

# **AWARENESS AND THE DIALECTICS OF DIVINITY**

Understanding Kashmiri Shaivist Tantra through  
the Dialectic Phenomenology of Michael Kosok



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2005

## THE AWARENESS PRINCIPLE AND THE DIALECTICS OF DIVINITY

In the light of the 'Dialectic Phenomenology' of Michael Kosok<sup>1</sup>, The Awareness Principle is an understanding of subjectivity or awareness is an immediate *field of presence* in which latencies or potentialities are constantly emerging or *coming to presence*.

'SHIVA' is awareness in its *field* character. 'SHAKTI' is the presencing or actualisation of any element or 'phenomenon' within the field of awareness that is SHIVA. Field and phenomenal elements are inseparable – the field being a field *of* phenomenal elements and all phenomenal elements being elements *of* a field.

An 'element' is essentially any bounded 'identity' or 'unit of consciousness' - from an atom to human being or an entity.

Yet like a circle on a blank sheet, each such element is defined just as much by the 'transcendental' field within which it emerges (SHIVA) as by the 'immanent' space or field it contains.

The circle as circle is neither SHIVA nor SHAKTI, field nor element. It is a dynamic boundary state of element *and* field, circle and surround – it is SHIVA-SHAKTI.

Shaivism is the understanding that every element (SHAKTI) emerging within a field is a self-manifestation of that field and therefore of SHIVA.

Yet since the 'transcendental' field is made up of and inseparable from the elements, that emerge within it, SHIVA cannot exist without SHAKTI. They are distinct but inseparable.

'Shaivism' is the recognition that since every bounded element or unit of consciousness is a *self*-manifestation of the divine awareness field itself, each beings ultimate or divine 'self' is none other than SHIVA.

Herein lies a fundamental paradox. For as the divine awareness field, SHIVA 'himself' can only gain a sense of 'I-ness' or 'selfhood' through the individualised units of consciousness or 'I-entities' that constitute the field.

For Shiva, as the 'transcendental' or source field is not a field in any way *separable* from the potencies (SHAKTIS) that emerge and are actualised within it.

My understanding of the dynamic relation of awareness and beings, field and elements - of 'Shiva-Shakti - rests on a synthesis of Michael Kosok's revolutionary *phenomenological* exposition and *formalisation* of the 'dialectical logic' of Marx and Hegel.

Michael Kosok's formalisation of dialectical logic was through a "dialectic matrix" representing a *nine-fold* grid of *triadic* relationships:

### The Dialectic Matrix

|       |       |       |
|-------|-------|-------|
| +[+A] | -[+A] | ±[+A] |
| +[-A] | -[-A] | ±[-A] |
| +[±A] | -[±A] | ±[±A] |

Following this formalisation of dialectical logic, the purely dualistic relation of field and element, Shiva and Shakti, can be understood in terms of nine distinct interrelationships:

1. **The field as field (*Shiva*)**
2. **The elements as elements (*Shakti*)**
3. **The immanent field *within* each element (Shiva within Shakti)**
4. **The elements *within* each field (Shakti within Shiva)**
5. **The field as a *field of elements* (Shiva as *Shakti*)**
6. **The elements as *elements of a field* (Shakti as *Shiva*)**
7. **The relation of field and elements (Shiva-Shakti) as a *self-relation of the field to itself* mediated by the elements within it (Shiva-Shakti as *Shiva*)**
8. **The relation of elements and field as a *self-relation of the elements to themselves* through the field that they constitute (Shiva-Shakti as *Shakti*)**
9. **The entire 'transcendental' field of elements (*Shiva-Shakti*) as something 'immanent' within each and every element of the field (*Shakti-Shiva*).**

Within this dialectical perspective, SHIVA and SHAKTI, are not 'gods', 'beings' or 'things in themselves'. They are not separable 'elements' that exist 'in' multiple relationships to one another. Instead they are elements *of* a singular dynamic relation, SHIVA-SHAKTI. This singular dynamic relation is the universe as divine 'intercourse' or 'sex'. Paradoxically however, intercourse or sex *as such* is neither masculine nor feminine, and therefore 'beyond gender'. It is not an *external* relation or interaction of *separable* masculine and feminine beings, qualities or soul aspects that exist *in* a fixed relation to one another. Understood dialectically, what we call 'masculine' and 'feminine' are both aspects *of* that dynamic relation we call 'sex'. And understood tantrically, sex is nothing specifically human. Instead the universe *is* nothing but divine intercourse or sex. In my

own *new* tantric religious science and philosophy, the essential *medium* of this intercourse lies in those sensual *field-qualities* of awareness I call 'qualia' or 'soul qualities'. Its vehicle is the 'soul-body' - a sensual *field-body* of awareness. Here, the very terms *field-quality* and *field-body* are synonyms of SHIVA-SHAKTI. Here 'SHIVA' symbolises the field dimension of awareness as such. 'SHAKTI' symbolises the actualisation of potential qualities of awareness through the emergence of individualised beings or units of awareness within that field. The divine awareness field that is SHIVA both *embodies* itself in the form of such bounded units or beings, and constitutes their 'transcendent' field of emergence *as* embodied beings. SHIVA is the both the purely transcendent and bodiless awareness of Bodyhood that embraces every body and being in the universe and the awareness *immanent* in each body as its very Being - each body being essentially but a bodily shape taken by the divine awareness field itself.

KALI symbolises the dark domain of Non-Being in contrast to both Being and beings. Non-Being is not a realm of nothingness but a primordial womb of *potentiality* - all those potential patterns, qualities and individualised units of awareness that are pregnant as *beings* within the field of awareness that is SHIVA, that are constantly coming to presence and *being* actualised within that field as SHAKTIS, and that are also constantly *multiplied* through the dynamic interrelation of field and element that is SHIVA-SHAKTI. MA KALI is divine mother and sustainer of the "dialectic matrix" - that *great matrix of sensual and sexual interrelatedness* that is SHIVA-SHAKTI - a *matrix* that is the very meaning of *tantra* as 'loom'.

### **More on MA KALI - the 'Dark Mother'**

**MA KALI** is the 'Dark Mother' - the dark secret of matter and the secret of dark matter. She personifies the inwardness that flows through and forms all matter, and constitutes its hidden core. This core links every material unit with the realm of inexhaustible potentiality that constitutes its own unbounded inwardness. As inexhaustible inner potentiality, KALI is source of both infinite creativity and destructiveness, for since the realm of potentiality can never find full expression in any actuality, being or body, it is both the creative womb of all structure or patterns of identity and awareness and that which dooms them to 'creative de-struction' i.e. to a process of *transformation* which allows them to give birth to new, as yet unborn potentials (like the cracking of an egg from within that allows the chick to hatch, the breakdown or loss of an individual's sense of self, allowing a new sense of self to emerge, or the collapse of an entire civilisation which allows a new one to emerge). All seemingly sequential or temporal processes or cycles of transformation or metamorphosis - with their phases of appearance and disappearance, emergence and submergence, coming into being and passing away - are but the expression of waxing and waning *intensities of presence* within awareness. Just as SHIVA is the link between any *spatially* bounded or unit entity (*kula*) and the unbounded spatial field of awareness within which it emerges (*akula*), so is KALI the link between any temporal sequence (*krama*) and an unbounded

realm of a-temporality and non-succession (*akrama*). The domain of potentiality is a domain neither of Spatiality nor of Temporality but of Intensionality. This domain is a density of intensities of awareness capable of forming infinite patterns. It can be compared to a density of patterned musical tones – or to a *primordial tone* which contains within itself all *possible* tones, tone colours and harmonics, all possible tonal permutations and patterns, all possible melodies and symphonies. The massive densities of intensities that constitute the domain of MA KALI find spatio-temporal manifestation in the massive gravitational densities of matter that, as ‘black holes’ bend space-time itself around them, allowing no light to escape. These are known to emanate only a sound – a fundamental tone. Within all material units lies a type of black hole – a central point (*bindu*) and central *tone* linking it to the intensional domain of unbounded inwardness and inexhaustible potentiality that flows through and forms all matter.

### **‘SPANDA’ – the Pulsating Heart of Divinity**

**SPANDA** (*spandashakti*) is the most impersonal and purely metaphysical of tantric god concepts, being a pure concept of the Absolute itself as the foundation of all realities. Various translated as a ‘throbbing’, ‘vibration’, ‘quivering’ or ‘slight movement’ it represents the concept – and experience – of a primordial tension and pulsation. The words *tone* and *tension*, *extension* and *intension*, *tend*, *attend* and *intend*, all have their root in the Latin *tendere* – to ‘stretch’ or ‘span’. In my new *Spanda Karikas* I have reinterpreted the tantric concept of *Spanda* as a primordial *tension spanning* the fundamental domains of ‘non-being’ and ‘being’, potentiality and actuality. It is SPANDA that is the very *source* of that ‘fundamental tone’ that resonates within all things and throughout the entire field of divine awareness. The fundamental tone does not *belong* to the domain of pure intensionality personified by KALI, for it is the very tension *between* the domains of potentiality and actuality that first *stretches* and *holds open* a space of temporal presencing or actualisation (SHAKTI) and an extensional space of co-presence (SHIVA). Space as such can be compared to the resonant cavity of a musical instrument such as a violin, and the tension of SPANDA to the slight movement or pulsation of a single stretched string. This tone is no mere mechanical oscillation or audible sound tone. Instead it is a fundamental tonality of awareness itself – comparable to the fundamental mood or *feeling tone* out of which a poem or symphony arises. The fundamental tone that is SPANDA however, has the pulsing or quivering character of a primordial *heart-beat*. This is not the heart of a being, human or divine. It is the pulsation of that heart that *is* divinity and yet beats within every being. As the very ground of our being SPANDA can be heard as silent sound, throbbing from deep within the bowels of the earth, like its own innermost heartbeat. And yet SPANDA is also the physically inaudible sound that each and every thing or thought, being or body IS. The pulsation of SPANDA is not only the very ground of our being but that which sings our souls into being, and imbues them with their own unique bodily shape and tone. As such, it is also the source of all sounded speech and song. In this sense SPANDA is also the source of the tantric and Sanskrit equivalent of the Greek LOGOS - the primordial ‘Word’ (PARAVAK) that is

ever manifesting, bodying and becoming 'Flesh'. The literal meaning of SPANDA as 'slight movement' is not insignificant however. For the very slightest of our own actual bodily movements in space emerges from a vast field of potential movements and can be felt to subtly alter the entire tone of our being. The 'slight movement' of SPANDA is the *trembling of actuality with potentiality* that can be felt at any time, in any space, by any being on the *threshold* of outer movement, action or speech. Like the heart however, it is only in inner stillness and silence that its deeply toned and evenly throbbing pulsation - or its rapidly quivering heights of high-pitched vibration - can be fully felt.

**The virtual and the actual are co-resonating systems. As the actual contracts a set of virtual states into itself at a threshold state, the virtual dilates. When the actual passes a threshold, bifurcates toward a specific choice, and renounces other potential states, the virtual contracts back and the actual dilates. When one contracts (resonates at a higher intensity), the other dilates (relaxes). Each side has its own local-global correlations, resonances and tensions between nucleating subpopulations that respond individually and together.**

**To every actual intensity belongs a virtual one. Actual intensity has extension (form and substance), virtual intensity does not: it is a *pure intensity*. The virtual has only intension That is not to say it is undifferentiated. Only that it is indeterminate in our spatiality. Every one of its dense points is adjacent to every point in the actual world, distanced from it only by the intensity of its resonance and its nearness to collapse. This means that it is also indeterminate in relation to our temporality. Each of its regions or individuals is the future and the past of an actual individual: the states it has chosen, will choose, and could have chosen but did not (and will not). All of this is always there at every instant, at varying intensities, insistently. The virtual as a whole is the future-past of actuality, the pool of potential from which universal history draws its choices and to which it returns the states it renounces. The virtual is not undifferentiated. It is hyperdifferentiated. If it is the void, it is a hypervoid in continual ferment.**

*Brian Massumi*

#### References:

(1) Kosok, Michael *The Dialectics of Nature* Proceedings of the First International Telos Conference, Ed. Grahl and Piccone, Telos Press 1970

Massumi, Brian *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* MIT 1992

See also [www.thenewdialectics.org](http://www.thenewdialectics.org) / [www.thenewscience.org](http://www.thenewscience.org)