

All english texts from: Yoga Spandakarika, Daniel Odier, translated by Clare Frock, published by Inner Traditions, 2005.

The *Spandakarika*, or “Song of the Sacred Tremor,” is one of the essential texts of Kashmiri Shaivism. Having been revealed at the beginning of the ninth century by Shiva to Vasugupta, or to say it more directly, having gushed forth like a spring from Vasugupta's own heart, it presents the essence of the tantras in fifty-two marvelously elliptical stanzas. It is also said that Vasugupta received them in a dream while meditating in a cave in Mount Kailash, the mythical home of the trident-bearing God who gave birth to the sacred River Ganges. They were written by Vasugupta himself or by his disciple Kallata. Ksemaraja, another important master of the tradition, who left a long commentary on the first stanza and to whom we owe the magnificent “Heart of Recognition” or *Pratyabhijnahrdayam*, said that Vasugupta found them carved into a rock, and the faithful of today still revere the site.

In his commentary, Ksemaraja stresses the fact that the Song of the Sacred Tremor is a presentation of Mahamudra, which would go on to become famous through the Tibetan lineage of transmission, and which is the ultimate teaching of the Kagyu school. Mahamudra, often translated as “the Great Seal,” referring to the secret of this teaching and to the fact that it seals all that preceded it, is translated by the Kashmiris as “the Great Cosmic Movement” because its realization is linked to the yoga transmitted by Matsyendranath, who is at the source of the Kashmiri lineages. This siddha probably lived in Assam in the seventh century of the Common Era. Abhinavagupta, the great philosopher and master of the tenth century, pays him homage in his *Tantraloka*, which presents the sum of all knowledge on the tantras. This yoga, the teaching of which has almost completely disappeared, is very profound. It seems to have been the form that preceded hatha yoga. Its very simplicity is what makes it so difficult. The most ancient masters of the tradition had come to the realization that all is movement in the universe. They saw everything, including matter, as consciousness, and they invented a yoga that fit this realization. This sacred dance, called Tandava, is carried out in three phases: During the first stage, the body is released into space, the breath settles in, and the sacred trembling of the organs is welcomed by consciousness, which allows this inner palpitation to become free and thus rejoins the limitless. Lalita Devi compared this sensation to the movements that moths flying within us might make. Little by little, the body lets itself go into an extremely slow, involuntary movement, where the limbs are carried by the breath in a circular unfolding.

In the second phase, the yogi lets his arms open out into space, the spinal column extremely supple, the eyelids slightly open, the tongue relaxed, the perineum open, the breath freed. The shoulder blades are open like wings and give balance to the body, which is normally drawn toward the front. This whole yoga is practiced visualizing oneself naked, floating in midnight blue space.

In the third phase, the yogi gets up and allows his whole body to express the dance of Shiva in space. These movements look like a completely free kind of tai chi in which no movement is codified. The sequential linking of these movements make up the whole Kashmiri yoga such as I received its transmission from my master, yogini Lalita Devi.

This is an extremely subtle and difficult yoga that requires thousands of hours of practice. The advantage of this yoga is that it makes all other physical practice unnecessary. It can be seen in the sculptures of Tantric temples and in Tibetan statuary and paintings, which almost always represent the yogin, the yogini, and the divinities in this supple, lateral movement, and which one can imagine is omnidirectional. This tradition – so simple, so subtle – has gradually fallen into oblivion and been replaced by the more spectacular hatha yoga.

The *Spandakarika* presents the philosophy that was born of this practice, and all the yoga does is keep bringing us back to the source of this fundamental realization.

The Chant of the Sacred Vibration (*)

1.

The venerated Shankari (Shakti), source of energy, opens her eyes and the universe is reabsorbed in pure consciousness; she closes them and the universe is manifested within her.

2.

The sacred tremor, the very place of creation and return, is completely limitless because its nature is formless.

3.

Even within duality, the tantrika goes straight to the non-dual source, because pure subjectivity always resides immersed within his own nature.

4.

All the relative notions tied to the ego rediscover their peaceful source deeply buried under all the different states.

5.

In the absolute sense, pleasure and suffering, subject and object, are nothing other than the space of profound consciousness.

6. 7.

To grasp this fundamental truth is to see absolute freedom everywhere. Thus, the activity of the senses itself dwells in this fundamental freedom and pours forth from it.

8.

Therefore, the person who rediscovers this essential sacred tremor of consciousness escapes the dim confusion of limited desire.

9.

Liberated in this way from the multiplicity of impulses tied to the ego, he experiences the supreme state.

10.

Then the heart realizes that the true innate nature is both the universal agent and the subjectivity that perceives the world. Thus immersed in understanding, it knows and acts according to its desire.

11.

How can this wonder-filled tantrika, who always comes back to his own fundamental nature as the source of all manifestation, be subject to transmigration?

12.

If the void could be an object of contemplation, where would the consciousness that perceives it be?

13.

Therefore, consider contemplation of the vacuity as an artifice of a nature analogous to that of a profound absence from the world.

14. 15. 16.

Actor and action are united, but when action is dissolved by abandoning the fruits of the act, the very dynamic that is tied to the ego exhausts itself, and the tantrika who is absorbed in this profound contemplation discovers the divine tremor liberated from its ties to the ego. The profound nature of action is thus revealed, and he who has interiorized the movement of desire no longer knows dissolution. He cannot cease to exist because he has returned to the profound source.

17.

The awakened tantrika realizes this continuous sacred tremor throughout the three states.

18.

Shiva is then in loving union with Shakti in the form of knowledge and its object, whereas everywhere else he is manifested as pure consciousness.

19.

The whole palette of the different kinds of sacred tremoring finds its source in the universal sacred tremor of consciousness, and in this way reaches the person. How could such a sacred tremoring limit the tantrika?

20.

And yet, this sacred tremor itself causes the loss of people who are subject to limited views because, their intuition being disconnected from the profound source, they throw themselves into the whirlwind of transmigration.

21.

The person who with fieriness tends toward the profound sacred tremor reaches his true nature even within activity.

22.

The profound and stable sacred tremor can be reached in extreme states: anger, intense joy, mental wandering, or the drive toward survival .

23. 24.

When the tantrika gives himself over to Shiva/Shakti, the sun and the moon come up in the central channel.

25.

At that moment, when in the sky the sun and the moon disappear, the awakened person remains lucid, whereas the ordinary person sinks into unconsciousness.

26. 27.

Mantras, when they are charged with the power of the sacred tremor, accomplish their function through the senses of the awakened person. They become united with the mind of the tantrika, who penetrates the nature of Shiva/Shakti.

28. 29

All things emerge from the individual essence of the tantrika who recognizes himself in Shiva/Shakti, everything in which she takes pleasure is Shiva/Shakti. Thus, there is no state that can be named that is not be Shiva/Shakti.

30.

Always present to the reality that he perceives as the play of his own nature, the tantrika is liberated at the very heart of life.

31.

Through the intensity of object-less desire, contemplation emerges in the heart of the tantrika united to the profound sacred tremor.

32.

This is the attainment of the supreme nectar, the immortality of samadhi, which reveals to the tantrika his own nature.

33. 34.

The ardor toward Shiva/Shakti that manifests the universe allows the tantrika to be fulfilled. Over the course of the dream, the sun and the moon appear in his heart and all his wishes are granted.

35.

But if he is not present, the tantrika will be wronged by the play of manifestation, and he will experience the illusory state of the aspirant throughout waking and sleeping.

36. 37.

Just as an object that escapes attention is more clearly perceived when we make the effort to see it better from all angles so the supreme sacred tremor appears to the tantrika when he ardently strives toward it. In this way, everything is in tune with the essence of his true nature.

38.

Even in a state of extreme weakness, such a tantrika succeeds in this accomplishment. Even starving, he finds his food.

39.

With his only support the recognition of the heart, the tantrika is omniscient and in harmony with the world.

40.

If the body/mind is ravaged by discouragement due to ignorance, only the completely unlimited expansion of consciousness will dissipate a lassitude whose source will then have disappeared.

41.

The revelation of the Self arises in the person who is now only absolute desire. May each of us have this experience!

42.

Then, may light, sound, form, and taste come and impede the person who is still tied to the ego.

43.

When the tantrika pervades everything with his absolute desire, what use are words? He has the experience on his own.

44.

May the tantrika remain present, his senses vigilantly sown in reality, and may he know stability.

45.

The person who is deprived of his power by the dark powers of limited activity becomes the plaything of the energy of sounds.

46.

Caught in the field of subtle energies and mental representations, the supreme ambrosia is dissolved, and the person forgets his innate freedom.

47.

The power of the word is always ready to veil the profound nature of the Self because no mental representation can free itself from language.

48.

The energy of the sacred tremor that passes through the vulgar person enslaves him, whereas this same energy liberates the person who is on the Path.

49. 50.

The subtle body itself is an obstacle that is tied to limited intelligence and to the ego. The enslaved person has experiences that are tied to his beliefs and to the idea that he has of his body, and in this way thing perpetuates the tie.

51.

But when the tantrika becomes established in the sacred tremor of reality, he liberates the flow of manifestation and return, and in this way takes pleasure in the universal freedom, as a master of the wheel of energies.

52.

I venerate the spontaneous, trembling, and wonderful words of my master who had me cross the Ocean of doubt.

May this jewel of knowledge lead all people to reach the true nature of reality, and may they keep this jewel in the deepest part of their heart.

**** Translated by the author from Lalita Devi's unpublished English version. Trans. note : The English version here has been translated from the author's written French, with his approval and oversight. Author's note : The pronoun "he" is used throughout in the interests of grammatical consistency.***