Alchemical Metaphors for Spiritual Transformation in Abhinavagupta's *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī* and *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī*

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1 Introduction

It is a great privilege to be able to present a paper in honour of Alexis G.J.S. Sanderson. I was fortunate enough to be his pupil for two years at Oxford, and to study with him subsequently in Leipzig and Kyoto. In my view, if one were to accord Professor Sanderson the praise that he in fact merits, it would sound (to those who do not know him) like embarrassingly unrestrained hyperbole. Suffice it to say here that his example formed my ideal of intellectual integrity, an ideal which entails relentless pursuit of the truth as part of a community of scholars engaged in the kind of longitudinal study that prioritizes the field as a whole over personal glory. Professor Sanderson taught me the value of admitting when I don't know, of sacrificing my own agenda in deference to the truth, and of striving to be as transparent a mediator as possible in the act of transmitting the words and ideas of the ancient Sanskrit thinkers to students of the present day. It is with enormous gratitude to his unstinting scholarly labours (I estimate he has logged well over a hundred thousand hours of research so far) that I offer this paper in his honour.

The oeuvre of the Kashmirian Tantric master Abhinavagupta (fl. c. 975–1015) is one of the many areas of research Professor Sanderson has mastered, and it is this author which the present paper treats. Specifically, we here focus on a trope found in Abhinavagupta's two commentaries on the *Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-kārikā* (īPK) of Utpaladeva, viz., that of an alchemical metaphor for spiritual transformation. These passages provide no small number of difficulties, because the text as we have it is not secure, and because some knowledge of Indian alchemy (*rasāyana*, *dhātu-śāstra*) is needed in order to translate it correctly. While I do not claim to have solved these problems, this paper may certainly contribute to our understanding of how Abhinavagupta thought about the process of spiritual transformation conferred by the uniquely potent insight (*jñāna*) and yoga offered by initiatory Śaivism. Specifically, we learn much about his usage of the key terms *samāveśa*, *turya*, and *turyātīta*, and it is hoped that

this paper advances our understanding of these topics, which are significant within Śaiva theology.*

2 The Pratyabhijñā Doctrine of the Fivefold Self

Some readers are no doubt aware that in Utpaladeva's ĪPK we find a teaching on the "layers" of the individuated self (see, e.g., III.1.8), parallel to the later Vedāntic teaching of five *kośas* based on *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.3–5.¹ This teaching, formed as Sanderson says on "slight scriptural precedent," is adopted by subsequent gurus of Utpala's lineage; for example, it has a prominent place in Kṣemarāja's *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*.² In this model, the self is said to be fourfold: void (*śūnya*), life-force (*prāṇa*), the subtle body consisting of the mind and its faculties (*puryaṣṭaka*, i.e. the *antaḥkaraṇa* plus *tanmātras*), and the physical body (*śarīra*). It is fivefold with the transindividual Power of Awareness (*cit*, *saṃvit*) that permeates the whole. In fact, it is not only *cit* that permeates the other levels: Kṣemarāja tells us that "it is clear that the very essence of *each* of these levels is the fact of its pervasion by all the loci of perception prior to it,"³ where "loci of perception" (*pramāṭṛ*) refers to these levels of embodiment as those realities with which contracted souls identify, and "prior to" means "more fundamental than."

Abhinavagupta adds to this teaching a homology implied but not spelled out in the ĪPK itself, one that assimilates these five levels to the five "phases of lucidity," as Vasudeva (2004) calls them: the states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep, the transcendental "fourth" state, and the state "beyond the fourth" (*jāgrat*, *svapna*, *suṣupta*, *turya*, and *turyātīta*). We will come to understand the last two terms as we proceed.

Our texts in this study are Abhinavagupta's two commentaries on the ĪPK, his *-vimarśinī* (hereafter ĪPV) and his *-vivṛti-vimarśinī* (ĪPVV). The former is his commentary on the *kārikās* themselves, the latter is his commentary on Utpaladeva's lost *Vivṛti* or longer auto-commentary. For both texts, we will

* An earlier version of this work is found in my unpublished doctoral dissertation (Wallis 2014).

1 "The *kośas*, mediated through the Pañcikaṛaṇa system ascribed to Śaṅkara, had become part of the [Deccani] vernacular tradition by the end of the twelfth [century, and proceeded from there into the pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition]." Jason Schwartz, personal communication, April 2018.

2 See, e.g., *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, chapter 7: *śūnya-prāṇa-puryaṣṭaka-śarīra-svabhāvatvāt catur-ātmā*.

3 *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, chapter 8: ... *dehādiṣu bhūmiṣu pūrva-pūrva-pramāṭṛ-vyāpti-sāratā-prathāyām*.

use the Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies (KSTS) edition. First, though, we will consider the two verses of the ĪPK that Abhinavagupta is commenting on, using Torella's critical edition (2002), and summarize Abhinava's initial remarks thereon. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

kalodbalitam etac ca cit-tattvaṃ kartṛtā-māyam |
acid-rūpasya śūnyāder mitaṃ guṇatayā sthitam ||

ĪPK III.2.11

And this Awareness-principle, consisting of [unlimited] Agency, [becomes] limited—[though] it is strengthened by partial agency (*kalā*)—abiding as a [mere] attribute in a person whose [habitual] nature is unconscious, [identifying as he does with] the void, [*prāṇa*, mind,] and [body].

mukhyatvaṃ kartṛtāyās tu bodhasya ca cid-ātmanah |
śūnyādaḥ tad-guṇe jñānaṃ tat-samāveśa-lakṣaṇam ||

III.2.12

By contrast, the characteristic of “immersion into That” is realization of the primacy of the Self-that-is-awareness as the [only] true Knower and Agent, and [a concomitant] insight regarding [the other layers of individuality,] the void, [*prāṇa*, mind] and [body], as mere attributes of it.⁴

Explaining the first of these verses in his ĪPV, Abhinava first describes how consciousness—which in its real nature is primordial, *a priori*, unlimited and free—comes to be in the degraded state we consider as normal. Through the power of his *māyā* expressed as the three *malas*, Śiva contracts himself into a limited form (*aṇu*, the individual soul), then equips himself with the five *kañcukas* beginning with *kalā* (cf. ĪPK III.1.9), resulting in a being that identifies itself with what is actually objective, that is, the body, mind, *prāṇa*, and void

4 While these verses have been translated a number of times (cf. Torella 2002, 202–203), they are not easy to translate in such a way that the reader clearly understands what is being said. Here I capitalize words that are equivalent, on this view, to the Deity. An unobtrusive but important word here is *tat-*, which I have translated as That but could also have been rendered Him. Assuming that it is to be taken as compounded with what follows, then it must denote what one is immersing in. The use of a gender-neutral pronoun that could just as well denote neuter *tattvaṃ* as masculine Him (= Śiva) is exemplary of the decreased theism of the Pratyabhijñā phase of the tradition.

(cf. ĪPK III.1.8).⁵ Identification with the void (*śūnya*) can be identification with the state of deep dreamless sleep (as Abhinava states it here) but also, and more importantly, the void is the considered the primary locus of the limited “I” (see ĪPK III.2.13), which, being in reality empty (*śūnya*), vainly seeks to reify itself through identification with the body, mind, and *prāṇa*. This identification persists in all three states of ordinary consciousness (waking, dreaming, and deep sleep).⁶

Note that the real “I” is not here the core of an individual being as in Sāṅkhya, but the one transindividual Self of all beings. The individual soul (*aṇu*) only exists as a particular phase of that transindividual Consciousness, specifically, an expression of the contracted state of bondage. Thus, one may argue, the non-dual Śaiva’s “I” is closer to the view of the Vijñānavāda Buddhists than it is to the *ātman* of Vedānta. (Even the dualistic Śaivas, who did posit a separate and eternal soul, distanced their view of the *ātman* from those of the brāhmanical schools (Watson 2006).)

3 The Exegesis of the *Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī*

Now let us look more closely at our first text as Abhinavagupta charts the trajectory from bondage towards liberation, commenting on ĪPK III.2.12 (KSTS vol. 33, p. 230–231):

yadā tūkta-gurūpadeśādi-diśā tenaivāhaṃ-bhāvena svātantryātmanā vyāpakatva-nityatvādi-dharma-parāmarśam ātmani vidadhatā tataḥ śūnyā-deḥ prameyād unmajjya iva āsyate tadā turyāvasthā⁷ |

But when, through realizing [that the divine] qualities such as all-pervasiveness and eternality apply to oneself, by having the experience of the [real] “I” whose nature is [unqualified] freedom—[an experience]

- 5 For example, Abhinava writes *idantāpanna-dehādi-śūnyānta-prameya-bhāga-nimagnatvāt prameyam, yo gauro, yaḥ sukhī, yas tṛṣṭo, yaḥ sarva-rūpa-rahitaḥ so 'ham*: “The levels from body to the Void are objects of awareness, [but] because of the submerging of a portion of that objectivity, [there arise the erroneous cognitions] ‘I am the one who is pale’ (body), ‘who is happy’ (mind), ‘who is thirsty’ (*prāṇa*), ‘who was devoid of all appearances’ (void)” (KSTS vol. 33, p. 230).
- 6 *seyaṃ jāgrat-svapna-suṣupta-rūpā saṃsārāvasthā* (KSTS vol. 33, p. 230). The illusion of separate individuality persists even in the deep sleep state because of the presence of the *saṃ-skāras* (cf. ĪPK III.2.13).
- 7 *turyāvasthā*] conj. em. Torella (email communication, July 2014); *turyātītāvasthā* Ed.

pointed out by the guru's instruction and other methods that I have explained—[and] having therefore emerged as it were from [identification with] the objective knowables of the Void etc., and [as a result] abiding [in one's real nature], then *that* is the [transcendent] state [called] the Fourth.

*yadāpi parāmrṣṭa-tathābhūta-vaibhava-nityatva-aiśvaryādi-dharma-saṃbhedenā*⁸ *eva ahaṃ-bhāvena śūnyādi-deha-dhātva-antaṃ siddharasayogena vidhyate, tadāsyāṃ turyātīta*⁹ *—daśāyāṃ tad api prameyatām ujha-tīva* |

When further [the layers of the objective “self”] from the Void to the [very] tissues of the body are transmuted¹⁰ by means of the “alchemical elixir,” i.e. by the [fundamental] “I”-sense which is certainly conjoined with the qualities of magnificent power (*vaibhava*), eternality, sovereignty, [and

8 *-vaibhava-nityatva-aiśvaryādi-dharma-saṃbhedenā*] conj. em.; *vaibhava-nityaiśvaryādi-dharma-saṃbhedenā* KSTS ed.; *vaibhavādi-nityaiśvaryā-saṃbhedenā* Iyer & Pandey ed.

9 *turyātīta-*] conj. em. Torella (email communication, July 2014); *turya-* Ed.

10 Āyurveda scholar Dominik Wujastyk (of the University of Alberta) recommended this translation of *vidhyate* as “transmuted” (over that of “penetrated”) based on his reading of the *rasāyana* literature, especially the *Rasa-ratna-samuccaya* 8.94–95 and the *Bodhinī* thereon (email communications, 7 and 9 July 2014). Ashok Aklujkar also contributed a citation from the same text (5.11: *vedhajam suvarṇam—pārada-vedhena saṃjātaṃ suvarṇam*), which I believe verifies that *vedha* must mean transmutation (or similar), not piercing or penetration, though he would wish to retain the latter translation (email, 7 July 2014). (See also n. 27 below.) The alchemical metaphor here (elaborated further in the ĪPVV, *infra*) is of course not original to Abhinavagupta; we find it earlier in the well-known eighth century Buddhist text, the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, 1.10cd: *rasajātaṃ atīva vedhanīyaṃ sudṛḍhaṃ grhṇata bodhicitta-saṃjñam*, which I translate as “Firmly take hold of the alchemical elixir called Intent to Awaken (*bodhicitta*), which must be thoroughly transmuted.” Vesna Wallace (1997, 19) translates almost identically; in this verse, it appears, *rasajāta* is unmodified mercury that must be properly transmuted to be safe for consumption, implying that some refinement of the initial raw *bodhicitta* is necessary. (However, Matthew Kapstein [email communication, 9 July 2014] points out that both the Sanskrit commentator and the Tibetan translation do not take *vedhanīyaṃ* as translated above, but rather in the active sense, “able to transform [this *aśuci-pratimā* to a *jina-ratna-pratimā*, 1.10ab]”—e.g., Prajñākaramati glosses *atyuccavedhakāritvād—atīva vedhanīyam*.) Our passage does support this latter reading, for here we certainly have *siddha-rasa* denoting a mercury preparation that can transmute base metals into gold (or more accurately, extract gold from base metals). Thus, the pure dynamic power of awareness called *cit* is here compared to a chemical catalyst: it needs no refinement or alteration, but can alter that which it contacts.

others] of such nature that are cognized [as aspects of that “I”], then in this state [called] Beyond the Fourth they abandon (as it were) their objectivity.

Having introduced the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, Abhinavagupta now discusses *turya* and *turyātīta*, which complete the set of the “phases of lucidity.” Now, in this passage, I take Abhinava to be reconciling two modes of realization: one gnostic, rapid, transcendent, and liberating, and the other yogic, gradual, immanent, and *siddhi*-conferring. Here, the Fourth state is the gnostic realization that one has wrongly taken objective realities to be the self; it is waking up out of the trance of believing “I am the body,” etc. Such a realization can be sudden because it requires no transformation, only a recognition of what is already the case, including a reflective awareness (*parāmarśa*) of the qualities (*dharma*s) of one’s real self. As Torella puts it, “the adept, after becoming aware of the supreme nature of the I, becomes as though withdrawn from the knowable which formed his fictitious identity” (2002, xxxiv). *Turya* is then an *exclusive* kind of realization. By contrast, the process of *turyātīta* (“Beyond the Fourth,” but not actually a fifth state)—here described in terms of penetrating the layers of that constructed identity with this deeper awareness or transcendent I-sense—is *inclusive* and gradual, requiring yogic practice. In the *turyātīta* experience, the objective layers of the limited self are seen as expressions of the transindividual divine consciousness, and thus are recovered as part of a greater “I” than the one they were excluded from in the previous *turya* state. This process by which the *cidātman* penetrates the layers of body, etc., is likened to alchemical transformation, whereby the elixir called *siddha-rasa* transforms a base metal into gold (or extracts the gold from the base metal).¹¹ The use of the word *iva* (last word of the passage just cited) denotes that the body etc. do not actually cease to be knowables when they come to be seen as nothing but crystallizations of the dynamic “liquid” essence of consciousness in the *turyātīta* state,¹² just as the previous *iva* denoted that emerging from

11 Cf. *Kulārṇava-tantra* 14.89: *rasendreṇa yathā viddham ayaḥ suvarṇatāṃ vrajet | dikṣā-viddhas tathā hy ātmā śivatvaṃ labhate prīye ||*, “Just as iron penetrated by mercury becomes gold, even so a soul penetrated by initiation becomes divine.” Torella writes, “[here] the various components of the levels of the limited subject are gradually penetrated by the elixir of the I, until they become, so to speak, transfigured, removed from their nature of [being merely] knowable realities” (2002, xxxiv).

12 Kṣemarāja’s phrase, *cidrasāśyānatā-prathanātmā samāveśaḥ*, in the context of a parallel discussion, in *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, chapter 19.

identification with knowables does not mean completely leaving them behind (which would entail physical death).

Now, the coherence of this passage only emerges after the emendation to the edition suggested by Torella and adopted here, that of exchanging the words *turya* and *turyātīta*. This may seem a dramatic emendation, but it would make little sense for Abhinava to list the three states of ordinary consciousness, then proceed to *turyātīta* when what is obviously called for is *turya*, “the Fourth.” Further, it would make no sense to argue that *turya* is an extension of the *turyātīta* state without completely ignoring the meaning of those two words; but the other way around exactly matches the meaning of the words.

But what would occasion such a confusion in the edition? It may well be that later scribes (for we do find the edition’s reading in the manuscripts), influenced by the more transcendentalist mainstream Indian philosophies, simply could not imagine that *turya* could denote the transcendent state while *turyātīta*, which is obviously intended as the higher attainment, embraced immanence. But this is precisely in line with Abhinavagupta’s Kaula view, for with the text emended as Torella suggests, we have here a model that is central to the Kaula Kālikula, which Sanderson characterizes as “transcendence followed by an expansion that causes the state of enlightenment to pervade the transcended” (Sanderson 2007, 402–403). The *Śivasūtra* (well known to Abhinava) inherits this model, teaching the “establishing of this realization first through withdrawal into the heart of consciousness and then through its expansion into the states that constitute the mundane awareness of the bound” (ibid.), which precisely characterizes our ĪPV passage. For example, in the *Śivasūtra* (1.7) we find the teaching that the Fourth state can spread to the ordinary states of *jāgrat*, *svapna*, and *suṣupta*, imbuing them with awakened consciousness, which the *Śivasūtra* calls *turyābhoga* but which is simply *turyātīta* under another name.¹³ Of course, an examination of all the extant ĪPV manuscripts, preferably after forming a critical stemma, would be necessary to make a final ruling on the reading of the passage.

To return to our text, Abhinava concludes his ĪPV discussion of ĪPK III.2.12 by informing us that *turya* and *turyātīta* are forms of *samāveśa*, which, when it becomes continuous and stable (*āsyate*), is itself liberation.

seyam dvayy api jīvanmuktāvasthā samāveśa ity uktā śāstre, samyag-āveśanam eva hi tatra tatra pradhānam, tat-siddhaye tūpadeśāntarāṇi |

13 *jāgrat-svapna-suṣupta-bhede turyābhoga-sambhavaḥ.*

This twofold state of one who is liberated while living is called *samāveśa* in the scriptures. For complete entering¹⁴ is itself primary in each of these; other teachings are [only] for its attainment.

This is a surprising statement, perhaps, for I know of no scriptural passage in which these two states are called *samāveśa*. What Abhinava wants us to understand, I think, is that when the scriptures use the term *samāveśa*, they are always referring to one of these two states. In *turya*, then, one fully and directly penetrates into one's true nature, while in *turyātīta*, one causes that nature to fully and gradually penetrate the objective levels of one's limited selfhood; for this reason they can both be appropriately referred to with the word *samāveśa* (from *ā√viś*, to penetrate). Abhinava continues:

dehapāte tu parameśvara evaika rasaḥ, iti kaḥ kutra katham samāviśet

But at the fall of the body, there is only one essence: the Supreme Lord. Thus, who could enter (/immerse), where and how?

In other words, it is only meaningful to speak of *samāveśa* in the context of embodiment, for only in that context are there apparently differentiated layers of selfhood such that there can be an “entry” of the locus of identity (*ahaṁ-bhāva*) from the body, etc., into *cit*, or an “entry” of *cit* into one of the layers of limited selfhood (*dehādi*)—the former entry being *turya* and the latter *turyātīta*.

4 The Parallel Passage in the ĪPVV

The corresponding ĪPVV passage (KSTS vol. 65, 327–331) is similar but sheds more light on some important points while simultaneously greatly complicating the issue. Abhinava elaborates further on the alchemical metaphor briefly introduced in the ĪPV; here, though, if we do not emend the published text, he appears to have changed his view from that seen in the ĪPV. There the alchemical metaphor was reserved for the *turyātīta* state, while here we see *two* stages of the alchemical metaphor, corresponding to both *turya* and *turyātīta*.¹⁵ Furthermore, it seems that he now posits two different modalities for attaining both

14 Abhinava is telling us that the *sam-* in *samāveśa* is in the sense of *samyāñc*.

15 Though Torella proposes an emendation which would bring the ĪPVV in line with the ĪPV (see below).

states, one gnostic and one yogic. (Here I differ from Torella's 1994 hypothesis that a single *turya* state bifurcates into two kinds of *turyātīta*.) Abhinava writes:

etad ajñāna-rūpa-mala-pratidvandvitayā samāveśa-lakṣaṇaṁ satya-sva-rūpe samyag āsamantāt praveśa-lakṣaṇaṁ jñānaṁ, yal-lābhena jñānī, yad-abhyāseṇa ca deha-prāṇādāv ananta-saṁvid-dharmātmaka-vibhava-samāsādanāt yogī bhavati |

[Utpala teaches that] the “distinguishing mark of *samāveśa*” is “insight,” since it is opposed to the Impurity that is ignorance, being characterized by a perfect (*samyag*), that is to say complete (*ā samantāt*), entry into one's true nature,¹⁶ obtaining which one becomes a gnostic (*jñānī*), and practicing which, on the levels of body, *prāṇa*, etc., one becomes a *yogī*, due to attaining the glory (*vibhava*) that is an intrinsic quality of infinite Consciousness.

etad uktaṁ bhavati—yadā ahaṁbhāvaḥ svāntrya-diśaiva vyāpitva-nit-yatvādi-parāmarśa-balāt śūnyādeḥ prameyikṛtād unmajjiya iva āste, tadā turyatā;¹⁷ tadāpi ca śūnyādi-saṁskāro 'pi asti,—iti vyatireka¹⁸-turyātīta-samatā eva |

This is said [already in the *īpv*]: when the [true] I-sense, due to the power of the realization of its all-pervasiveness, eternity, etc., through the [scriptural] indication of its [innate] autonomy, emerges as it were from the objectified [levels of limited selfhood]—Void etc.—and abides [in its real nature], then that is the state [called] the Fourth. Nevertheless [in that state] the impressions of the Void, etc., still remain. Thus this has exactly the same [nature] as [that which is called] the “separated *turyātīta*.”

16 We have here an implicit analysis of the word *samāveśa*: *samyag* and/or *āsamantāt* + *praveśa* = *samāveśa*.

17 *turyatā*] conj. em. Torella (email communication, 16 July 2014); *turyātītātā* Ed. Without this emendation, the following comment *turyātīta-samatā eva* makes little sense.

18 *iti vyatireka*] conj. em. Torella; *iti avyatireka* Ed. Following this emendation (proposed in an email, 15 July 2014) we can take *vyatireka* in the sense of *kevala* or *kaivalya*, i.e., a spiritual state which is separated from the *saṁskāras* but does not dissolve them. Even if we do not emend, we can still argue for the same meaning: *avyatireka*- could indicate that he is “unseparated” from his *saṁskāras* in the sense of still having them, though they are now powerless to obscure his real nature. However, the emendation makes for a clearer meaning.

Though I am not aware of another usage of the technical term *vyatireka-turyātīta*, the meaning here is clear enough (after applying Torella's suggested emendation): the gnostic who does no yoga enters into a transcendental *turya* state in which he is authentically immersed in his essence, but the impressions of limited selfhood from which he has successfully separated (*vyatireka*) himself from remain undissolved (thus his social self might exhibit little to no change). Thus, Abhinava argues, the attainment of *turyātīta* of the *vyatireka* variety is in fact no different from the *turya* state itself. This obviously sets up the possibility of a higher attainment, an *avyatireka-turyātīta* in which one dissolves those impressions through practice, allowing the practitioner to be not-separated (*avyatireka*) from his body, mind, etc., yet still liberated; i.e. an immanentist state of liberation.

It is hard to see what Abhinavagupta has gained here, because in the simpler ĪPV model, *turya* was the transcendental state and *turyātīta* the immanent (and therefore higher) attainment. Perhaps he simply wants to indicate here that either state can be attained by either gnostic or yogic means. But there is more evidence to examine before drawing conclusions.

Now we see the yogic version of the *turya* → *turyātīta* progression. In the following paragraph (continuing directly from the previous ĪPVV citation), note that the first part closely parallels the ĪPV passage we have seen above (pp. 147–149), while the second part is new data.

*yadā tu parāmrṣṭa-nityatva-vyāpitvādi-dharmakaiśvarya-ghanātmanā
ahambhāva-siddharasena śūnyādi-deha-dhātv-antaṃ¹⁹ vidhyate yena
prameyatvāt tat cyavata iva, tadā turya-daśā;*

But when [all the layers of limited selfhood] from the Void to the tissues of the body are penetrated by the “alchemical elixir” that is the [true] I-sense—replete with the sovereignty in which the qualities of eternality, all-pervasiveness, etc., are cognized [as aspects of that “I”]—through which [penetration] they abandon (as it were) their objectivity, then that [too] is [called] the Fourth State.

*yadāpi viddho 'sau prānadehādi-dhātuḥ saṃvid-rasena abhiniviṣṭo 'tyantaṃ
kanaka-dhātur iva jīrṇaḥ kriyate yena sa druta-rasa iva ābhāti kevalaṃ
tat-saṃskāraḥ, tadāpi turyātīta-daśā sā bhavati |*

19 Oriental Research Library manuscript no. 2403 has *śūnyādi-deha-dhāturtvaṃ* here.

When, further, these elements of *prāṇa*, body, etc., [already] penetrated by the elixir of Awareness, are thoroughly permeated [by it], they are [then] “digested” like the element of gold [is by mercury], by which [process] their purifier, the “liquefied essence” [of Awareness] as it were, alone remains—then that too is the state Beyond the Fourth.

Here we have a clear progression of *turya* → *turyātīta* without the necessity of emendation. Or do we? According to the earlier ĪPV passage, in the Fourth state, one simply transcends the objective layers of the self, rather than those layers losing their objectivity. Thus, either Abhinavagupta has changed his view since writing the ĪPV, or an emendation is indeed necessary here. If the latter, we could either emend *tat* to *sa* (“one leaves behind their objectivity”) or we could emend *turya-daśā* (in the first paragraph above) to *turyātīta-daśā*. The latter solution, tentatively proposed by Torella in an email communication (July 2014), seems to me to ignore the grammar that suggests two stages here (the first structured around the relative/correlative *yadā tu ... tadā*, and the second around *yadāpi ... tadāpi*); or rather, more correctly, he sees the grammar (after his emendation) as referring not to two successive stages but to two kinds of *turyātīta*, the *api* in *tadāpi* informing us that “thus, this too is *turyātīta*.” However, then we have the problem that two apparently distinct stages of the same process are denoted by the very same word, *turyātīta*. That they *are* distinct stages is evidenced by the fact that in the first phase (the paragraph ending with the compound *turya-daśā*), we see the verb *√vidh* (penetrate²⁰), and in the second (*turyātīta*) phase we have *√vidh* followed by *abhinivīś*, which here denotes a further development of the same process (as also indicated by the adverb *atyantam*, construing with *abhinivīṣṭa*). Furthermore, Abhinava’s recapitulation of this discussion (KSTS vol. 65, 348) would seem to argue against Torella’s conjecture here. On the other hand, if we did adopt the emendation, it would allow us to preserve the notion seen in the ĪPV that *turya* is the gnostic attainment and *turyātīta* the yogic one. It seems to me, however, that this creates more problems than it solves.

In summary, by not adopting the emendation, we see here a yogic²¹ version of the Fourth state that can be developed into the state Beyond the Fourth, thus indicating a change in Abhinavagupta’s thought since the ĪPV.

20 Note that the verb is here being used in a more precise sense than in the ĪPV passage, in which (I argue) it means “transmute.” See also the extended discussion on *vedha-dīkṣā* in TĀ 29, translated in an appendix to my doctoral dissertation (Wallis 2014).

21 Besides the alchemical metaphor, Abhinava signals to us that this is a yogic process with the word *aiśvarya*, which, like *v(a)ibhava*, often relates to yogic power (*siddhi*).

To explain in more detail my understanding of this rather difficult passage, the process goes like this: having inundated/penetrated (*viddha*) the objective layers of selfhood (body etc.) with the “elixir” of one’s ultimate nature (i.e., *saṃvid-rasa*, autonomous dynamic consciousness), the “gold” hidden within them is extracted, i.e. their dependence on consciousness as their substrate is revealed.²² When those layers have become completely permeated (*abhiniviṣṭo ’tyantam*), through, one presumes, further spiritual practice,²³ all trace of their objectivity (and the *saṃskāras* thereof) is “worn away” or “digested” (*jīṛṇa*) by the elixir of consciousness—as mercury eats up gold flakes—which thus becomes a single unitary mass of awareness (*prakāśa-ghanam eva saṃvid-rūpam*, cited *infra*).

Our understanding of Abhinava’s vision of this process depends in part on grasping his use of an alchemical metaphor rooted in the complex and often ambiguous *rasāyana* (alchemy, proto-chemistry) theories of medieval India. In this matter I was fortunate to receive the helpful comments of Professors Wujastyk and Houben (of the University of Alberta and the Sorbonne, respectively), who clarified that *jīṛṇa* here stands in for *jāraṇa*, one of the sixteen *rasa-saṃskāras* (alchemical processes). *Jāraṇa* can mean digestion, assimilation, or swallowing (in much the same sense that we speak of an acid “eating away” at a metal). Here the alchemical elixir of the metaphor is of course prepared mercury (*siddha-rasa*), which can indeed “digest” gold (the modern term is amalgamate).²⁴ That Abhinavagupta was aware of the basics of alchemy is confirmed by his use of the compound *druta-rasa*, for according to Houben, “initially the mercury remains as fluid as before it started to ‘eat’ the gold etc. but at a certain point its viscosity increases significantly ... [it] remains fluid or *druta* [only] as long as it is not saturated.”²⁵ Clearly, Abhinava wishes to emphasize that here this saturation does not occur, that Consciousness must be

22 Cf. *Sarvajñānottara* 1.5: *tāmrasyaiva tu hematvam antarlīnaṃ yathā sthitam | antarlīnaṃ tathā jñeyam śivatvaṃ pudgalasya tu* (“Just as gold is hidden within copper, in the same way the Divinity which a man seeks to know is hidden within [him].”).

23 In the present context, the nature of the yogic practice alluded to is very likely the proto-*kuṇḍalinīyoga* that Utpaladeva outlines at ĪPK III.2.19–20 and which was presumably elaborated in his *Vivṛti*. For Abhinava, such practice must be animated by *bhāvanā* (contemplative insight) to be truly effective.

24 This can be clearly seen in a video made by Dr. Andrea Sella (Department of Chemistry, University College London), which includes the following comment: “[In ancient times] mercury was absolutely essential ... in extracting gold and purifying it ... what gold can do is, it can actually dissolve in mercury” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKxCw889qck&feature=youtu.be>).

25 Email communication from Dr. Jan E.M. Houben, 7 July 2014.

understood purely as a catalyst (something that effects change but is not itself affected): it remains as it is, a dynamic “fluid” essence (*druta-rasa* = *cid-rasa*).

First, then, in this alchemical vision, the mercury transmutes the base metal into gold,²⁶ then “digests” or absorbs it without a (perceptible) trace (as can be seen in the chemistry video cited in note 24).²⁷ That is to say, if we follow the terms of the metaphor strictly, first the layers of body, etc., are experienced as expressions of the dynamic essence of awareness, then all the *saṃskāras* implanted in those layers through one’s earlier experience of them as other than awareness are dissolved or “digested.”

To summarize, if we are constituting and interpreting the text correctly, Abhinava has changed his view as follows: in the ĪPV, *turya* is an exclusive, gnostic, transcendental state and *turyātīta* an inclusive, yogic, immanent one (the progression from one to the other exemplifying the typical Kaula model of transcendence followed by pervasion), with the alchemical metaphor denoting only the *turyātīta* stage; whereas in the ĪPVV, there is a rapid gnostic version of *turya* progressing to *turyātīta* (in which *saṃskāras* are not dissolved) and a gradualist yogic version of the same (in which they are dissolved in the *turyātīta* phase), both stages (of the latter) being described in terms of the alchemical metaphor. In the second text, then, we have a fork in the road, giving us four stages, only two of which a given practitioner is likely to traverse.

Before we move on to examine the last version of the alchemical metaphor, we have one more problem with the present passage: how to interpret the final compound of the phrase *sa druta-rasa iva ābhāti kevalam tat-saṃskāraḥ*. Here I differ from Torella (2002, 209 n. 35), who seems to interpret it to mean that only the *saṃskāras* (impressions) of *śūnyādi-dehāntam* remain. However, that case was already specified for the first, gnostic *turyātīta* (*tadāpi ca śūnyādi-saṃskāro ’py asti*, above), and if that were intended here we would have nothing to differentiate the two *turyātītas* described. Thus I take *tat-saṃskāraḥ* in apposition to *druta-rasaḥ*, in the meaning “the purification (or refinement) of that,” or, as translated above on page 10, as a *bahuvrīhi* meaning “their purifier,” the antecedent of the neuter pronoun *tat* being *śūnyādi-dehāntam* in either

26 Even though professional alchemists must have known that mercury actually extracts gold from a base metal, rather than magically transmutes that metal into gold, *vedha* is certainly used in the sense of transmute or transform—see the citations in note 10, in one of which *vidh* is glossed with *pariṇāma* (*Rasa-ratna-samuccaya-bodhinī* ad 8.95). See also the relevant statement in Roṣu 1982, 366: “la transsubstantiation [alchimique] du corps (*deha-vedha*) étant calquée sur la transmutation des métaux vils (*loha-vedha*) ...” He cites *Rasārṇava* 12.165–166 in support (*ibid.*, note 21).

27 The reader who has German and wishes to know more about this arcane world of Indian alchemy is referred to Hellwig 2009.

case. Torella argues (email communication, 10 July 2014) that the *saṃskāras* of *śūnyādi-dehāntam* cannot be entirely dissolved here because then there would be no possibility of *saṃāveśa*, since, consciousness having become a single unitary mass, there would be nothing that could enter or be entered (cf. p. 151 *supra*). However, while Abhinava unambiguously does say this with regard to the after-death state (*dehāpāte tu eka-ghanā eva śivateti tadā saṃāveśādivyavahāro na kaścid*, KSTS vol. 65, 328), I am not at all sure that he thought it impossible to go beyond *saṃāveśa*, as generally understood, before death; after all, in a continuous nondual state of “complete immersion” (a new sense of *saṃāveśa* starting with Utpala’s usage; see Wallis 2014) there will no longer be any kind of “entry” or “penetration” (*ā√viś*) per se.

We need not speculate overmuch on this question, however, for we can find evidence to suggest that Abhinava did regard such supervision of *saṃāveśa* as possible. That evidence is found almost twenty pages further on in the ĪPVV (KSTS vol. 65, 348, commentary on ĪPK III.2.19), where he recaps his earlier discussion (our most recent passage above) but also adds new information:

aham ity eka-rasena anuvēdhe tu, yadā idantā ācchādītā bhavati, bhāvanā-sātmyād īśvara-sadāśīva-saṃvidi iva turya-daśāyāṃ rasa-viddha-tāmra-kanaka-nyāyena, yadā vā sarvathaiva pradhvaṃsitā vidrāvītā vā bhavati turyātīta-daśāyāṃ śākta-saṃvidi iva tan-nīja-rūpa-samyag-viddha-kanaka-rūpatātyanta-jaraṇāpādita-tat-saṃskāra-vaśa-pītātā²⁸-avaśeṣa-vidruta-rasa-nyāyena; tadā pūrṇa-svātantryollāsa eva deha eva sati api ...

In the [process of] transmutation by the “one taste” that is [the fundamental] “I,” when

[a] objectivity is covered, i.e. in the Fourth state [that arises] due to becoming habituated to meditative contemplation [on reality], in which one possesses the consciousness of Īśvara or Sadāśīva as it were, according to the maxim of gold [being extracted] from copper due to being penetrated by mercury,

28 *pītātā*] conj. em. Isabelle Ratié (email, July 2014); *pītalātā* Ed., though *pītātā* as “gold” is problematic. Another possibility is to not emend the text, and take it instead to be speaking of the digestion/dissolution of the brass or copper (*pīṭala*) that remains after gold has been extracted from it. This has not been adopted on the assumption that the present passage recaps the one on p. 153 *supra*. Also, I presume that Abhinavagupta, not being himself an alchemist, viewed the process of *vedha* as one of transmutation more than extraction—and if so, there would be no brass (or copper) left to digest. Further, the metaphor of transmutation suits his purposes better.

or when

[b] [objectivity] is completely destroyed or “liquefied”—i.e. in the state Beyond the Fourth, the level of Goddess-consciousness, as it were [śakta-saṃvit, i.e. śakti-tattva]—according to the maxim of liquid mercury thoroughly digesting the remaining “gold,” i.e. the power of the impression(s) of that [objectivity], which [now] have the appearance of gold [i.e., radiant and soft] due to having been thoroughly penetrated by the innate form of that [“I”/rasa],

then [in either case]

[c] there is simply the delightful blossoming of full autonomy, even while the body exists.²⁹

This passage features a piling on of parenthetical phrases that is rather easier to understand in the Sanskrit than in literal English translation;³⁰ I have illustrated the basic structure here as “when a) or b), then c).” Several things become

29 Some parallel passages: cf. TĀ 14.12, TĀ 5.151 (*svayambhāsātmanānena tādātmyaṃ yāty ananyadhīḥ | śivena hematām yadvat tāmraṃ sūtena vedhitam ||*), and Yogarāja’s commentary ad *Paramārthasāra* 96, a verse on *anupāya* and *atitvra-śaktipāta*, the effect of which is compared by the commentator to alchemical transformation by means of *siddha-rasa* (*yathā tāmra-dravyaṃ siddharasa-pātāt suvarṇabhavati*). Note that later in the same passage the aspirant is referred to as *anugraha-śakti-viddha-hṛdayasya*, “one whose heart has been penetrated/transmuted by the power of divine grace (i.e., śaktipāta).” We find the same terminology used with reference to *dikṣā*, e.g. in the *Kulārṇava-tantra* (14.89): *rasendreṇa yathā viddha-mayaḥ suvarṇatām vrajet | dikṣā-viddhas tathā hy ātmā śivatvaṃ labhate priye ||*, “Just as [a metal] penetrated by mercury becomes gold, even so a soul penetrated by initiation becomes divine.” Cf. Goodall 2004, 402 note 904:

The conception that gold can be created out of copper with an alchemical preparation is, as Prof. Isaacson has pointed out to me, commonly used in tantras as an image for the irreversible transformation that takes place in *dikṣā*. See, e.g., *Kiraṇa* 59.36c–38b ... And cf. *Sarvajñānottara* 1.6 (Devakoṭṭai ed.): *rasa-viddhaṃ yathā tāmraṃ hematvaṃ pratipadyate | tathātmā jñāna-sambandhāt śivatvaṃ pratipadyate ||*. Cf. also *Haravijaya* 6.137 ... In his commentary thereon Alaka cites the following verse: *rasa-ghṛṣṭaṃ yathā tāmraṃ na bhūyaḥ tāmratām vrajet | evaṃ yuktāḥ śivatvena na bhūyaḥ paśūtām vrajet*.

I render the last verse cited as: “Just as copper rubbed with mercury [becomes gold and] does not again become copper, in the same way one united with Divinity does not again become a bound soul.” Goodall informs me (email communication, 13 July 2014) that the *Sarvajñānottara* verse cited in his footnote (viz., 1.6) is the most typical form of the maxim; the verse immediately preceding it is cited above in note 22.

30 And I wonder if the largely redundant first part of the long compound (*tan-nija-rūpa-samyag-viddha-kanaka-rūpatā*), which fits awkwardly, might have been a marginal annotation in a manuscript that got incorporated into the main text. However, it may be more likely that Abhinava is here incorporating language that Utpala used in his lost *Vivṛti*, as he tends to repeat Utpala’s compounds with added glosses.

clear from this paragraph, despite its density. First, if my translation is correct, it corroborates my reading of the previous alchemical passage. Second, it confirms that the *saṃskāras* are indeed “thoroughly digested” in the state Beyond the Fourth (*atyanta-jaraṇāpādita-tat-saṃskāra-*), and that this can occur with the body still existing (*deha eva sati api*). However, having said this, we must note that “thoroughly digested” does not mean “entirely destroyed” if Abhinavagupta is holding strictly to the terms of his metaphor; for when mercury absorbs gold leaf such that the gold is entirely dissolved and thus completely invisible, it is in fact still present in the mercury and can be retrieved by evaporating the latter in a retort. We have no way of knowing if Abhinava knew this, but if so, Torella could well be correct in arguing that a subtle trace of the *saṃskāras* (which are themselves subtle traces) can remain in the *turyātīta-daśā*. What certainly is entirely dispelled or dissolved (*sarvathaiva pradhvaṃsitā vidrāvītā vā*) in that state is *objectivity*, which was only “covered” (*ācchādītā*) by subjectivity in the *turya* state.

We find similar language in chapter three of the *Pratyabhijñā-hṛdaya*, authored by Abhinavagupta's disciple Kṣemarāja, where the *Sadāśiva-tattva* is described in these terms: “[a level of consciousness] in which an implicit and indistinct objectivity is covered by [the predominant] subjectivity [literally, ‘I-ness’]” (*sadāśiva-tattve ahantācchādītāsphuṭedantā-mayaṃ*).³¹ Thus, according to the *Pratyabhijñā* schema, abiding in *turya* means achieving the *īśvara*- or *sadāśiva-tattva* and abiding in *turyātīta* means reaching the *śakti-tattva*. In either case the result is the “delightful blossoming of full autonomy” (*pūrṇa-svāntaryollāsa*), i.e. liberation. But if the yogic/alchemical *turyātīta* is equivalent to reaching *śakti-tattva*, are we supposed to understand that the gnostic *turyātīta* reaches *śiva-tattva*, despite the fact that the latter *turyātīta* does not dissolve the *saṃskāras* and the former does? If so, does Abhinava mean to imply subtly that Śakti is in reality higher than Śiva? This would contradict the mainstream doctrines of Śaivism, but not of the Krama, the sect of Abhinava's first initiation. We know from the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra*, Abhinava's root-text, that the *tattvas* of *Sadāśiva* and *Īśvara* are indeed associated with the Fourth state and that “Śiva and Śakti exist in the state Beyond the Fourth” (2.28c–29b³²). So we would expect that the two *turyātītas* are associated with *tattvas* 1 and 2. But which is which?

31 However, Kṣemarāja loc. cit. posits *īśvara-tattva* as a level in which subjectivity and objectivity are equal and opposite, whereas in our present passage *Sadāśiva* and *Īśvara* are not differentiated, both being described as a level at which objectivity is “covered.”

32 See Vasudeva 2004, 209–210.

The reader will recall that we looked ahead eighteen pages in our primary source to see how Abhinavagupta recapitulated his alchemical metaphor. Now we return to our main passage (KSTS vol. 65, 330) to address the questions just raised. First we see that the distinction we have posited between the gnostic and yogic paths to liberation is not as clear-cut as it would seem:

yadā tu dehādeḥ kiṃ tattvam iti cintopakramaṃ prakāśa-ghanam eva saṃvid-rūpam iti, tadā bodha-svarūpikṛtaṃ tad-rasānuviddham iva³³ śūṇyādi-dehāntam avabhāti. iti abhyāsāt tasya saṃvid-dharmāḥ śakti-viśeṣāḥ samyag āviśanto vibhūtīr utthāpayanti. na abhyāse 'pi tu tat-kṣaṇāveśa eva ānandodbhava-kampa-nidrā-vyāpti-rūpa-ghūrṇy-āvirbhāvana-krameṇa jīvanmuktatā-lābhaḥ |

When one begins to contemplate “What is the reality of the body, etc.?” [and subsequently realizes] “it is simply a form of awareness, replete with the Light of Consciousness,” then those [levels] from the Void to the body manifest as [they really are,] of one essence with Awareness, as if transmuted by its elixir. Thus, due to practicing [this insight], the qualities of His consciousness, which are aspects of *śakti*, fully penetrate [those various levels], causing the [various] powers (*vibhūti*) to arise. But even without practice, in the [rare] case of an instantaneous immersion into That, one obtains the state of liberation-in-life through the process of the direct experience of [the Five Mystic States]: Bliss, Ascent, Trembling, Sleep, and “Whirling,” which means Pervasion.

This passage serves as an explanation of *tat-śakti-samāveśa* in Utpala's *Vṛtti* on III.2.12. The passage confirms for us that Abhinava sees *samā√viś* (= *atyantam abhini√viś* in the previous iteration of the alchemical metaphor) as denoting the further development of the process first denoted by *√vidh*. More importantly, here we find crucial evidence that the distinction between the yogic and gnostic in Abhinavagupta's thought is not as clear-cut as we have been led to expect: in this passage, a contemplation (*cintā*) on the nature of reality leads to a realization that entails a spiritual transformation metaphorically described as alchemical transmutation (= *turya* stage), which then may be stabilized and enhanced with yogic practice such that the qualities of this deeper awareness (e.g., *svātantrya-śakti*) come to fully penetrate or infuse (*samā√viś*)

33 *iva*] conj. em.; *eva* Ed.

all the layers of limited selfhood (= *turyātīta* stage). Gnostic realization is here inseparably wedded to the *pañcāvasthāḥ* or Five Mystic States that we see repeatedly in the Kaula scriptures. This emphasis on direct experience (*āvir-bhāvana*) demonstrates that Abhinava's understanding of the path of the *jñānī* is not one of intellectual or conceptual realization, but rather one of insights into the nature of reality so powerful that they spontaneously bring on psychophysical experiences.

Curiously, he uses the phrase "instantaneous immersion" or *kṣaṇāveśa* in describing gnostic realization but then immediately follows it with the term *krama*, denoting a sequential process of passing through the Five States. I would hypothesize that Abhinava is saying that each of the Five States is (or rather can be) an example of *kṣaṇāveśa*; even though there is a process, it may unfold spontaneously and in sudden leaps, in connection with the *jñānī*'s deep contemplation of the nature of reality.

At any rate, now our reading of two distinct tracks (or two distinct *turyātītas*), one gnostic and one yogic, is problematized. Yet we cannot abandon it, for on the very next page of our text (KSTS vol. 65, 331) we find the following:

turya iti etad-daśā-samāpatti-paryanta-rūpā api turyātītātā tatraiva uktā, vyatirekeṇa tu śūṇyāder avasthāpane bodhasya turyātītātā tatraiva uktā—śuddhātmatā niṣkalatā śuddha-caitanya itī sāmānya-darśaneṣu sarvot-tīrṇaika-tadrūpa-vedakeṣu darśiteti sūcayati |

The state of *turyātīta* taught [above] with reference to that [blossoming of insight³⁴] is simply the [further] extension of the realization of the state called *turya*. But that state of *turyātīta* was taught there as a state of awareness in which Void etc. remain [as objective knowables], but is separated (*vyatireka*) [from them].³⁵ This is the state referred to as "the pure Self," "the Formless," and "pure Consciousness" in the Saiddhāntika scriptures. It is taught with reference to those who know the Deity³⁶ solely as [being] all-transcendent; so [Utpaladeva] indicates [in his *Vivṛti*].

34 Inferring the antecedent of *tatra* from the previous line: *jñānollāsa itī ajñāna-vigamād advaya-bodha-prasaraṇād ullāsa[h]*, "the blossoming of insight is a blossoming that results from the departure of ignorance and the [concomitant] spread of nondual awareness."

35 Exactly how to construe the grammar of this sentence is not clear to me, nor am I convinced that the text is secure.

36 For Abhinava's use of *tadrūpa* to mean the Deity, see, e.g., TĀ 1.173c–174b.

Again we are presented with the notion of a *vyatireka-turyātīta*, though here its transcendental as opposed to its gnostic character is stressed. Since this state is associated with the transcendent deity (*sarvottīrṇaika-tadrūpa*, a kenning for *Anāśrita-śiva*, usually considered *tattva* 1), we are inclined to conclude that, as suggested previously, Abhinava wishes us to understand that the *turyātīta* which accesses the *śakti-tattva* is in fact the superior one. Perhaps this is not stated explicitly because it is a subversive view relative to the mainstream of the tradition.

Here Abhinava criticizes the exclusively transcendentalist view of the Saidhāntikas, since as a nondualist Śākta he wishes to privilege the Kaula “immanentist” view. Likewise, his disciple Kṣemarāja argues that the defining feature of their lineage (*trikādi-darśana*, meaning the view of the Trika-Krama synthesis uniquely expounded by Abhinavagupta) is the view that the Divine Self is simultaneously transcendent of all *and* immanent in all.³⁷ Now, since the transcendental *turyātīta* is identified with the teachings of the *sāmānya-śāstra* (i.e., right-current Śaiva Siddhānta), we would expect the yogic-cum-alchemical *turyātīta* to be identified with the *viśeṣa-śāstra* (i.e., left-current Śākta streams), and just such identification is found by Torella (2002, xxxiv note 52) on the same page of the ĪPVV as the passage just quoted, but to me the text is not so clear. Apparently glossing *viśeṣa-darśaneṣu* in Utpala’s lost *Vivṛti*, Abhinava says (KSTS vol. 65, 331): “The specialized views are those which predominantly teach the nonduality of Power [and the Power-holder, i.e. Consciousness]; they are superior (*viśeṣa*) because they teach the Power-characteristics of the Self, [and thereby] lead one to the direct experience [of that]” (*viśeṣa-darśaneṣu iti śāktādvaita-pradhāneṣu, viśeṣaḥ śakti-lakṣaṇa ātmano darśyate sākṣātkāraṇ nīyate yeṣu*). There is no explicit correlation with the second, yogic *turyātīta*, but perhaps we can assume it because the power element of the self (*vai-bhavādi*) is repeatedly mentioned in the passages we have examined in connection with that *turyātīta*.

37 From chapter 8 of his *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*: “The Tāntrikas (= Saidhāntikas and other ritualists) hold that the reality of the Self is all-transcending. Those attached to traditions such as the Kula say it is all-embodying. Those who hold [our] viewpoint of the Trika and [the Krama] hold that it is [simultaneously] all-transcending and all-embodying” (*viśvot-tīrṇam ātma-tattvam iti tāntrikāḥ, viśva-mayam iti kulādy-āmnāya-nivīṣṭāḥ, viśvottīrṇam viśvamayaṃ ca iti trikādi-darśana-vidāḥ*).

5 Summary of the Data

Now to summarize what we have learned about these two states of immersion.³⁸ The primary distinction Abhinava wishes to make is that the first *turya* → *turyātīta* constitutes an “active” entry/immersion into one’s essence-nature (one’s *satya-svarūpa* or *ahambhāva*, which is *cidānanda* and *prakāśa-ghana*), and the second *turya* → *turyātīta* denotes a “passive” process by which one is entered; i.e., that in which the various layers of selfhood are permeated by that ultimate I-sense (note that it is passive only in the grammatical sense, for the yogic method involves considerably more work). This distinction is summed up as *āveśyāveśaka-bhāvaḥ* (p. 331). Since the yogic process is a gradual one, differences are noted between *turya* and *turyātīta*, whereas the gnostic *turyātīta* is said to be identical in nature (though presumably not in degree) to the *turya* that precedes it (*turyatā ... turyātīta-samatā*).

Table 6.1 summarizes the data in tabular form (items in parentheses are only implicit in the primary source text).

6 Problems of Interpretation

To close, I will briefly discuss some interesting ambiguities and difficulties of these sections of the ĪPV and ĪPVV, apart from those already discussed above and in the notes. The first problem is the one raised (but not discussed) by Torella (2002, xxxv note 52), who tells us that Abhinavagupta’s inclinations lie towards the second *turyātīta*, the yogic-alchemical one. This seems evident from the passages we have translated here, but on the other hand it is surprising, because in general Abhinava tends to privilege the gnostic over the yogic in his work. Perhaps the context of a clearly liberation-focused yoga outlined in ĪPK III.2.19–20 allowed him to endorse a term that otherwise so commonly denotes the pursuit of *siddhi* and *bhoga* in the Śaiva literature.

But we have another problem with Torella’s hypothesis, one briefly discussed already above: the implication in these passages is that the gnostic *turyātīta*—(1) in Table 6.1—reaches the *śiva-tattva*, while (2) explicitly only reaches the *śakti-tattva*. My reasons for concluding that *turyātīta* (1) reaches the *śiva-tattva* are as follows: since the term *turyātīta* refers to the highest liberation where only the absolute “I” remains, and in the tattva-system that attainment is explicitly identified with the top two tattvas, *turyātīta* (1) must correspond to the *śiva*-

38 *sā iyaṃ dvayī api daśā samāveśo*, KSTS vol. 65, 328.

TABLE 6.1 Two types of *Turyātīta* in the ĪPVV

<i>Turyātīta</i> (1)	<i>Turyātīta</i> (2)
<i>gnostic (realization)</i>	<i>yogic (practice)</i>
<i>sudden</i>	<i>gradual</i>
<i>āveśaka</i>	<i>āveśya</i>
<i>knowables transcended</i>	<i>knowables transmuted</i>
<i>(objectivity transcended)</i>	<i>objectivity dissolved</i>
<i>vyatireka</i>	<i>(avyatireka)</i>
<i>(śiva-tattva)</i>	<i>śakti-tattva</i>
	<i>(īśvara- or sadāśiva-tattva in turya^a)</i>
<i>qualities of the Self:</i>	<i>qualities of the Self:</i>
<i>vyāpaka, nitya</i>	<i>vaibhava, aiśvarya</i>
<i>(emptiness)</i>	<i>fullness</i>
<i>sāmānya-darśanas</i>	<i>(viśeṣa-darśanas)</i>

- a Note that the ĪPK itself (III.2.20) lists the levels of *turya*-attainment as those of the Vi-jñānākālas (= level of Mahāmāyā, just outside the *śuddhādhvan* and therefore not yet liberated), Mantras (= *śuddhavidyā-tattva*, lowest level of liberation), and Īśvara; but Abhinava takes *mantrēśa* in that verse to refer to the Mantra-lords of *īśvara-tattva*, then reads *-īśa* a second time, taking it to refer Lord Sadāśiva (Torella 2002, 208 note 33). Here he is making the correlation correspond to what is found in Trika scripture, for the *Mālinī-vijayottara-tantra* teaches that “the Mantras, Mantrēśas and Mantramahēśvaras occupy the Fourth state” and “Śakti and Śiva exist in the state Beyond the Fourth” (2.28c–29b, trans. Vasudeva 2004, 209–210).

tattva, which also matches its transcendent nature (the Śiva of *tattva* 1 is often called *Anāśrita-śiva*³⁹). And we have seen that *turyātīta* (2) aligns with the *śakti-tattva*. Now, it doesn't seem altogether likely that Abhinavagupta would favor an attainment that reached only to *tattva* 2. However, he may well have held the view explicitly articulated by his successor Kṣemarāja, i.e. that there is no reality to hierarchy with regard to Śiva/Śakti, they being two aspects of one reality, one or the other of them being more prominent in the liberated experience at any given moment (see Vasudeva 2004). In other words, Abhinava may have held the view that since Śiva and Śakti are in fact inseparable except heuristically, to attain one is to attain the other. Or perhaps, as already posited above, we are to understand that Abhinava is allusively suggesting that in this system,

39 E.g., in *Pratyabhijñā-hṛdaya* chapters 4 and 5.

Śakti is in fact *tattva* 1. Such a hidden doctrine would be in keeping with the rest of his esoteric theology, which constitutes a Trika doctrine with a Krama core.

The other problem of interpretation that arises in connection with these passages is a philosophical one, not yet to my knowledge addressed in the secondary literature. This issue centers on the question of who is the agent of the various verbs used here, most especially $\sqrt{viś}$. For example, when it is said that “there is an entry into one’s true nature,” who or what is the agent of that entry, since the *satya-svarūpa* that is entered is the only real source of both awareness and agency? This problem is not glaringly obvious because of the nature of the Sanskrit language, in which passive voice is so common, and nouns or pronouns denoting the agent can be omitted entirely, the verb conjugation itself communicating a generic unspecified third-person agent. When a first-person active verb is used, for example when Kṣemarāja glosses *namas* or *naumi* as *saṁāviśāmi* (in his commentaries on *stotras*⁴⁰), the problem is made evident: what exactly is the “I” that enters? Obviously it cannot be mind, body, etc. (since they have no agency of their own), nor can it be *cit*, for it would make no sense to say that consciousness, which is undivided, enters into itself.

Two possible solutions occur. First, that what enters from the mind, etc., into the Self is a kind of “locus of subjective identity” or *ahaṁbhāva*. But Abhinava seems to use this term in the passages we have considered to mean the *true* I-sense, the Self-that-is-awareness. The second and more likely solution is that this language of entry is purely metaphorical, derived from the phenomenology of the experience it denotes (i.e., what it *feels like* to have that experience), and that in actuality there is no entry at any time: the true “I” simply realizes itself or wakes up to itself, clearly apprehending itself. It may be the case that Abhinava addresses this problem of agency in relation to $\sqrt{viś}$ verbs somewhere in his vast body of work, and I simply have not yet come across it.

7 Postscript: *Samāveśa* and *Turya* in *Tantrāloka* 10

Abhinavagupta also discusses *turya* and *turyātīta* briefly in *Tantrāloka* 10.264–284. Though this passage is not directly a commentary on the ĪPK (being instead a commentary on the phenomenological categories of *Mālinī-vījayottara-tantra*, chapter 2 and *passim*), it clearly has in mind Utpaladeva’s phrase *tat-śakti-*

40 See Stainton 2013 or Stainton 2019.

samāveśa in the *Vṛtti* on ĪPK III.2.12 and very likely also alludes to his lost *Vivṛti* on the same.⁴¹ For *Tantrāloka* 10.265 informs us that *turya* is in fact *śakti-samāveśa*!⁴² This seems to imply that *turyātīta* is *śiva-samāveśa*, which could match the ĪPV account but *not* the ĪPVV; again, perhaps Abhinava changed his view between the two, the latter having been composed after the *Tantrāloka*. Abhinava goes on (in TĀ 10) to subdivide this *śakti-samāveśa* into four stages, corresponding to the four epistemological categories of knower, knowing, known and the autonomous pure awareness (*para-pramāṭṛ*) which is the source and ground of the previous three (Vasudeva 2004, 230).⁴³ The four stages are as follows. When immersion into this *parā saṁvit* is only proximate (*tat-samāveśa-naikatyaṭ*), object-consciousness is dominant (TĀ 10.270d–271a). When there is contact⁴⁴ with this immersion, the process or faculties of knowing are dominant (*tat-samāveśoparāgān mānatvam*, 270cd). In full identification with this immersion, the state of the knower becomes clear (*tat-samāveśa-tādātmye mātṛtvaṁ bhavati sphuṭam*, 270ab). Beyond this, in the state of the so-called pure awareness in which all three previous categories have perfectly fused, in which there is perception but no sense of a separate perceiver or perceived, the Light of Consciousness is self-manifest and we cannot speak of an immersion, except metaphorically (10.269). This helps us understand that the movement into the transcendent Fourth state can indeed happen in stages, the first three of which (*prameya*, *pramāṇa*, *pramāṭṛ*) are an expression of divine grace (*trayaṁ tat tad-anugrahāt*, 270b). We can infer that speaking of grace is meaningless in the fourth stage, where there is no duality (though the ĪPV and ĪPVV accounts tell us that there are still *saṁskāras* of duality at this stage).

41 This supposition receives support from the fact that Abhinava explicitly comments on ĪPK III.2.15–17 further on in the same chapter (viz., TĀ 10).

42 *pūrṇatāgamanaunmukhyam audāśīnyāt paricyutiḥ | tat turyam ucyate śakti-samāveśo hy asau mataḥ* ||, paraphrased by Vasudeva (2004, 229) as “In the fourth state ... knowable entities appear as awareness on the verge of reaching plenitude because [the] indifference [that characterized the third state of deep sleep] is abating. Abhinavagupta further identifies this state as an immersion into Śakti.”

43 For the fourth category of pure awareness, see TĀ 10.269: *pramāṭṛtā svatantratva-rūpā seyaṁ prakāśate | saṁvit turīya-rūpaivaṁ prakāśātmā svayaṁ ca sā* ||, and Jayaratha ad loc.: *parā saṁvid evaṁ aṁśa-trayottīrṇā ... svātantrya-mayī para-pramāṭṛtā ... sā hi para-pramāṭṛ-rūpā śuddhā saṁvit svayaṁ prakāśate na tu paśyāmītyādi-vikalpollekha-bhūmiḥ*. That there are four epistemological categories, not three, is due to the influence of the Krama, in which Kālī is identified with the fourth.

44 *Uparāga* seems a strange word to use here; its commonest use is “eclipse” or “affliction”—perhaps we should emend to *upayoga*.

Abhinava then defines *turyātīta* at 10.278: “that [state] whose beautiful nature is full and undivided, overflowing with joy, is called Beyond the Fourth; that alone is the supreme state” (*yat tu pūrṇānavacchinna-vapur ānanda-nirbharam turyātītaṃ tu tat prāhus tad eva paramaṃ padam*⁴⁵). His discussion goes on, but it reaches beyond the purview of the present work.

8 Conclusion

The present paper does not, of course, entirely solve the complex textual and exegetical problems we discovered in the comparison of these passages of the ĪPV and the ĪPVV, but perhaps it contributes towards an understanding of their significance for the study of Tantric Śaiva theology. Provisionally, I propose that we see Abhinavagupta changing, developing, and nuancing his view in the time between the ĪPV and the ĪPVV (with *Tantrāloka* falling between the two). If I am reading the texts correctly, the ĪPV features a simpler model of a gnostic transcendentalist *turya* succeeded by a “immanentist” *turyātīta* (the latter being marked by the transcendent element’s pervasion of all that was previously transcended), while the ĪPVV proposes two distinct versions of both *turya* and *turyātīta*, gnostic and yogic respectively (giving us four categories in total), where the yogic is to be preferred despite being more gradual because in it the *saṃskāras* of dualistic experience are finally dissolved.

Abbreviations

conj. em.	conjunctural emendation
em.	emendation
ĪPK	<i>Īśvarapratyabhijñāṅkārikā</i> of Utpaladeva
ĪPV	<i>Īśvarapratyabhijñāvimarśinī</i> of Abhinavagupta
ĪPVV	<i>Īśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtivismarśinī</i> of Abhinavagupta
KSTS	Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies
TĀ	<i>Tantrāloka</i> of Abhinavagupta
TĀV	<i>Tantrālokaviveka</i> of Jayaratha

45 Or we could take *pūrṇānavacchinna-vapur* as a *bahuvrīhi* meaning “in which every beautiful embodiment is full and unlimited,” the implication being that every part is now experienced as containing the whole (*akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākāram*).

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