

**CONTEMPLATING THE IMAGE OF BHAIRAVA<sup>1</sup>: A STUDY OF  
KSHEMARÂJA'S BHAIRAVÂNUKARANASTAVA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The cult of Bhairava appears around the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. Though, the genealogy can be traced to the earlier extant Kapalika tradition, the advent of Trika Saivism in Kashmir during the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, provided impetus to the spread of the cult of Bhairava. This paper examines one image of Bhairava, the Svachhandabhairava, as detailed in a text by the Kashmiri Tantric theologian and philosopher Kshemarâja (11<sup>th</sup> C.), disciple of the Abhinavagupta credited with synthesizing Indian culture. The text narrates the process of absorption (samâvesha) wherein the yogin experiences himself as Bhairava. The practice of visualization in the imagery of Bhairava induces experience of non-duality where the self is experienced as identical to the totality of manifestation and also with the Bhairava deity.*

**Key Words:** Bhairava, tantra, Kâpâlîka, Trika, dhyâna, pratyabhijñâ, consciousness, mandala, ritual

**INTRODUCTION**

Bhairava is the central deity of Kaula Tantrism. In medieval Tantras, Bhairava is considered to be the central deity of sixty-four Âgamas, and while separate Tantric texts are attributed to goddesses such as Kubjikâ, Bhairava resides at the center of the deity *mandala* in many of these traditions. The peculiarity of Bhairava as carrying a skull cup, as well as other weapons such as a staff or a trident, helps to relate this deity to the Kâpâlîkas. The shrines of Bhairava located nearby the cremation grounds (most often near the shrines of Yoginî, Châmunda, or Kâlî), or the deity shown with a dog as his ride further confirm his Kâpâlîka association. Bhairava, however, is not merely worshipped by the Tantrics in their esoteric rituals, as the deity is widely revered throughout the pan-Indian continent, with shrines dedicated to him widely distributed in Kathmandu valley, Varanasi, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. While the earliest imagery of Bhairava appears around the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, this deity comes to prominence with the rise of the distinctive philosophical school of Trika in Kashmir during the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries. The objective of this paper is to examine one image of Bhairava, the Svachhandabhairava, as detailed in a text by the Kashmiri Tantric theologian and philosopher Kshemarâja (11<sup>th</sup> C.), disciple of the prominent Kashmiri philosopher Abhinavagupta.

With the development of the Tantric Kaula and Trika systems in Kashmir during 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries, Bhairava emerged in a prominent position. Texts dedicated to one or another emanation of Bhairava were written, and prominent scholars such as Abhinavagupta composed their texts with Bhairava at the center of their liturgy. The available myths and ritual texts relate Bhairava to shiva, depicting him as immanent, oriented towards world with his wide open gaze. Like the many depictions of shiva begging for alms, Bhairava is clearly a renunciant, wandering with his skull cup (*kapāla*). Following one myth, Bhairava is the manifestation of Shiva after he severed one of Brahmâ's heads and had to beg to redeem himself from the sins of Brahmanicide. This identification of Bhairava with Shiva has, while making Shaivism esoteric, brought Bhairava to wider acceptance.

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The above-mentioned myth of Bhairava lends support to the interpretation of central motifs associated with him, that the skull he carries is the head of Brahma, and that he has turned dark due to the sins he collected in severing the head of Brahmâ. Although the description found in this myth is widely distributed in Purânîc and Âgamic literature, the popular imagination of Bhairava does not address Bhairava as the central deity that embodies emotions. If we analyze some of the names associated with this deity, Bhairava embodies time and death in his emanation of Kâla; becomes a ferocious deity called Chanda; is in fury, as his name Krodha suggests; is aroused, as the name Unmatta describes; generates fear, as the name Bhîshana suggests; and embodies destructive characteristics, portrayed by the name Samhâra.

The centrality of Bhairava in theological discourse is clearly seen in Abhinava's *Tantrâlôka* or Kshemarâja's commentary on *Svacchandatantra*. The image of Bhairava as depicted in these texts, however, is not of a deity begging in penance or playing the part of destruction. These texts depict Bhairava as the almighty, carrying out all the roles through different emanations. Bhairava, in this depiction, is at the center of *mandala*, with the deities surrounding his *mandala* carrying out his command. The origins of this tradition, as Sanderson (1988: 699-701) suggests, are associated with the early cremation ground practices of the Kâpâlikas. The image of Svachchanda Bhairava as presented by Kshemarâja in his *Bhairavânukaranastava* (BAS) transcends earlier depictions of this deity. In the non-dual Trika paradigm, Bhairava is the supreme reality, embracing all that exists, and is identical to the self. The image of Bhairava in this shifted paradigm becomes emblematic of the yogis and one's experience of oneself, as 'Bhairava' is no longer just the name of a deity in this context but a concept to depict the highest state of cosmic awakening, the surge of bliss and consciousness that embodies the totality.<sup>2</sup>

The objective of this paper is to decipher the imagery of Bhairava as described in BAS by Kshemarâja. According to the Trika tradition that Kshemarâja upholds, Bhairava stands for both the supreme deity and the state of experience of a yogin in the state of highest absorption (*samâvesha*) wherein the yogin experiences himself as Bhairava. This experience is the culmination of the practice of visualization in the imagery of Bhairava. The experience of non-duality where the self is experienced as identical to the totality of manifestation and also with the deity is cultivated in this visualizing process. This process, thus, is an active gaze upon Bhairava imagery, relating specific gestures and weapons of Bhairava with the central tenets of the Trika doctrine. Accordingly, the focus on Bhairava's imagery is no longer a mere observation of it, but a conscious and creative gaze where the consciousness of the aspirant is oriented towards non-dual experience while focusing upon the image of the deity as support.

### **The Image of Bhairava**

The focus of this paper, as mentioned above, is the image of Bhairava detailed in a small treatise, *Bhairavânukaranastava* (BAS) of Kshemarâja.<sup>3</sup> By bringing to light this work of Kshemarâja, this paper aims to initiate a reading of Tantric visual culture in relation to its literary culture. Tantric images provide ample examples that support the claim that a society's literary culture at any given time defines and describes the visual culture. In the absence of a proper awareness of Tantric literature, interpreting these images and even experiencing their aesthetic modes can be compromised. Historically, an image over time accretes meanings that are found in different systems, and any interpretation needs to keep these integral cultural processes within the conceptual framework. This awareness allows a viewer to enter the heart of the artist and acquire his refined gaze. The interpretive enterprise is not isolated within philosophical texts, with liturgical texts and the manuals for architecture providing a glimpse of the meaning of images as well. By focusing on a single Tantric image that is prototypical of many other images, the objective here is to investigate the philosophical foundation of Tantric visual culture.

While the argument that Tantric images are embedded within an inherent system of signs and can be understood only in light of Tantras in particular and the layered philosophical perspectives in general has its own validity, a question begs for an answer: have any of the classical philosophers applied these perspectives to deciphering images? This paper intends to provide textual support for the claim that Tantric images have been the repository of meaning since classical times and the process of deciphering meaning has remained integral to ritual visualization (*dhyāna*), essential to Tantric practice. BAS is significant in that this concise treatise reveals the philosophical scaffolding necessary for understanding the central Tantric deity, Bhairava.<sup>4</sup>

Kshemarāja, the foremost disciple of Abhinavagupta (950-1020 CE), contributed greatly to the development of the Trika system. That Kshemarāja has a particular relation to Bhairava is explicit in his commentarial writings.<sup>5</sup> What is evident in BAS is that Kshemarāja treats the image as a text and endeavors to read it in light of Trika philosophy. This reading or process of visualization is for him a means to access self-realization (*pratyabhijñā*).<sup>6</sup> In light of this, Kshemarāja considers weapons, gestures, and other physical characteristics as meaningful elements of the Trika text.

The text begins with the identification of the self with Bhairava, ascribing to him aspects of self-awareness. In light of this, the physical gestures, posture, and ornaments are deciphered as instances of cognition and specific feelings. Seeing the body of Bhairava, for Kshemarāja, is recognizing the self or consciousness actively engaged through the senses in grasping the externals and returning back to the self. For him, the highest realization does not isolate the self from its engagement in the world. The ever-enfolding and unfolding entity, Bhairava or the self, is described here as simultaneously transcendent and immanent. While the essential nature of Bhairava is beyond the triad of cognized object, the process of cognition, and the cognizing subject, at the same time, he also embodies this triad. The image of Bhairava is thus the intermediary ground of form and the formless. Bhairava, following this understanding, is the latent force in all manifestation, comparable to the lines that constitute alphabets or images.

This Bhairava-awareness is recognized in the heart, with the aspirant seeking identity between his body and that of the deity. Pleasing Bhairava thus results in nourishing one's own senses. As the limbs of Bhairava parallel those of the practitioner, the attributes of the deity reflect specific modes of the subject engaged in visualization. Kshemarāja interprets the skull of Brahmā as the fivefold power of awareness, bliss, will, knowledge, and action (BAS 9). These five energies are visualized as the five *pretas*, and stand for the first five principles (*tattvas*) in the process of emanation, identified as the 'pure path' (*shuddhādhvan*). Kshemarāja interprets the heart, head, tuft, shield, eyes, and weapons of Bhairava as six divine attributes, including omnipotence, omniscience, pervasiveness, and so forth (BAS 10).

That Bhairava embodies paradoxes is vivid in all his gestures and aspects. For instance, the fire and water elements signify poison and ambrosia, death and life. Visualized as his attributes, these contradictory elements reside in harmony within Bhairava (BAS 12). It is noteworthy that the distinctive gesture called 'Bhairavī' is the gaze that looks outward while remaining fixed within, revealing the nature of Bhairava in which paradoxes resolve. This gaze is frequently found in the images of Bhairava, indicative of awareness melded together inside and out, harmonizing the external world with intrinsic bliss and awareness. Bhairava is pure awareness eternally free from duality, while remaining vibrant within and as the world, enjoying objects of the senses. According to Kshemarāja, in holding a skull cup filled with blood, Bhairava metaphorically enjoins the practitioner to likewise imbibe the fluids of life in an embrace of sensory pleasure (BAS 31). Bhairava drinks blood, a metaphor for the self enjoying life, recognizing sensory pleasure as a valid means for entering into the heart of reality. Bhairava, as uninterrupted self-awareness, is ever-present, even when the senses are fully engaged

with the world (BAS 37). The supreme reality, although eternally free, assumes the form of Bhairava to demonstrate that one who knows reality is free, even though duality may appear within the phenomenal realm (BAS 40). The cremation ground, where Bhairava resides, is populated with ghosts and goblins. This, according to Kshemarāja, signifies awareness-in-itself as free from modifications, even while appearing in the form of segmented cognitive modes signified by the surrounding beings (BAS 41). Bhairava is the essential nature of awareness-in-itself and the deities surrounding him in his *mandala* express the *mantras*, or words that reveal awareness in all its glory (BAS 43). The central deity and the deities in the periphery can be compared with the self and the body, with the senses allowing the self to embrace the reality that is externalized.

Kshemarāja interprets the garland made of hands and heads as the collection of individual selves that dissolve into Bhairava's nature of bliss and awareness (BAS 13). Bhairava thus is the image of singular self-awareness, where the phenomenal selves are subordinated and become mere objects of ornamentation. Following BAS 14, the entrails that Bhairava wears and grotesquely displays highlight the bondage of the body. Both what Bhairava wears and how he appears as demonstrate specific modes of the self being engaged in the world. For instance, the lion's skin that Bhairava wears or stretches taut signifies an illusory and stained state that does not exist in consciousness, devoid of all forms (BAS 15).

Bhairava's weapons symbolize the powers that sever bondage and allow the self to manifest in its true nature. The sword of Bhairava cuts through the haze of mental agitation that gives rise to instances of cognition (BAS 16). The shield the deity wields similarly demonstrates that the devotees of Bhairava, armed with his protection, may free themselves from fear (BAS 17).

According to Kshemarāja, the rope signifies time, and since Bhairava, the deity or self-awareness incarnate, carries it, time is in his grip (BAS 18). The hook signifies the reabsorbing aspect of Bhairava that dissolves difference (BAS 19), leading to the solitary nature of Bhairava-awareness. Deities such as Brahmā and Vishnu refer to the divinity manifest within the realm of causation and bound in terms of time. Bhairava's bow and arrow demonstrate the reabsorption of the deities that allow the world to manifest (BAS 20). The gestures of boon and fearlessness, along the same lines, demonstrate the liberating nature of Bhairava, granting release from suffering in the world (BAS 21-22).

By carrying the freshly chopped head that signifies illusion, Bhairava demonstrates his mastery over it (BAS 23). The skull-staff of Bhairava signifies that the self is the foundation of creation (BAS 24). As the staff of Bhairava bears skulls, consciousness, likewise, holds the world manifest in the form of multiple subjects. Another gesture of Bhairava, carrying freshly-chopped heads by their tufts of hair, confirms this same aspect: awareness in terms of I-sense is manifest in manifoldness (BAS 32).

Kshemarāja interprets the musical instruments of Bhairava as mental modifications. The lute, bell, and drum thus refer to three varieties of mental constructions and Bhairava, the enlightened self-awareness, demonstrates his control over them (BAS 25). In Kshemarāja's terms, the strand of beads that Bhairava holds refers to his pulsating nature that maintains the world through emission and reabsorption by opening and closing the sensory orifices (BAS 34). The trident refers to the triadic divinities, Parā, Parāparā, and Aparā, who comprise the fundamental nature of Bhairava (BAS 26). The bolt, with six spokes, demonstrates the all-pervasive, divine nature that permeates the three different modes of awareness in the form of subject, object, and cognition (BAS 27). Other weapons, such as the stick that Bhairava wields, demonstrate his control over the world (BAS 28), while the club and axe signify the power that shatters difference (BAS 29). By holding a citron (*bijapūra*), Bhairava identifies consciousness as the seminal nature of the cognized world (BAS 33).

Bhairava wears severed hands and bones smeared with blood, demonstrating that the world is nonetheless pure, because even the most impure elements are fundamentally of the nature of Brahman (BAS 35). Bhairava's nudity, along these lines, stands for his eternally free nature that never undergoes suffering caused by limitation (BAS 38). The dark-blue color of Bhairava's body refers to his all-reabsorbing nature (BAS 39), dissolving all light and manifestation into his deep hue. Bhairava's third eye shows that those who are merged within the bliss of self-awareness perceive that the pleasure obtained through sensory objects is futile, as external objects are momentary, like bubbles on the surface (BAS 36). In Kshemarāja's cosmology, Bhairava's image itself is 'the seal,' an unmistakable symbol that grants the bliss of self-awareness and liberates the aspirant from the notion of difference that is rooted in the world (BAS 44-45).

Kshemarāja concludes the BAS by highlighting that this visualization results in self-realization even when senses are engaged with their particular objects (BAS 47). The purpose of this hymn is thus to experience this shimmering self-awareness even when difference appears in terms of cognized objects and instances of mental modification (BAS 48). Following this depiction, Bhairava realization is the most exalted Tantric experience, as it embraces the world while experiencing non-duality.

Visualization of Bhairava is thus a means to recognize the self that in essence is awareness itself. Encountering an image, along these lines, is in itself the liberating experience where what is seen and the perceiver become one. Since Bhairava is identical to his manifestation, the world, being in the world becomes a metaphor for the divine presence. The hymns of BAS are thus the image of Bhairava. The words describe an image and the image is deciphered through language. The speech, found in the form of prayer, culminates in deciphering the divine image or that which is real, and thus is able to touch upon reality and not merely the mental constructs. In the non-dual gaze of Bhairava, the manifest world in terms of language and meaning depicts two modes of the same awareness assuming embodiment.

What is the significance of the image of Bhairava? The above description has portrayed Bhairava as the essence of Trika doctrine, an embodiment of self-realization. However, if we dissociate the philosophical foundations of Kshemarāja, is there an independent meaning to the image? This is a thorny question and requires a different treatment, as the question requires further clarification of 'meaning.' One truism can be asserted, that any conscious act generates and embodies meaning. Things perceived in the background, a passive perception, may not have any meaning associated with it, but the moment we bring an entity to our awareness, we constitute meaning. Kshemarāja consciously utilizes this meaning-making aspect of consciousness for transforming his vision towards the world, the divine, and the self.

The objective of this visualization, as summed up by Muller-Ortega (2002) is 'becoming Bhairava.' While being aware of the body and the cosmos and thus retaining the gesture identified as Bhairavî, the aspirant seeks to find his self-awareness as merged within the cosmic experience of Bhairava. Bringing an image to mind, or the ritual of visualization, thus culminates in transforming experience, where the subject shifts the notion regarding the self from a bound and suffering individual to the one at the center of the wheel of shaktis, simultaneously transcendent and immanent, enjoying the worldly presence while retaining awareness of the absolute. Kshemarāja's approach of deciphering the imagery is merely one step towards retaining this experience.

## BHAIRAVĀNUKARANASTAVA<sup>7</sup>: HYMNS IN IMITATION OF BHAIRAVA

### Salutations to Bhairava of the nature of consciousness

1

Manifesting [the highest wisdom] to those filled with devotion [with the instruction], “Those of you taking refuge in the foundation of consciousness! Rest on the glory of consciousness [and] do not wander in vain;” victorious is Shiva, skilled in bestowing grace.

2

I bow to Shiva, the supreme Bhairava of the character of consciousness, solitary, of the form of supreme nectar, radiant, [and] who has devoured the entire [existence] with the realm of senses streaming out [to their corresponding objects].

3

There exists nothing here that is distinguished as the [deity] that is prayed, the subject that prays, and the prayer. In whichever form one mentally touches, this [Bhairava-awareness] manifests in that form, since [it is] of the form of awareness [itself].

4

Lord, I bow your image that is in imitation of your true nature of the form of bliss and the [formless] void of consciousness, which, although the essence of all differences, in truth, is devoid of all differences.

5

Supreme self! [Just] as a sketch of a person suggests [the real] person, [and] the lines indicating alphabets identify the real phonemes, in the same way, the image manifests you having innumerable forms.

6

The supreme reality is not at all the object of imagination. We experience whatever [we do] having entered your essential nature of consciousness that is devoid of mental constructions.

7-8

I extol the supreme lord while experiencing my very self, the mass of consciousness alone, with the collection of ties dissolved by assuming the effulgence of the self as the goddess of speech [Sarasvati] and having worshipped [her] by assuming the objects [of experience] as the flowers [to offer], having bowed to the preceptor, the first flash [of awareness], [and] having entered the heart.

9

The omnipresent one! Victorious are [your] powers called awareness, bliss, will, cognition, and action [that are] distinguished as the heads of Brahmâ, having assumed the faces with the distinction of subtle and gross [forms].

10

Lord! The heart [and so forth] that corresponds to omnipresence and so forth are your six limbs. Since all [entities] up to Sadâshiva are of the character of the dead [or within the realm of death, and so constitute] your seat.

11

Lord! The goddess Parâ is the power of reflection [of the self] that has the body of the supreme light [or consciousness]. All the goddesses such as Brâhmî are the emanations of herself.

12

By carrying fire and water, or [by] the flow of nectar and poison, you instruct that, although the world is [comprised of] conflicting [natures], this world (*etat*) does not conflict in me, [being] of the nature of being and consciousness [alone].

13

Lord! You as if show us by wearing the rosary of hands and heads that this mass of cognizing subjects threaded into awareness is devoid of essence [in itself].

14

You appear to be telling us, by the gesture of wearing entrails, that ‘look, look, I have removed these bonds (*pâsha*) which are hard to break.

15

Lord! By carrying an elephant hide covered with blood on your head, you tell [us] that the garment of illusion accompanied with passion [and other emotions] is expelled from the supreme void [of consciousness].

16

By the sword, you demonstrate the inner sword of power, which cuts [the illusion of] creation. Victorious are those who have embraced the entire world by the glory of one’s own power.

17

Our lord! In displaying the shield making sound striking on the arms, you instruct [us] that “fear not, I am your assistance, I am the destroyer of the fear of transmigration (*bhava*).”

18

In carrying a rope, you who subdue even death or time (*kâlakâla*), show us that time or death (*kâla*) that is surrounded by the bondage of its own powers is constrained by you with your body of [pure] consciousness.

19

By carrying a hook, our supreme Bhairava reveals that He dispels with His own powers all of this comprised of distinctions in order to dissolve them [in the essential nature of the self].

20

[You suggest] by displaying an arrow taut within the bow that you with your [infinite] power slay the creator beasts, Brahmâ, Vishnu, Rudra, Ishvara, and Sadâshiva.

**21**

With [your] hand [displaying the gesture] of boons, you play the role of bestowing prosperity on the world. One abiding in the supreme reality cannot be touched by the defilements of coming into being [birth].

**22**

Your hand [gesture] of fearlessness constantly displays your nature of showering [grace] upon the world by having obliterated the fear of coming into being.

**23**

In clutching a head that signifies illusion, you show that this head [referring to limited Pramâtra] here is a fragmented part of illusion, uneven and of the character of not revealing the real nature (*akhyâti*) [that is carried by] supreme realization.

**24**

With the stance of wielding the skull staff, you declare that the sustenance of the world whose entire essence has been dissolved is within you, the mass of consciousness alone.

**25**

In playing a lute, bell, and a loud drum, you show that you are resting [while] listening to the sound divided into three distinct forms of mental modifications (*vrtti*) [of the forms of waking, dreaming, and dreamless states].

**26**

Moreover, by the external gesture of carrying a trident, you constantly imitate the supreme Shakti [who is] decorated [with a wheel] with the spokes comprised of three Shaktis including Parâ.

**27**

You hold your own supreme power comprised of the bolt that has six spokes [or aspects] that has the lower three objects of senses manifest by [three energies] beginning with will which are the powers of the self.

**28**

Our Bhairava of the nature of awareness! You demonstrate by wielding a stick that the entire sustenance of the whole world rests within the control of your power.

**29**

Lord! You demonstrate your orientation towards shattering difference by carrying a hammer and axe that imitate the drop (*bindu*) and sound (*nâda*).

**30**

Lord! While assuming different forms [to accommodate] differences in [people's] viewpoints, you manifest your abode of the nature of Bhairava comprised of supreme awareness in all [of these forms].

**31**

In holding the human skull cup filled with blood, you suggest in my heart that you as if always drink the essences [of the world] found in the middle of the cosmic Shakti-egg.



32

Mahâkâla! You carry the lotus [upside down by its stalk] like a heads [held] by its tuft [of hair], demonstrating as if [it is] the materialized bondage [of *mâyâ* and *karma*] accompanied by the limited ego [*Anava mala*] that have been eradicated.

33

Lord! Ocean of awareness! You demonstrate the seminal form of the entire world in its primordial [state] by the gesture of holding citron fruit with your hand.

34

Although you are of ferocious [Bhairava] form, you nonetheless carry counting beads. With this (*tat*), you change the entire world by engaging all the senses outwards.

35

Lord! By wearing bones and the rosary made of hands and heads, and shining with the human blood, you instruct that the world is pure because it is of the nature of Brahman.

36

You instruct by opening wide (*prath*) the eye on your forehead of the nature of fire that incinerates the lord of desire that, for those who are enjoying [their] own [limited] self, although the bubbles of these objects are uneven, nonetheless, are of no significance.

37

As you always have your attention fixed within, even when the senses are spread out, you demonstrate that your self-nature is of the character of awareness, free from afflictions (*moha*) and limiting adjuncts (*kalâ*) in all the states.

38

Lord! Your [acceptance of] the sky as raiment speaks of the nature of the self, free from limitations. How could the rays of supreme Brahman be veiled by illusion?

39

You demonstrate by the body of the hue of the cloudless autumn sky that you, the dark foundation, are the destroyer of all [celestial bodies] such as the sun.

40

Lord! As you are of the nature of supreme Brahman but still assume the form of Bhairava, you demonstrate that one who knows the reality is liberated even when there is difference.

41

Having been surrounded by the goblins in the circle of cremation grounds, you demonstrate that you are the Bhairava of the nature of consciousness, abiding at the center of consciousness streaming towards objects.

42

Lord! You are endowed with the flow of nectar of the form of supreme power, [and] you are the highest among the cognizing selves (*pramâtra*), and so you appear in our heart that you are the life of the [entire] world.

Bhairava! There are external [circles of] family in every group of eight [phonemes] of your body comprised of the mass of phonemes, with an initial Lokeçvara following the distinction of the transcendent, subtle, and [gross] forms.

44-45

Lord! Your image is considered the seal for the reasons that [1] it affirms all the visible world (*etat*) by transcending the entire forms, [2] it delights the circle of devotees having bliss as their abode (*gati*), [3] it liberates from the net of bondage and dissolves differences, and [4] seals the wealth of gold in the form of various modes of consciousness.

46

Victorious is this [image of yours (*mûrtti*)] that is the lower ground for the stage of the supreme reality. Let this [image of yours] purify the defilements of the heart by vividly manifesting the reality.

47

Supreme Lord! The entire world manifests underneath within the consciousness that arises in every moment. Those engaged in the [inner] sacrifice realize that [this entire manifestation is] of the essence of the glory of Shiva and Shakti.

48

Bhairava, of the nature of consciousness! The self of all the beings! You always appear to me in this way. [And due to this,] all [the rituals starting from] your worship to the recitation of the *mantras* has been accomplished without any effort.

Thus completes the hymns in imitation of Bhairava composed by Mahâmaheshvara Kshemarâja.

**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> I am thankful to Dr. Phyllis Granoff, Dr. Jürgen Hanneder, and Mrs. Mary Hicks for reading the earlier drafts, and Mr. Jason Schwartz for the library support

<sup>2</sup> For the gradual stages of self-realization in *Svacchandatantra*, see Goudriaan 1992, 139-174

<sup>3</sup> The *Bhairavânukaranastava* of Kshemarâja. See Gnoli 1957.

<sup>4</sup> The most extensive study update on Bhairava is the analytical translation of the *Manthânabhairavatantra* (Dyczkowski 2009). For studies on Bhairava, see Pandey 1963; White 1996; Muller-Ortega in Harper and Brown 2002, 213-230; Chalier-Visuvalingam in Hildebeitel 1989, 157-229.

A small treatise in ten verses by Abhinavagupta, *Bhairavastava*, (see Pandey 1963, 951-52) is another noteworthy text in understanding the significance of Bhairava in the Trika lineage of Abhinavagupta-Kshemarâja.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, see his commentaries on *Svacchandatantra* and *Vijñânabhairavatantra*.

<sup>6</sup> Kshemarâja also authored texts entirely dedicated to the philosophical system of *pratyabhijñâ*, such as the *Pratyabhijñâh[daya]*.

<sup>7</sup> This translation relies on Gnoli's (1958) reading of the manuscript, except as indicated in the footnotes.

<sup>8</sup> Gnoli has read the text as, 'mâyâ mundam.'

<sup>9</sup> I have read âkriti instead of ârhati.

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