    - a. p306
    - b. p308
  6. Padoux, Andre. *Vac*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990.
    - a. p183
    - b. p216
- 

*Stephen Brown graduated in 2004 with honors in Religion and Classics. His research specialty at the University of Rochester was Tantric traditions and Sanskrit language. He is now beginning his PhD work in South Asian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin this fall.*