

## Chapter Two

### Shakti: The World as Power

There is no word of wider content in any language than this Sanskrit term meaning 'Power'. For Shakti in the highest causal sense is God as Mother, and in another sense it is the universe which issues from Her Womb. And what is there which is neither one nor the other? Therefore, the Yoginihridaya Tantra thus salutes Her who conceives, bears, produces and thereafter nourishes all worlds: "Obeisance be to Her who is pure Being-Consciousness-Bliss, as Power, who exists in the form of Time and Space and all that is therein, and who is the radiant Illuminatrix in all beings."

It is therefore possible only to outline here in a very general way a few of the more important principles of the Shakti-doctrine, omitting its deeply interesting practice (Sadhana) in its forms as ritual worship and Yoga.

Today Western science speaks of Energy as the physical ultimate of all forms of Matter. So has it been for ages to the Shaktas, as the worshippers of Shakti are called. But they add that such Energy is only a limited manifestation (as Mind and Matter) of the almighty infinite Supreme Power (Maha-Shakti) of Becoming in 'That' (Tat), which is unitary Being (Sat) itself.

Their doctrine is to be found in the traditions, oral and written, which are contained in the Agamas, which (with Purana, Smriti and Veda) constitute one of the four great classes of Scripture of the Hindus. The Tantras are Scriptures of the Agama. The notion that they are some queer bye-product of Hinduism and not an integral part of it, is erroneous. The three chief divisions of the Agama are locally named Bengal (Gauda), Kashmira and Kerala. That Bengal is a home of Tantra-shastra is well known. It is, however, little known that Kashmir was in the past a land where Tantrik doctrine and practice were widely followed.

The communities of so-called 'Tantrik' worshippers are five-fold according as the cult is of the Sun, Ganesha, Vishnu, Shiva or Shakti. To the Knower, however, the five named are not distinct Divinities, but different aspects of the one Power or Shakti. An instructed Shakti-worshipper is one of the least sectarian of men. He can worship in all temples, as the saying is. Thus the Sammohana Tantra says that "he is a fool who sees any difference between Rama (an Avatara of Vishnu) and Shiva". "What matters the name," says the Commentator of the Satcakranirupana, after running through the gamut of them.

The Shakta is so called because the chosen Deity of his worship (Ishta-devata) is Shakti. In his cult, both in doctrine and practice, emphasis is laid on that aspect of the One in which It is the Source of Change and, in the form of Time and Space and all objects therein, Change itself. The word Shakti is grammatically feminine. For this reason an American Orientalist critic of the doctrine has described it as a worthless system, a mere feminization of orthodox (whatever that be) Vedanta -- a doctrine teaching the primacy of the Female and thus fit only for "suffragette monists". It is absurd criticism of this kind which makes the Hindu sometimes wonder whether the Western psyche has even the capacity to understand his beliefs. It is said of the Mother (in the Hymn to Her in the Mahakala-Samhita): "Thou art neither girl, nor maid, nor old. Indeed Thou art neither female nor male, nor neuter. Thou art inconceivable, immeasurable Power, the Being of all which exists, void of all duality, the Supreme Brahman, attainable in Illumination alone." Those who cannot understand lofty ideas when presented in ritual and symbolic garb will serve their reputation best by not speaking of them.

The Shaiva is so called because his chosen Divinity is Shiva, the name for the changeless aspect of the One whose power of action and activity is Shakti. But as the two are necessarily associated, all communities acknowledge Shakti. It is, for the above reason, a mistake to suppose that a 'Tantrik,' or follower of the Agama, is necessarily a Shakta, and that the 'Tantra' is a Shakta Scripture only. Not at all. The Shakta is only one branch of the Agamik school. And so we find the Scriptures of Saivism, whether of North or South, called Tantras, as also those of that ancient form of Vaishnavism which is called the Pancaratra. The doctrine of these communities, which share certain common ideas, varies from the monism of the Shaktas and Northern Shaivas to the more or less dualistic systems of others. The ritual is to a large extent common in all communities, though there are necessarily variations, due both to the nature of the divine aspect worshipped and to the particular form of theology taught. Shakta doctrine and practice are contained primarily in the Shakta Tantras and the oral traditions, some of which are secret. As the Tantras are mainly Scriptures of Worship such doctrine is contained by implication in the ritual. For reasons above stated recourse may be had to other Scriptures in so far as they share with those of the Shakta certain common doctrines and practices. The Tantras proper are the Word of Shiva and Shakti. But there are also valuable Tantrik works in the nature of compendia and commentaries which are not of divine authorship.

The concept 'Shakti' is not however peculiar to the Shaktas. Every Hindu believes in Shakti as God's Power, though he may differ as to the nature of the universe created by it. Shakta doctrine is a special presentment of so-called monism (Advaita: lit. 'not-two') and Shakta ritual, even in those condemned forms which have given rise to the abuses by which this Scripture is

most generally known, is a practical application of it. Whatever may have been the case at the origin of these Agamic cults, all, now and for ages past, recognize and claim to base themselves on the Vedas. With these are coupled the Word of Shiva-Shakti as revealed in the Tantras. Shakta-doctrine is (like the Vedanta in general) what in Western parlance would be called a theology based on revelation that is, so-called 'spiritual' or supersensual experience, in its primary or secondary sense. For Veda is that.

This leads to a consideration of the measure of man's knowing and of the basis of Vedantik knowledge. It is a fundamental error to regard the Vedanta as simply a speculative metaphysic in the modern Western sense. It is not so; if it were, it would have no greater right to acceptance than any other of the many systems which jostle one another for our custom in the Philosophical Fair. It claims that its supersensual teachings can be established with certainty by the practice of its methods. Theorizing alone is insufficient. The Shakta, above all, is a practical and active man, worshipping the Divine Activity; his watchword is Kriya or Action. Taught that he is Power, he desires fully to realize himself in fact as such. A Tantrik poem (Anandastotra) speaks with amused disdain of the learned chattering who pass their time in futile debate around the shores of the 'Lake of Doubt'.

The basis of knowing, whether in super-sense or sense-knowledge, is actual experience. Experience is of two kinds: the whole or full experience; and incomplete experience -- that is, of parts, not of, but in, the whole. In the first experience, Consciousness is said to be 'upward-looking' (Unmukhi) -- that is, 'not looking to another'. In the second experience it is 'outward-looking' (Bahirmukhi) The first is not an experience of the whole, but the Experience-whole. The second is an experience not of parts of the whole, for the latter is partless, but of parts in the whole, and issuing from its infinite Power to know itself in and as the finite centers, as the many. The works of an Indian philosopher, my friend Professor Pramatha Natha Mukhyopadhyaya, aptly call the first the Fact, and the second the Fact-section. The Isha Upanishad calls the Supreme Experience -- Purna, the Full or Whole.

It is not, be it noted, a residue of the abstracting intellect, which is itself only a limited stress in Consciousness, but a Plenum, in which the Existent All is as one Whole. Theologically this full experience is Shiva, with Shakti at rest or as Potency. The second experience is that of the finite centers, the numerous Purushas or Jivas, which are also Shiva-Shakti as Potency actualized. Both experiences are real. In fact there is nothing unreal anywhere. All is the Mother and She is reality itself. "Sa'ham" ("She I am"), the Shakta says, and all that he senses is She in the form in which he perceives Her. It is She who in, and as, he drinks the consecrated wine, and She is the wine. All is manifested Power, which has the reality of Being from which it is put forth. But the reality of the manifestation is of something which appears and disappears, while that of Causal Power to appear is enduring. But this disappearance is only the ceasing to be for a limited consciousness. The seed of Power, which appears as a thing for such consciousness, remains as the potency in infinite Being itself. The infinite Experience is real as the Full (Purna); that is, its reality is fullness. The finite experience is real, as such. There is, perhaps, no subject in Vedanta, which is more misunderstood than that of the so-called 'Unreality' of the World. Every School admits the reality of all finite experience (even of 'illusive' experience strictly so-called) while such experience lasts. But Shamkaracarya, defines the truly Real as that which is changeless. In this sense, the World as a changing thing has relative reality only. Shamkara so defines Reality because he sets forth his doctrine from the standpoint of transcendent Being. The Shakta Shastra, on the other hand, is a practical Scripture of Worship, delivered from the world-standpoint, according to which the world is necessarily real. According to this view a thing may be real and yet be the subject of change. But its reality as a thing ceases with the passing of the finite experiencer to whom it is real. The supreme Shiva-Shakti is, on the other hand, a real, full Experience which ever endures. A worshipper must, as such, believe in the reality of himself, of the world as his field of action and instrument, in its causation by God, and in God Himself as the object of worship. Moreover to him the world is real because Shiva-Shakti, which is its material cause, is real. That cause, without ceasing to be what it is, becomes the effect. Further the World is the Lord's Experience. He as Lord (Pati) is the whole Experience, and as creature (Pashu) he is the experiencer of parts in it. The Experience of the Lord is never unreal. The reality, however, which changelessly endures may (if we so choose) be said to be Reality in its fullest sense.

Real however as all experience is, the knowing differs according as the experience is infinite or finite, and in the latter case according to various grades of knowing. Full experience, as its name implies, is full in every way. Assume that there is at any 'time' no universe at all, that there is then a complete dissolution of all universes, and not of any particular universe -- even then the Power which produced past, and will produce future universes, is one with the Supreme Consciousness whose Shakti it is. When again this Power actualizes as a universe, the Lord-Consciousness from and in Whom it issues is the All-knower. As Sarvajña He knows all generals, and as Sarvavit, all particulars. But all is known by Him as the Supreme Self, and not, as in the case of the finite center, as objects other than the limited self.

Finite experience is by its definition a limited thing. As the experience is of a sectional character, it is obvious that the knowing can only be of parts, and not of the whole, as the part cannot know the whole of which it is a part. But the finite is not always so. It may expand into the infinite by processes which bridge the one to the other. The essential of Partial Experience is knowing in Time and Space; the Supreme Experience, being changeless, is beyond both Time and Space as

aspects of change. The latter is the alteration of parts relative to one another in the changeless Whole. Full experience is not sense-knowledge. The latter is worldly knowledge (Laukika Jñana), by a limited knowing center, of material objects, whether gross or subtle. Full Experience is the Supreme Knowing Self which is not an object at all. This is unworldly knowledge (Alaukika Jñana) or Veda. Sense-knowledge varies according to the capacity and attainments of the experiencer. But the normal experience may be enhanced in two ways: either physically by scientific instruments such as the telescope and microscope which enhance the natural capacity to see; or psychically by the attainment of what are called psychic powers. Everything is Shakti; but psychic power denotes that enhancement of normal capacity which gives knowledge of matter in its subtle form, while the normal man can perceive it only in the gross form as a compound of sensible matter (the Bhutas). Psychic power is thus an extension of natural faculty. There is nothing 'supernatural' about it. All is natural, all is real. It is simply a power above the normal. Thus the clairvoyant can see what the normal sense-experiencer cannot. He does so by the mind. The gross sense-organs are not, according to Vedanta, the senses (Indriya.) The sense is the mind, which normally works through the appropriate physical organs, but which, as the real factor in sensation, may do without them, as is seen both in hypnotic and yogic states. The area of knowledge is thus very widely increased. Knowledge may be gained of subtle chemistry, subtle physiology (as of the cakras or subtle bodily centers), of various powers, of the 'world of Spirits,' and so forth. But though we are here dealing with subtle things, they are still things and thus part of the sense-world of objects -- that is, of the world of Maya. Maya, as later explained, is, not 'illusion,' but Experience in time and space of Self and Not-Self. This is by no means necessarily illusion. The Whole therefore cannot be known by sense-knowledge. In short, sense or worldly knowledge cannot establish, that is, prove, what is super-sensual, such as the Whole, its nature and the 'other side' of its processes taken as a collectivity. Reasoning, whether working in metaphysics or science, is based on the data of sense and governed by those forms of understanding which constitute the nature of finite mind. It may establish a conclusion of probability, but not of certainty. Grounds of probability may be made out for Idealism, Realism, Pluralism and Monism, or any other philosophical system. In fact, from what we see, the balance of probability perhaps favors Realism and Pluralism. Reason may thus establish that an effect must have a cause, but not that the cause is one, For all that we can say, there may be as many causes as effects. Therefore it is said in Vedanta that "nothing (in these matters) is established by argument." All Western systems which do not possess actual spiritual experience as their basis are systems which can claim no certainty as regards any matter not verifiable by sense-knowledge and reasoning thereon.

Shakta, and indeed all Vedantik teaching, holds that the only source and authority (Pramana) as regards supersensual matters, such as the nature of Being in itself, and the like, is Veda. Veda, which comes from the root vid, to know, is knowledge par excellence, that is super-sensual experience, which according to the Monist (to use the nearest English term) is the Experience-Whole. It may be primary or secondary. As the first it is actual experience (Sakshatkara) which in English is called 'spiritual' experience.

The Shakta, as a 'monist,' says that Veda is full experience as the One. This is not an object of knowledge. This knowing is Being. "To know Brahman is to be Brahman." He is a "monist," not because of rational argument only (though he can adduce reasoning in his support), but because he, or those whom he follows, have had in fact such 'monistic' experience, and therefore (in the light of such experience) interpret the Vedantik texts.

But 'spiritual' experience (to use that English term) may be incomplete both as to duration and nature. Thus from the imperfect ecstasy (Savikalpa-Samadhi), even when of a 'monistic' character, there is a return to world-experience. Again it may not be completely 'monistic' in form, or may be even of a distinctly dualistic character. This only means that the realization has stopped short of the final goal. This being the case, that goal is still perceived through the forms of duality which linger as part of the constitution of the experiencer. Thus there are Vedantik and other schools which are not 'monistic'. The spiritual experiences of all are real experiences, whatever be their character, and they are true according to the truth of the stage in which the experience is had. Do they contradict one another? The experience which a man has of a mountain at fifty miles distance, is not false because it is at variance with that of the man who has climbed it. What he sees is the thing from where he sees it. The first question then is: Is there a 'monistic' experience in fact? Not whether 'monism' is rational or not, and shown to be probable to the intellect. But how can we know this ~ With certainty only by having the experience oneself. The validity of the experience for the experiencer cannot be assailed otherwise than by alleging fraud or self-deception. But how can this be proved? To the experiencer his experience is real, and nothing else is of any account. But the spiritual experience of one is no proof to another who refuses to accept it. A man may, however, accept what another says, having faith in the latter's alleged experience. Here we have the secondary meaning of Veda, that is secondary knowledge of super-sensual truth, not based on actual experience of the believer, but on the experience of some other which the former accepts. In this sense Veda is recorded for Brahmanism in the Scriptures called Vedas, which contain the standard experience of those whom Brahmanism recognizes as its Rishis or Seers. But the interpretation of the Vaidik record is in question, just as that of the Bible is. Why accept one interpretation rather than another? This is a lengthy matter. Suffice to say here that each chooses the spiritual food which his spiritual body needs, and which it is capable of eating and assimilating. This is the doctrine of Adhikara. Here, as elsewhere, what is one man's meat is another man's poison. Nature works in all who are not altogether beyond her workings. What is called the 'will to believe' involves the affirmation that the form of a man's faith is the expression of his nature; the faith is the man. It is not man's reason only which leads to the adoption of a particular

religious belief. It is the whole man as evolved at that particular time which does so. His affirmation of faith is an affirmation of his self in terms of it. The Shakta is therefore a 'monist,' either because he has had himself spiritual experiences of this character, or because he accepts the teaching of those who claim to have had such experience. This is Apta knowledge, that is received from a source of authority, just as knowledge of the scientific or other expert is received. It is true that the latter may be verified. But so in its own way can the former be. Revelation to the Hindu is not something stated 'from above,' incapable of verification 'below'. He who accepts revelation as teaching the unity of the many in the One, may himself verify it in his own experience. How? If the disciple is what is called not fit to receive truth in this 'monistic' form, he will probably declare it to be untrue and, adhering to what he thinks is true, will not further trouble himself in the matter. If he is disposed to accept the teachings of 'monistic' religion-philosophy, it is because his own spiritual and psychical nature is at a stage which leads directly (though in a longer or shorter time as may be the case) to actual 'monistic' experience. A particular form of 'spiritual' knowledge like a particular psychic power can be developed only in him who has the capacity for it. To such an one asking, with desire for the fruit, how he may gather it, the Guru says: Follow the path of those who have achieved (Siddha) and you will gain what they gained. This is the 'Path of the Great' who are those whom we esteem to be such. We esteem them because they have achieved that which we believe to be both worthy and possible. If a would-be disciple refuses to follow the method (Sadhana) he cannot complain that he has not had its result. Though reason by itself cannot establish more than a probability, yet when the super-sensual truth has been learnt by Veda, it may be shown to be conformable to reason. And this must be so, for all realities are of one piece. Reason is a limited manifestation of the same Shakti, who is fully known in ecstasy (Samadhi) which transcends all reasoning. What, therefore, is irrational can never be spiritually true. With the aid of the light of Revelation the path is made clear, and all that is seen tells of the Unseen. Facts of daily life give auxiliary proof. So many miss the truth which lies under their eyes, because to find it they look away or upwards to some fancied 'Heaven'. The sophisticated mind fears the obvious. "It is here; it is here," the Shakta and others say. For he and every other being is a microcosm, and so the Vishvasara Tantra says: "What is here, is elsewhere. What is not here, is nowhere." The unseen is the seen, which is not some alien disguise behind which it lurks. Experience of the seen is the experience of the unseen in time and space. The life of the individual is an expression of the same laws which govern the universe. Thus the Hindu knows, from his own daily rest, that the Power which projects the universe rests. His dreamless slumber when only Bliss is known tells him, in some fashion, of the causal state of universal rest. From the mode of his awakening and other psychological processes he divines the nature of creative thinking. To the Shakta the thrill of union with his Shakti is a faint reflection of the infinite Shiva-Shakti Bliss in and with which all universes are born. All matter is a relatively stable form of Energy. It lasts awhile and disappears into Energy. The universe is maintained awhile. This is Shakti as Vaishnavi, the Maintainer. At every moment creation, as rejuvenescent molecular activity, is going on as the Shakti Brahmani. At every moment there is molecular death and loosening of the forms, the work of Rudrani Shakti. Creation did not take place only at some past time, nor is dissolution only in the future. At every moment of time there is both. As it is now and before us here, so it was 'in the beginning'.

In short the world is real. It is a true experience. Observation and reason are here the guide. Even Veda is no authority in matters falling within sense-knowledge. If Veda were to contradict such knowledge, it would, as Shamkara says, be in this respect no Veda at all. The Hindu is not troubled by 'biblical science'. Here and now the existence of the many is established for the sense-experencer. But there is another and Full Experience which also may be had here and now and is in any case also a fact, -- that is, when the Self 'stands out' (ekstasis) from mind and body and sense-experience. This Full Experience is attained in ecstasy (Samadhi). Both experiences may be had by the same experencer. It is thus the same One who became many. "He said: May I be many," as Veda tells. The 'will to be many' is Power or Shakti which operates as Maya.

In the preceding portion of this paper it was pointed out that the Power whereby the One gives effect to Its Will to be Many is Maya Shakti.

What are called the 36 Tattvas (accepted by both Shaktas and Shaivas) are the stages of evolution of the One into the Many as mind and matter.

Again with what warrant is this affirmed? The secondary proof is the Word of Shiva and Shakti. Revealers of the Tantra-shastra, as such Word is expounded in the teachings of the Masters (Acaryas) in the Agama.

Corroboration of their teaching may be had by observation of psychological stages in normal life and reasoning thereon. These psychological states again are the individual representation of the collective cosmic processes. "As here, so elsewhere." Primary evidence is actual experience of the surrounding and supreme states. Man does not leap at one bound from ordinary finite sense-experience to the Full Experience. By stages he advances thereto, and by stages he retraces his steps to the world, unless the fullness of experience has been such as to burn up in the fire of Self-knowledge the seed of desire which is the germ of the world. Man's consciousness has no fixed boundary. On the contrary, it is at root the Infinite Consciousness, which appears in the form of a contraction (Shamkoca), due to limitation as Shakti in the form of mind and matter. This contraction may be greater or less. As it is gradually loosened, consciousness expands by degrees until, all bonds being gone, it becomes one with the Full Consciousness or Purna. Thus there are, according to common teaching, seven ascending light

planes of experience, called Lokas, that is 'what are seen' (lokyante) or experienced; and seven dark descending planes, or Talas, that is 'places'. It will be observed that one name is given from the subjective and the other from the objective standpoint. The center of these planes is the 'Earth-plane' (Bhurloka). This is not the same as experience on earth, for every experience, including the highest and lowest, can be had here. The planes are not like geological strata, though necessity may picture them thus. The Earth-plane is the normal experience. The ascending planes are states of super-normal, and the descending planes of sub-normal experience. The highest of the planes is the Truth-plane (Satya-loka). Beyond this is the Supreme Experience, which is above all planes, which is Light itself, and the love of Shiva and Shakti, the 'Heart of the Supreme Lord' (Hridayam parameshituh). The lowest Tala on the dark side is described in the Puranas with wonderful symbolic imagery as a Place of Darkness where monster serpents, crowned with dim light, live in perpetual anger. Below this is the Shakti of the Lord called Tamomayi Shakti -- that is, the Veiling Power of Being in all its infinite intensity.

What then is the Reality -- Whole or Purna? It is certainly not a bare abstraction of intellect, for the intellect is only a fractional Power or Shakti in it. Such an abstraction has no worth for man. In the Supreme Reality, which is the Whole, there is everything which is of worth to men, and which proceeds from it. In fact, as a Kashmir Scripture says: "The 'without' appears without only because it is within." Unworthy also proceeds from it, not in the sense that it is there as unworthy, but because the experience of duality, to which evil is attached, arises in the Blissful Whole. The Full is not merely the collectively (Samashti) of all which exists, for it is both immanent in and transcends the universe. It is a commonplace that it is unknowable except to Itself. Shiva in the Yoginihridaya Tantra, says: "Who knows the heart of a woman? Only Shiva knows the Heart of Yogini (the Supreme Shakti)." For this reason the Buddhist Tantrik schools call it Shunya or the Void. This is not 'nothing' but nothing known to mind and senses. Both Shaktas and some Vaishnavas use the term Shunya, and no one suspects them of being 'Nihilists'.

Relatively, however, the One is said to be Being (Sat), Bliss (Ananda) and Cit -- an untranslatable term which has been most accurately defined as the Changeless Principle of all changing experience, a Principle of which sensation, perception, conception, self-consciousness, feeling, memory, will, and all other psychic states are limited modes. It is not therefore Consciousness or Feeling as we understand these words, for these are directed and limited. It is the infinite root of which they are the finite flower. But Consciousness and possibly (according to the more ancient views) Feeling approach the most nearly to a definition, provided that we do not understand thereby Consciousness and Feeling in man's sense. We may thus (to distinguish it) call Cit, Pure Consciousness or Pure Feeling as Bliss (Ananda) knowing and enjoying its own full Reality. This, as such Pure Consciousness or Feeling, endures even when finite centers of Consciousness or Feeling arise in It. If (as this system assumes) there is a real causal nexus between the two, then Being, as Shiva, is also a Power, or Shakti, which is the source of all Becoming. The fully Real, therefore, has two aspects: one called Shiva, the static aspect of Consciousness, and the other called Shakti, the kinetic aspect of the same. For this reason Kali Shakti, dark as a thundercloud, is represented standing and moving on the white inert body of Shiva. He is white as Illumination (Prakasha). He is inert, for Pure Consciousness is without action and at rest. It is She, His Power, who moves. Dark is She here because, as Kali, She dissolves all in darkness, that is vacuity of existence, which is the Light of Being Itself. Again She is Creatrix. Five corpse-like Shivas form the support of Her throne, set in the wish-granting groves of the Isle of Gems (Manidvipa), the golden sands of which are laved by the still waters of the Ocean of Nectar (Amrita), which is Immortality. In both cases we have a pictorial presentment in theological form of the scientific doctrine that to every form of activity there is a static background.

But until there is in fact Change, Shakti is merely the Potency of Becoming in Being and, as such, is wholly one with it. The Power (Shakti) and the possessor of Power (Shaktiman) are one. As therefore He is Being-Bliss-Consciousness, so is She. She is also the Full (Purna), which is no mere abstraction from its evolved manifestations. On the contrary, of Her the Mahakali Stotra says: "Though without feet, Thou movest more quickly than air. Though without ears, Thou dost hear. Though without nostrils, Thou dost smell. Though without eyes, Thou dost see. Though without tongue, Thou dost taste all tastes." Those who talk of the 'bloodless abstractions' of Vedanta, have not understood it. The ground of Man's Being is the Supreme 'I' (Purnosham) which, though in Itself beyond finite personality, is yet ever finitely personalizing as the beings of the universe. "Sa'ham," -- "She I am."

This is the Supreme Shakti, the ultimate object of the Shaktas' adoration, though worshipped in several forms, some gentle, some formidable.

But Potency is actualized as the universe, and this also is Shakti, for the effect is the cause modified. Monistic Vedanta teaches that God is the material cause of the world. The statement that the Supreme Shakti also exists as the Forms evolved from It, may seem to conflict with the doctrine that Power is ultimately one with Shiva who is changeless Being. Shamkara answers that the existence of a causal nexus is Maya, and that there is (from the transcendental standpoint) only a seeming cause and seeming modification or effect. The Shakta, who from his world-standpoint posits the reality of God as the Cause of the universe, replies that, while it is true that the effect (as effect) is the cause modified, the cause (as cause) remains what it was and is and will be. Creative evolution of the universe thus differs from the evolution in it. In the latter case the material cause when producing an effect ceases to be what it was. Thus milk turned into curd ceases to be milk. But the simile given

of the other evolutionary process is that of 'Light from Light'. There is a similarity between the 'conventional' standpoint of Shamkara and the explanation of the Shakta; the difference being that, while to the former the effect is (from the transcendental standpoint) 'unreal,' it is from the Shakta's immanent standpoint 'real'.

It will have been observed that cosmic evolution is in the nature of a polarization in Being into static and kinetic aspects. This is symbolized in the Shakta Tantras by their comparison of Shiva-Shakti to a grain of gram (Canaka). This has two seeds which are so close together as to seem one, and which are surrounded by a single sheath. The seeds are Shiva and Shakti and the sheath is Maya. When the sheath is unpeeled, that is when Maya Shakti operates, the two seeds come apart. The sheath unrolls when the seeds are ready to germinate, that is when in the dreamless slumber (Sushupti) of the World-Consciousness the remembrance of past enjoyment in Form gives rise to that divine creative 'thinking' of 'imagining' (Srishtikalpana) which is 'creation'. As the universe in dissolution sinks into a Memory which is lost, so it is born again from the germ of recalled Memory or Shakti. Why? Such a question may be answered when we are dealing with facts in the whole; but the latter itself is uncaused, and what is caused is not the whole. Manifestation is of the nature of Being-Power, just as it is Its nature to return to Itself after the actualization of Power. To the devotee who speaks in theological language, "It is His Will". As the Yoginihridaya says: "He painted the World-Picture on Himself with the Brush which is His Will and was pleased therewith."

Again the World is called a Prapañca, that is an extension of the five forms of sensible matter (Bhuta.) Where does it go at dissolution? It collapses into a Point (Bindu). We may regard it as a metaphysical point which is the complete 'subjectification' of the divine or full 'I' (Purnahanta), or objectively as a mathematical point without magnitude. Round that Point is coiled a mathematical Line which, being in touch with every part of the surface of the Point, makes one Point with it. What then is meant by these symbols of the Point and Line? It is said that the Supreme Shiva sees Himself in and as His own Power or Shakti. He is the 'White Point' or 'Moon' (Candra), which is Illumination and in the completed process, the 'I' (Aham), side of experience, She is the 'Red Point'. Both colors are seen in the microcosmic generation of the child. Red too is the color of Desire. She is 'Fire' which is the object of experience or 'This' (Idam), the objective side of experience. The 'This' here is nothing but a mass of Shiva's own illuminating rays. These are reflected in Himself as Shakti, who, in the Kamakalavilasa, is called the 'Pure Mirror' of Shiva. The Self sees the Self, the rays being thrown back on their source. The 'This' is the germ of what we call 'Otherness,' but here the 'Other' is and is known as the Self. The relation and fusion of these two Points, White and Red, is called the Mixed Point or 'Sun'. These are the three Supreme Lights. A = Shiva, Ha = Shakti, which united spell 'Aham' or 'I'. This 'Sun' is thus the state of full 'I-ness' (Purnaham-bhava). This is the Point into which the World at dissolution lapses, and from which in due time it comes forth again. In the latter case it is the Lord-Consciousness as the Supreme 'I' and Power about to create. For this reason Bindu is called a condensed or massive form of Shakti. It is the tense state of Power immediately prior to its first actualization. That form of Shakti, again by which the actualization takes place is Maya; and this is the Line round the Point. As coiled round the Point, it is the Supreme Serpent-Power (Mahakundalini) encircling the Shiva-Linga. From out of this Power comes the whisper to enjoy, in worlds of form, as the memory of past universes arises therein. Shakti then 'sees'. Shakti opens Her eyes as She reawakens from the Cosmic Sleep (Nimesha), which is dissolution. The Line is at first coiled and one with the Point, for Power is then at rest. Creation is movement, an uncoiling of Maya-Shakti. Hence is the world called Jagat, which means 'what moves'. The nature of this Power is circular or spiralline; hence the roundness and 'curvature' of things of which we now hear. Nothing moves in a really straight line. Hence again the universe is also called a spheroid (Brahmanda). The gross worlds are circular universal movements in space, in which, is the Ether (Akasha), Consciousness, as the Full (Purna), is never dichotomized, but the finite centers which arise in it, are so. The Point, or Bindu, then divides into three, in various ways, the chief of which is Knower, Knowing and Known, which constitute the duality of the world-experience by Mind of Matter.

Unsurpassed for its profound analysis is the account of the thirty-six Tattvas or stages of Cosmic Evolution (accepted by both Shaivas and Shaktas) given by the Northern Shaiva School of the Agama, which flourished after the date which Western Orientalists assign to Shamkaracarya, and which was therefore in a position to criticize him. According to this account (which I greatly condense) Subject and Object in Pure Being are in indistinguishable union as the Supreme Shiva-Shakti. We have then to see how this unity is broken up into Subject and Object. This does not take place all at once. There is an intermediate stage of transition, in which there is a Subject and Object, but both are part of the Self, which knows its Object to be Itself. In man's experience they are wholly separate, the Object then being perceived as outside the Self, the plurality of Selves being mutually exclusive centers. The process and the result are the work of Shakti, whose special function is to negate, that is to negate Her own fullness, so that it becomes the finite center contracted as a limited Subject perceiving a limited Object, both being aspects of the one Divine Self.

The first stage after the Supreme is that in which Shakti withdraws Herself and leaves, as it were, standing by itself the 'I' side (Aham) of what, when completed, is the 'I-This' (Aham-Idam) experience. But simultaneously (for the 'I' must have its content) She presents Herself as a 'This' (Idam), at first faintly and then clearly; the emphasis being at first laid on the 'I' and then on the 'This'. This last is the stage of Ishvara Tattva or Bindu, as the Mantra Shastra, dealing with the causal state of 'Sound' (Shabda), calls it. In the second and third stage, as also in the fourth which follows, though there is an 'I' and a 'This' and therefore not the indistinguishable 'I - This' of the Supreme Experience, yet both the 'I' and the 'This' are experienced as

aspects of and in the Self. Then as a preliminary to the division which follows, the emphasis is laid equally on the 'I' and the 'This'. At this point Maya-Shakti intervenes and completely separates the two. For that Power is the Sense of Difference (Bheda-Buddhi). We have now the finite centers mutually exclusive one of the other, each seeing, to the extent of its power, finite centers as objects outside of and different from the self. Consciousness thus becomes contracted. In lieu of being All-knowing, it is a 'Little Knower,' and in lieu of being Almighty Power, it is a 'Little Doer'.

Maya is not rightly rendered 'Illusion'. In the first place it is conceived as a real Power of Being and as such is one with the Full Reality. The Full, free of all illusion, experiences the engendering of the finite centers and the centers themselves in and as Its own changeless partless Self. It is these individual centers produced from out of Power as Maya-Shakti which are 'Ignorance' or Avidya Shakti. They are so called because they are not a full experience but an experience of parts in the Whole. In another sense this 'Ignorance' is a knowing, namely, that which a finite center alone has. Even God cannot have man's mode of knowledge and enjoyment without becoming man. He by and as His Power does become man and yet remains Himself. Man is Power in limited form as Avidya. The Lord is unlimited Power as Maya. In whom then is the 'Illusion'? Not (all will admit) in the Lord. Nor is it in fact (whatever be the talk of it) in man whose nature it is to regard his limitations as real. For these limitations are he. His experience as man provides no standard whereby it may be adjudged 'Illusion'. The latter is non-conformity with normal experience, and here it is the normal experience which is said to be Illusion. If there were no Avidya Shakti, there would be no man. In short the knowing which is Full Experience is one thing and the knowing of the limited experience is another. The latter is Avidya and the Power to produce it is Maya. Both are eternal aspects of Reality, though the forms which are Avidya Shakti come and go. If we seek to relate the one to the other, where and by whom is the comparison made? Not in and by the Full Experience beyond all relations, where no questions are asked or answers given, but on the standing ground of present finite experience where all subjectivity and objectivity are real and where therefore, ipso facto, Illusion is negative. The two aspects are never present at one and the same time for comparison. The universe is real as a limited thing to the limited experiencer who is himself a part of it. But the experience of the Supreme Person (Parahanta) is necessarily different, otherwise it would not be the Supreme Experience at all. A God who experiences just as man does is no God but man. There is, therefore, no experiencer to whom the World is Illusion. He who sees the world in the normal waking state, loses it in that form in ecstasy (Samadhi). It may, however, (with the Shakta) be said that the Supreme Experience is entire and unchanging and thus the fully Real; and that, though the limited experience is also real in its own way, it is yet an experience of change in its twin aspects of Time and Space. Maya, therefore, is the Power which engenders in Itself finite centers in Time and Space, and Avidya is such experience in fact of the finite experiencer in Time and Space. So much is this so, that the Time-theorists (Kalavadins) give the name 'Supreme Time' (Parakala) to the Creator, who is also called by the Shakta 'Great Time' (Mahakala). So in the Bhairavayamala it is said that Mahadeva (Shiva) distributes His Rays of Power in the form of the Year. That is, Timeless Experience appears in the finite centers as broken up into periods of time. This is the 'Lesser Time' which comes in with the Sun, Moon, Six Seasons and so forth, which are all Shaktis of the Lord, the existence and movements of which give rise, in the limited observer, to the notion of Time and Space.

That observer is essentially the Self or 'Spirit' vehicled by Its own Shakti in the form of Mind and Matter. These two are Its Body, the first subtle, the second gross. Both have a common origin, namely the Supreme Power. Each is a real mode of It. One therefore does not produce the other. Both are produced by, and exist as modes of, the same Cause. There is a necessary parallelism between the Perceived and the Perceiver and, because Mind and Matter are at base one as modes of the same Power, one can act on the other. Mind is the subjective and Matter the objective aspect of the one polarized Consciousness.

With the unimportant exception of the Lokayatas, the Hindus have never shared what Sir William Jones called "the vulgar notions of matter," according to which it is regarded as some gross, lasting and independently existing outside thing.

Modern Western Science now also dematerializes the ponderable matter of the universe into Energy. This and the forms in which it is displayed is the Power of the Self to appear as the object of a limited center of knowing. Mind again is the Self as 'Consciousness,' limited by Its Power into such a center. By such contraction there is in lieu of an 'All-knower' a 'Little Knower,' and in lieu of an 'All-doer' a 'Little Doer'. Those, however, to whom this way of looking at things is naturally difficult, may regard the Supreme Shakti from the objective aspect as holding within Itself the germ of all Matter which develops in It.

Both Mind and Matter exist in every particle of the universe though not explicitly displayed in the same way in all. There is no corner of the universe which contains anything either potential or actual, which is not to be found elsewhere. Some aspect of Matter or Mind, however, may be more or less explicit or implicit. So in the Mantra Scripture it is said that each letter of the alphabet contains all sound. The sound of a particular letter is explicit and the other sounds are implicit. The sound of a particular letter is a particular physical audible mode of the Shabdabrahman (Brahman as the cause of Shabda or 'Sound'), in Whom is all sound, actual and potential. Pure Consciousness is fully involved in the densest forms of gross or organic matter, which is not 'inert' but full of 'movement' (Spanda), for there is naught but the Supreme Consciousness which does not move. Immanent in Mind and Matter is Consciousness (Cit Shakti). Inorganic matter is thus Consciousness in full subjection to the

Power of Ignorance. It is thus Consciousness identifying Itself with such inorganic matter. Matter in all its five forms of density is present in everything. Mind too is there, though, owing to its imprisonment in Matter, undeveloped. "The Brahman sleeps in the stone." Life too which displays itself with the organization of matter is potentially contained in Being, of which such inorganic matter is, to some, a 'lifeless' form. From this deeply involved state Shakti enters into higher and higher organized forms. Prana or vitality is a Shakti -- the Mantra form of which is 'Hangsah'. With the Mantra 'Hang' the breath goes forth, with 'Sah' it is indrawn, a fact which anyone can verify for himself if he will attempt to inspire after putting the mouth in the way it is placed in order to pronounce the letter 'H'. The Rhythm of Creative Power as of breathing (a microcosmic form of it) is two-fold -- an outgoing (Pravritti) or involution as universe, and an evolution or return (Nivritti) of Supreme Power to Itself. Shakti as the Great Heart of the universe pulses forth and back in cosmic systole and diastole. So much for the nature of the Power as an evolutionary process. It is displayed in the Forms evolved as an increasing exhibition of Consciousness from apparently, though not truly, unconscious matter, through the slight consciousness of the plant and the greater consciousness of the animal, to the more highly developed consciousness of man, who in the completeness of his own individual evolution becomes freed of Mind and Matter which constitute the Form, and thus is one with the Supreme Consciousness Itself. There are no gaps in the process. In existence there are no rigid partitions. The vital phenomena, to which we give the name of 'Life', appear, it is true, with organized Matter. But Life is not then something entirely new which had no sort of being before. For such Life is only a limited mode of Being, which itself is no dead thing but the Infinite Life of all lives. To the Hindu the difference between plant and animal, and between the latter and man, has always been one rather of degree than of kind. There is one Consciousness and one Mind and Matter throughout, though the Matter is organized and the Mind is exhibited in various ways. The one Shakti is the Self as the 'String' (Sutratma) on which all the Beads of Form are strung, and these Beads again are limited modes of Herself as the 'String'. Evolution is thus the loosening of the bonds in which Consciousness (itself unchanging) is held, such loosening being increased and Consciousness more fully exhibited as the process is carried forward. At length is gained that human state which the Scripture calls so 'hard to get'. For it has been won by much striving and through suffering. Therefore the Scripture warns man not to neglect the opportunities of a stage which is the necessary preliminary to the attainment of the Full Experience. Man by his striving must seek to become fully humane, and then to pass yet further into the Divine Fullness which is beyond all Forms with their good and evil. This is the work of Sadhana (a word which comes from the root sadh 'to exert'), which is discipline, ritual, worship and Yoga. It is that by which any result (Siddhi) is attained. The Tantrik Shastra is a Sadhana Scripture. As Powers are many, so may be Sadhana, which is of various kinds and degrees. Man may seek to realize the Mother-Power in Her limited forms as health, strength, long life, wealth, magic powers and so forth. The so-called 'New Thought' and kindred literature which bids men to think Power and thus to become power, is very ancient, going back at least to the Upanishad which says: "What a man thinks, that he becomes."

Those who have need for the Infinite Mother as She is, not in any Form but in Herself, seek directly the Adorable One in whom is the essence of all which is of finite worth. The gist of a high form of Kulasadhana is given in the following verse from the Hymn of Mahakalarudra Himself to Mahakali:

"I torture not my body with penances." (Is not his body Hers? If man be God in human guise why torment him?) "I lame not my feet in pilgrimage to Holy Places." (The body is the Devalaya or Temple of Divinity. Therein are all the spiritual Tirthas or Holy Places. Why then trouble to go elsewhere?) "I spend not my time in reading the Vedas." (The Vedas, which he has already studied, are the record of the standard spiritual experience of others. He seeks now to have that experience himself directly. What is the use of merely reading about it? The Kularnava Tantra enjoins the mastering of the essence of all Scriptures which should then be put aside, just as he who has threshed out the grain throws away the husks and straw.) "But I strive to attain Thy two sacred Feet."

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