



The Role of Ideation in Tantric Meditation

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A SERIOUS STUDENT of Tantra must have knowledge of the origin of the Sanskrit alphabet, and of the basic principles of Sanskrit grammar. The entire Tantra literature has two meanings: the exoteric and the esoteric. The former gives us the meaning as designated by words, and the other their inner meaning embedded in the sense as implied by the author. Only by clear understanding of the philosophy, the spiritual *Sādhanā* will bear fruit. The base of spiritual *Sādhanā* is *Bhāva*, the sentiment, the feeling, the ideation because that alone which has been conceived by the mind, that which has been ideated upon is capable of being manifested. The importance of *Bhāvanā* and its relation to spiritual *Sādhanā* has been dealt with in *Bhāvanopaniṣad* and a great Tantra scholar and adept (Siddha) Bhāskararāya (1690–1785) has written a commentary on it. Without the *Bhāva* spiritual *Sādhanā* becomes a mechanical exercise which does not bear any fruit. It is said:

*Mantrārtham nantracaitanyaṁ yonimudrā na veti
yah,
Satakōtījapenāpi tasya vidyā na sidhyati.*

“One who does not know the meaning—the esoteric meaning; the underlying sense, the method of awakening the *Mantra*; i.e., activating the *Mantra* and the *Yonimudra*—cannot realise the fruits of the *Mantra* even if one recites it a billion times.”

The importance of *Bhāva* or *Bhāvanā* (ideation) cannot be underestimated by a *Sādhaka* and therefore to understand it the knowledge of the significance of the Sanskrit alphabet and its origins,

and the basic principles of Sanskrit grammar are essential.

The letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are called *akṣarāḥh*—the immutables. They represent the immutable sound vibrations which are the cause of creation as the manifestation of pure Consciousness. They were produced from the drum of Siva, from the *damru*. They are contained in the 14 sutras called *pratyāhārasūtrāṇi* or *māheshvarāṇisūtrāṇi*. These *sūtras* have been attributed to Shiva by Pāṇini.¹ The order of these alphabets has baffled the greatest of grammarians. From the view point of *Tantra* their order represents the stages of Cosmic Creation; the transformation of subtle Consciousness into crude matter. These original sounds represented by these letters are also called *Mātrkāḥ*—“the little Mothers”. They are called “mothers” because they are the mothers of all *Mantras*. According to *Tantra*, the accomplishment of all objectives and the fulfilment of all desires whether mundane (worldly) or supramundane; i.e., pertaining to the world beyond senses, is brought about by *Mantras*. These *Mātrkāḥ* are the source or the origin of all gods and goddesses, which only represent different powers. The study of the relationship between different *Mātrkāḥ* and their manifestations, and the method of invoking or activating the powers the *Mātrkāḥ* represent, is the subject matter of *Mantra Shastra*. There are dictionaries of *Tantra*, called *ekākṣariimātrkākośah*, “single-lettered dictionaries”, which give the potentiality of different manifestations of each primary Sanskrit letter.

Most of the literature on *Tantra* available today is written in classical Sanskrit. Classical Sanskrit

¹ Pāṇini, the “first descriptive linguist”, “the father of linguistics”, lived in India some 2500 years ago.



strictly follows the grammar of Páṇini. As previously mentioned, all Tantra literature has two meanings: the exoteric and the esoteric. Both meanings must be understood by any scholar of Tantra. The latter meaning is especially important to a *Sádhaka*, a spiritual aspirant, initiated in Tantra Sádhaná. For this reason alone some basic rules governing Sanskrit grammar must be known and understood.

The first rule to be remembered is that only those Sanskrit words which qualify to be a *pada* can be used in Sanskrit. *Pada* is that which has either a verbal termination (*ñānta*) or a nominal termination (*subānta*).

The second rule to be remembered is that all words including verbal stems, nominal bases, pronouns, indeclinables and adjectives are formed from a verbal root, *dhātu*, by adding a suffix (an affix at the end), *pratyaya*, and sometimes a prefix (an affix added in front), *upasarga*.

There are about 2000 verbal roots as given by Páṇini in his *Dhātupāthah*, that is a list of verbal roots given as an appendix to his grammar called *Ashṭádháyi*, so called because it has eight chapters. There are two main types of suffixes: Primary suffixes which are affixed to verbal roots directly to form nominal bases, adjectives, and indeclinables called *krta* suffixes. The other type, the secondary suffixes which are affixed to nominal bases to form special nominal bases, are called *taddhita* affixes. The prefixes which are indeclinables are always affixed in front of a verbal root. They change the meaning of the root and are called *upasarga*. They are 20 in number.

The origin of the Sanskrit alphabet (*varṇamala*) is attributed to Shiva, the Supreme Consciousness, while Páṇini refers to the verbal roots, suffixes and prefixes. Páṇini refers to them as “original revelations”, *ádyocáraṇam*, confirming their Divine

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origin. Verbal roots denote a particular action, which is a necessary element of the relative world. The action which a verbal root denotes gives a particular characteristic to it, which is passed on to the word formed by that verbal root.

Similarly, the suffixes give a sense and a relationship of that word with other relative factors. Because of the Divine character of the verbal roots and their affixes, the characteristics and the sense are embedded in that word. Everything in this created Universe is designated by a name and because of the inherent Divine character of the Sanskrit alphabet and the affixes, the relationship between the word and the thing which that word denotes remain permanent, Divine and natural. This is the foundation of Mantra Shastra.

Thus, the characteristics attributed to that word and inherent in it, represent the Dharma of the thing designated by that word. This not only helps in manifestation but also in ideation during Sádhaná.

The substance of philosophy of Ananda Marga, propounded by Shrii Shrii Anandamúrtiji, is contained in his work *Ananda Sútram*. This work is composed by 85 Sanskrit aphorisms in five chapters. Shrii Shrii Anandamúrtiji's choice of writing his treatise in Sútra form has further enriched the Sútra literature. To mention a few, we have Patanjali's *Yogasútras*, Páñini's *Ashtádhyáyii*, Nárada's *Bhakti Sútra*, Jamini's *Vaishésika Sútra*, and the famous *Brahma Sútra*.

The first four chapters of Ananda Sútram exclusively deal with spiritual philosophy and the last chapter with his socio-economic philosophy Progressive Utilisation Theory (PROUT), *pragatishúla upayoga tattva*. Shrii Shrii Anandamúrtiji was a Tantric Guru, so his philosophy is based on Yoga and Tantra. He was not only a *Siddha* but was the embodiment of Shiva, Cosmic Consciousness of the modern age. His own commentary on his work is in Bengali, which has already been translated into many languages of the world. It was translated by me into Sanskrit long time back but it has not been published so far.

Shrii Shrii Anandamúrtiji gave numerous discourses to expound his philosophy all over the world. From his discourses it can be seen that he quoted extensively from Sanskrit literature, and always gave etymology of important Sanskrit words. In this way it was clear that for any Sádhanaka or any student of Tantra, a knowledge of Sanskrit was necessary, and that the analysis of Sanskrit words by giving its etymology was an integral part of Sádhaná.

The significance of this fact in reading his discourses has perhaps not been given the importance it deserves. Sanskrit words cannot be accurately translated by single English words or in any other language. Each Sanskrit word has its own individual characteristic or Dharma. Its own ideogram is totally different from the ideogram of a similar word. To take an example: one word for "world" is *Jagat*, which is formed from the verbal root *gam*, "to go" and by the addition of the suffix *kvip*. This forms an adjective meaning that which is "moving". And as a noun it has been used for the "world," "sun," "wind," etc. That is to say that the entity which is connected or designated by the word *jagat* must have the particular attribute of "motion". In other words, when we use the word *Jagat* for the world, we are emphasising its characteristic of movement. Another word for the world is *Lokah*. This word is formed by the verbal root *lok* meaning "to see" with the addition of the suffix *ghain*, implying that the world is limited as an object of the sense. Sanskrit is a very sophisticated language. In fact, it is a science fit only for scholars and true spiritual aspirants. There are more than 500 roots in Sanskrit signifying "motion" and as already mentioned each one of them has its own individual characteristic.

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