

Tantraloka Notes

1. ONE

Tantraloka

by [george barselaar](#)

Of all the philosophical systems emanating from the east, [Kashmir Shaivism](#) stands alone in its subtle elucidation of the theory and practice of spirituality. Aptly labeled ‘the mystical geography of awareness’, the *agamas*⁽¹⁾ of Shaivism describe in microscopic detail the development of human consciousness from the grossest state of ignorance to the subtlest state of universal God consciousness.

Drawing from these ancient scriptures—many of which are now lost—the great Shaiva master Abhinavagupta (10 CE), fashioned the monistic tradition known as *Trika Rahasyam*⁽²⁾. After attaining God realization, Abhinavagupta states that out of curiosity he sat at the feet of many masters and like an industrious bee collected the nectar of the prominent philosophical traditions of his time. Completing this venture he returned to his own disciples and spontaneously sang thirty-seven philosophical hymns in the same number of days.

This encyclopedic text became Abhinavagupta’s greatest philosophical work entitled Tantraloka. In thirty-seven chapters he unfolded the petals of his heart lotus of knowledge explaining the process of creation and evolution of the universe in term of the expansion of Shiva’s consciousness. He laid bare the secrets of the monistic system know today as Kashmir Shaivism.

In his first chapter Abhinavagupta states clearly that he was impelled by Lord Shiva, his masters, and his closest disciples, to compose Tantraloka. In verse 284 of that same chapter he states:

“That person who has read, achieved and understood the depth of these thirty-seven chapters becomes one with Bhairava-Lord Shiva.” ~Swami Lakshmanjoo

In composing *Tantraloka*, Abhinavagupta drew inspiration from the Malinivijaya tantra⁽³⁾, a text so cryptic in places that scholars of that time were at a loss to understanding it. In shedding light on the Malinivijaya⁽⁴⁾, Abhinavagupta gave profound and detailed descriptions of both spiritual practice and theoretical philosophy; there is nothing to parallel these writings in existence today.

About two hundred years after Abhinavagupta’s passing, a commentary on *Tantraloka* was composed by a scholar named Jayaratha. To this day this commentary has been held as an authoritative work on *Tantraloka*. Swami Lakshmanjoo was one of the few masters to refute this commentary. Being a direct descendent in the line of masters of the oral tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, he pointed out that Jayaratha was not actually from this tradition, and though in places his commentary was brilliant, in others it was quiet misleading.

In the mid 70's Swami Lakshmanjoo started an English translation of *Tantraloka*⁽⁵⁾. Surrounded by a few western disciples and the occasional visiting scholar from universities both in India and abroad, it took almost five years to complete the first eighteen chapters. In simple terms he explained the cryptic text, emphasizing in many places, that without direct experience and a connection to the oral tradition of Kashmir Shaivism, it was almost impossible to understand Abhinavagupta's words. He added that *Tantraloka* was essentially a book for masters.

The essence of these first eighteen chapters of *Tantraloka* were published in 1985 under the title of "[Kashmir Shaivism – The Secret Supreme](#)".

Om Namah Shivaya!

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1. The agamas or tantras of the monistic school of Shaivism are always presented in the form of a dialogue between Shiva in the form of Bhairava and his divine consort Parvati in the form of Bhairavi.
 2. Trika Rahasya – the secret of the trinity of Shiva, Shakti and Nara-(individual).
 3. *Tantraloka*—to shed light on the knowledge of tantra. The essence of the first 14 chapters of *Tantraloka* are contained in the book "[Kashmir Shaivism-The Secret Supreme](#)" by Swami Lakshmanjoo.
 4. The *Malinivijaya* itself was extracted from a more ancient text called the *Siddhayogeshvarimata*-(now extinct).
 5. *Tantraloka* means to shed light on the knowledge of tantra.

2. TWO

An Interview with Mark Dyczkowski by Ellen Jefferds

[Mark Dyczkowski & Tantraloka: The Bible of Kashmiri Shaivism. ~ Ellen Jefferds](#)

Ellen Jefferds is *the editor of* *Depth Over Time: Kundalini MahaYoga, A Path of Transformation and Liberation, a book written by her teacher, Swami Khecarnatha.*

I recently had the opportunity to interview Mark Dyczkowski , one of the world's foremost authorities on Tantra and Kashmiri Shaivism.

Both a scholar and a practitioner, he has a Ph.D. from Oxford and was initiated by the renowned Indian teacher Swami Lakshmanjoo. Mark has completed the first English translation and commentary on the *Tantraloka*, written in the 11th century by the great Tantric teacher Abhinavagupta, and will be teaching an ongoing course on that text starting July 30, 2012. The opening sessions will be presented by Sacred Space Yoga Sanctuary at Rudramandir in Berkeley, California, and CDs of the lessons will be available online.

Ellen: Mark, you have been studying Indian philosophy since you were a young man. How did you initially get involved in that field?

Mark: My interest in India was at first curiosity, seeing the beauty of the culture, but I also found that its wisdom fulfilled the basic spiritual need everyone has to be peaceful and happy. I arrived in Delhi in 1969, as a teenager in search of a guru and spent several months living in an ashram. Seeing my intense interest, the Mahatmas there suggested I stay in India to attend university, so I enrolled in Banaras University for my undergraduate and master's work, focusing on Indian studies, religion, and Sanskrit.

By 1974 I finished my studies in India and went on to Oxford University to earn a PhD. My doctoral dissertation was later published under the title *The Doctrine of Vibration*—a text that is now used by both lay scholars and academicians world-wide. In the years since then, I have been focused on the study of Kashmiri Shaivism and, specifically, I have devoted the past thirty years to the Tantric tradition that gave rise to the *Tantraloka*. I consider this text to be the height of that tradition.

Ellen: Can you give us an overview of what Kashmiri Shaivism is?

Mark: Kashmir Shaivism explains that reality is understood to be just One, and that reality is Lord Shiva. He is the pure conscious nature that manifests as all things. Like a light that shines and illumines everything, the light of consciousness shines, illuminating its own infinite manifestations. This shining of Lord Shiva is eternal, unending, undivided, and in all ways unconditioned. What we live and experience in our daily lives, in every moment, is part of that immense consciousness. He shines, manifests, and is everything and everybody—all that happens in our lives, as well as the means by which we perceive it all.

The essence of the entire teaching is that anything we do for our spiritual development is ultimately to achieve the recognition that there is only that one reality and it is who we are: we *are* that Lord Shiva who is shining and manifesting as all things. I have always felt that what the Tantrics were teaching was very much in consonance with what one would aspire to experience in one's own life. And the way it was all expressed was also wonderfully beautiful.

Ellen: Of all the Tantric texts, why devote 30 years to the *Tantraloka*? What is its importance and how does it fit into the larger scope of Kashmiri Shaivism?

Mark: In the beginning of the 1970s, we knew practically nothing about the history of Shaivism. It was largely due to the inspiration of Professor Alexis Sanderson, my mentor at Oxford, that the historical study of Shaivism began. The wealth of knowledge gathered in this field in the past forty years is largely due to his efforts and those of his students who, like me, have edited and studied unpublished Tantras. Of course there are other scholars in this field, but Sanderson really spearheaded a huge effort.

The inspiration and the basis for this historical inquiry are the actual works of Kashmiri Shaivites, the most extensive of which are by Abhinavagupta, who wrote the *Tantraloka*. He was the one who built up what he called "Anuttara Trika," and he did that by referring to and integrating many Tantras and other works, drawn from varied Shaiva Tantric traditions. The main manual—you might say the Bible of Anuttara Trika—is the *Tantraloka*, and secondary to that is the *Paratrishikavivarana*. The *Tantraloka* is one of the last great classics in Sanskrit that had not been fully and authoritatively translated into English before now.

Trika Tantra is part of the Bhairava tradition, which is one of the main branches of Shaivism. Trika focuses on the worship of the three Goddesses who represent Shiva's power. Abhinavagupta quotes from many of these Trika Tantras, which had been revealed in the 400-500 year span before his time. Anuttara Trika was considered by him to be the highest form of Trika. It was a synthesis of all the main aspects of the Trika tradition plus that of the Shaiva Agamas.

***Ellen:** You are a practitioner as well as a scholar, so can you tell us something about what you've gained from the inner practices found in the study of scripture?*

Mark: Kashmiri Shaivism teaches that the light of consciousness, which shines as everything, also has a Divine power. That power is not only Its freedom to shine as all things but also to know Itself as that light of consciousness, and as every single individual thing It manifests from within Itself. This light of consciousness is essentially Lord Shiva's Self-awareness, because He knows Himself as all things that manifest externally, as all the perceptions through which they are known, and as all the perceivers who know all the things that manifest within consciousness. All practice is therefore centered on developing the recognition of the spiritual self-awareness that is inherent in us as perceivers and as Shiva's agents.

In that sense, my practice is quite like anybody else's, in that it is based upon trying to remember, recollect, and be aware of Lord Shiva's infinite being within myself and in all things. I have practices that my teacher Swami Laksmanjoo gave me, which I also try to maintain in the course of my daily life. This has given me a sense, that God is everywhere and is the basis of my existence, and that I should learn to trust that infinite intelligence. Ultimately, I hope I will discover my own true nature, the revelation that God is not different from myself.

***Ellen:** For Westerners who have a spiritual practice but may not be too familiar with the classical Kashmiri Shaivite texts, what is the importance of studying something like the *Tantraloka*?*

Mark: It's not necessary for everyone to study in the way that I have done, but it is necessary to have some understanding of the path and how to develop yourself spiritually. And at the same time, we all need some inspiration, a way to keep reminding ourselves of the importance and the value of what we're doing. We need to be reminded that the concerns and worries, the hopes and joys of our daily life, are just a small part of who we really are.

A little bit of study is something that everybody does, on any path. So the *Tantraloka*, like the Bible or Koran, is there to give us a source of daily inspiration. It gives us advice on how and why to practice, and some glimmer of what we are ultimately destined to achieve through assiduous practice and, above all, by Lord Shiva's grace.

***Ellen:** Starting late July, you will be offering an ongoing immersion in the *Tantraloka*. How and why did you form an association with Swami Khecaranatha, the spiritual director of Sacred Space Yoga Sanctuary?*

Mark: I met Swami Khecaranatha when he came to meet me in Varanasi two years ago—and it's largely been his inspiration, hard work, and good wishes that have set up this program. As I pointed out in the forward I wrote for his book, *Depth Over Time*, Swami Khecaranatha is an authentic practitioner and teacher of Anuttara Trika, which is one of the reasons that I am happy to be working with him. I hope that in the coming years, this relationship will enable us to bring

Tantraloka and Kashmiri Shaivism to more and more people. This should be possible through the immersions and through the talks that will be posted on the internet.

I like to see this as part of a process that Lord Shiva himself is initiating and sustaining to reveal Himself in the world more concretely, and to revive the teachings of the Kashmiri Shaiva masters that are so profound and extensive. These teachings have always been an inspiration for the great masters of Tantrism who followed Abhinavagupta, as his words have been the means through which the masters have understood their own tradition.

From this perspective, a great revival of Kashmiri Shaivism is happening through the acts and initiatives of many people, great and small, all over the world. I find it to be an astonishing revival of a tradition, which, when I began to learn about it forty years ago, was known to barely a dozen people outside Kashmir. What a wonderful opportunity for the average person, who now has the good fortune to have access to these teachings.

3. THREE

Tantra and the Teachings of Abhinavagupta

Description

Tantraloka is a magnum opus of the Indian Tantric-world, written in the Tenth Century, in the light of Kashmir Saivism by the great polymath Sri Abhinavagupta. This great work does not only include all the philosophical and Tantric essence of monistic Kashmir Saivism but is also often considered the apex of Indian Tantric Philosophy

Consciousness and Creative Power

The goal of Kashmir Shaivism is to become divine. But what would it be like to be God? Some yoga students, especially those who've studied Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, or Vedanta philosophy as taught by Shankaracharya, may imagine the Supreme Being as pure consciousness without an object, undisturbed awareness that rests eternally in its own perfect nature. But there's one glaring problem with this picture, Abhinavagupta points out. If reality is nothing but pure awareness, it's hard to explain how the universe came into existence. Somehow we've got to account for the fact that we're not experiencing just the rapture of consciousness itself; we're also experiencing all the things that clutter it, like noisy neighbors and computer crashes and lousy weather.

Patanjali would respond that the cosmos we experience around us exists entirely outside our consciousness. It's just external matter/energy that our higher self observes, but never actually

interacts with. Liberation means turning our awareness away from the external world, including our own body (which after all is also made of matter/energy) and remaining totally focused on pure, passive awareness alone.

Abhinavagupta rejects this view. He does not believe two separate absolutes—consciousness (purusha) and matter/energy (prakriti)—exist apart from each other. He says there is only one supreme reality, and it includes our bodies and our world. There is a fundamental unity connecting everything, he tells us, that is both the source and final end of everything in the cosmos. Consciousness and matter/energy are not separate, but two ends of one undivided spectrum, like two poles of a single magnet.

Abhinavagupta points out that in our actual experience awareness is much more than the simple, passive inner witness mentioned in the Yoga Sutra. Every meditator knows that no matter how still your consciousness becomes, at some point images, thoughts, and desires spontaneously well up in the field of your awareness. This, says Abhinavagupta, is because consciousness is inherently creative; it basks in its own radiance, constantly filling itself with every kind of content and taking genuine delight in its own endless productions.

According to Abhinavagupta, if we want to understand the nature of the Supreme Being we need only to look into our own nature. Jiva, the individual soul, is a smaller version of Shiva, the Supreme Soul, because we, like our maker, are conscious, creative beings. And just as it is our innermost nature to be creative and active, to will and to desire, to know and to enjoy, so it is the nature of Divine Being to freely and consciously manifest the universe through an act of supreme will.

According to Abhinavagupta, if we want to understand the nature of the Supreme Being we need only to look into our own nature.

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light,” says the Bible. Abhinavagupta’s form of Tantra Yoga agrees that through its limitless creative power and will, Shiva, the Supreme Being, can effortlessly project a universe into existence just as we can make a fantasy lover or an imaginary tropical beach instantly appear in our mind’s eye. But while the Bible seems to suggest the universe exists outside of God, Abhinavagupta explains the universe doesn’t exist apart from Shiva anymore than the images in our dreams exist outside ourselves.

Think about it. When you’re dreaming you may experience yourself as an Antarctic explorer lost in a blizzard. Suddenly your mother appears with a thermos of steaming French Roast coffee and you find yourself in a comfortable chalet. You experience yourself as an individual in that dream, yet the coffee, your mother, even the entire continent of Antarctica were nothing but projections of your own power of awareness.

“In just this way the entire universe composed of limitless objects appears all together in the Supreme Consciousness,” Abhinavagupta wrote. The Supreme Being, though it is intrinsically unitary, is able to split itself into subject, object, and the process of the subject knowing the object just as we do when we dream. And it does this from outside of time and space and without ever ceasing to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent.

Why does Shiva do this? The Supreme Being brims with rapture, Abhinavagupta explains, spilling out of itself with joy. Shiva is consciousness (chit) which doesn't merely take things in passively but has the ability to reflect back on itself, to know itself (vimarsha). This self-knowledge is the source of infinite delight (ananda). This bliss in turn is the source of creative activity (kriya). When Shiva's limitless awareness expands out across itself the universe comes into existence and we, as figments of Shiva's imagination, experience ourselves as individual entities moving through a world that Shiva's will holds in place. When Shiva withdraws its awareness back into its silent depths the universe subsides into perfect tranquility, as the images in our minds do when we fall into a deep state of sleep.

What evidence is there that all this talk of Shiva's experience is anything more than words? Abhinavagupta cites the experience of cosmic consciousness reported by mystics in many different spiritual traditions and tells us that in vastly expanded states of awareness the greatest saints and yogis actually experience themselves as Shiva. They feel their consciousness widening until it embraces the cosmos, which they feel vibrating with bliss and self-awareness. The distinction between their own I-consciousness and Shiva's melts away and they merge into infinity.

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Five Veils of Consciousness

Needless to say, most of us are not presently experiencing ourselves as Shiva. Why not? When Shiva wills to create, Abhinavagupta explains, it wraps a portion of itself in five kanchukas (cloaks or veils). The first is vidya, or knowledge. From Shiva's perspective, however, knowledge is limiting. Shiva contains everything within itself all at once. But in order to know anything in particular consciousness needs to look at each item one by one. So it wraps itself in vidya, which is the ability of the infinite to know the finite. Now the immeasurable reality can be measured by our limited minds. Instead of knowing everything, however, we perceive reality in tiny fragments fed to us by our senses.

The second veil is kala (pronounced ka-lah), the ability to deliberately perform specific actions. Shiva's activity is always joyful, spontaneous, perfect, and purely good. Each of us retains a sense that we should be able to just wish things into existence; that if we willed it hard enough, we'd have whatever we wanted. This deep sense that our will has the power to instantly create new realities is a vestige of the Shiva consciousness still within us. But in our personalities Shiva's immense power is obstructed by kala, which forces us to do one thing at a time instead of everything all at once.

Next comes raga, attachment to or desire for something. Shiva doesn't want anything because it already contains everything. But when we forget that deep inside we're all Shiva, then we begin to imagine there are things outside ourselves we want or need (just as when we dream we think it is something other than the projection of our own consciousness). Raga can lead to endless grief. For example, many of us long for the perfect lover, but there's only one of those—and its name is Shiva. We continually search for the perfection that exists only on a higher plane of consciousness here in the physical world, which is only a flickering reflection of the true reality.

It's as if we're trying to have a fulfilling relationship with a handsome lover's image in a mirror rather than turning around and seeing the true lover himself.

The fourth covering is *niyati*, the laws of cause and effect that operate within the confines of space. Unlike Shiva, whose actions are completely natural and spontaneous, we ordinary folk consciously choose to act, usually with specific goals in mind. But our voluntary and often selfish actions leave us subject to the laws of karma. Actions we deliberately undertake, as self-conscious beings, shape our destiny, which further limits our vast potential.

The fifth limiting condition—*kala*—is spelled the same in simplified transliteration as the second veil, but it is pronounced differently (kah-la), and refers to time, rather than to the ability to perform actions. We, however, experience ourselves in one particular time and place. For us the past comes before the future. Great yogis who align themselves with Shiva consciousness can perceive events of the distant past or even the distant future as if they're happening in this very moment because, for Shiva, they are.

Four Stages of Spiritual Practice

According to Abhinavagupta, if we could shake off these five veils of consciousness we would experience ourselves as all-knowing, all-pervading, all-powerful, purely good, and ever-present. This sounds like a tall order, but for students sincerely interested in exploring higher states of consciousness this is not as impossible as you might think. Abhinavagupta outlined four stages of spiritual practice that can help us remove the five cloaking principles and actually experience Shiva's unlimited state for ourselves.

These practices also gradually burn away karmic blocks that obstruct the flow of spiritual illumination.

The vast majority of yoga students are already working with at least some of the practices of the first stage. This level is called *kriya upaya*, which means "physical techniques." These include hatha yoga postures, breathing exercises, selfless service, ritual worship, pilgrimage, fasting, and other techniques involving our body and physical actions. These outer actions lay the groundwork for more advanced inner practices by strengthening and purifying our nervous system so that our physical brain becomes capable of hosting higher states of awareness. These practices also gradually burn away karmic blocks that obstruct the flow of spiritual illumination. And they help generate new, healthier attitudes toward life, enthusiasm for spirituality, as well as the intense inner focus necessary to succeed in our inner work.

The second stage is called *shakta upaya*, or "techniques involving mental energy." These include study, contemplation, visualization, meditation, and working with mantras mentally. They sharpen concentration and clean out the mental debris that clutters our thought life so that we can focus on our Shiva nature without so many inner distractions. *Shakta upayas* are the homing beacons that help us zero in on the reality that lies concealed beneath the five veils.

The third stage is *shambhava upaya*, or "techniques involving the use of will." The last stage helped us identify the center of consciousness within ourselves. Now, through a concerted effort of will, we remain balanced at that center. This doesn't involve doing anything or even thinking

anything. Instead we continually monitor our awareness, noting whenever our attention shifts away from our center and gently nudging it back. We go beyond the states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping into turiya, the fourth state of consciousness so highly praised by yogis. Once turiya is mastered we live life consciously, dream lucidly, and even remain alert during the state of deep sleep.

The final state is anupaya, which means “the non-technique.” At this point there’s no effort at all. We simply relax into our inner being continually, resting in our true nature. At this level we enter a superhuman state of consciousness called turiyatita, which means “even beyond turiya.” Abhinavagupta’s descriptions of what this is like sound like science fiction and yet the reality of this condition has been attested to by many advanced yogis. At this level the distinction between us and Shiva dissolves. We feel ourselves pervading all of space; the universe itself becomes our body. We can sense anything that’s happening anywhere. If we sense that anyone is in distress, through the merest flicker of our will we can send comfort and aid. Abhinavagupta says that masters of this caliber can create their own universes if they want to. And indeed the yoga tradition is full of accounts of Buddhas and other great siddhas who actually manifest new heaven worlds which other souls can visit.

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Active Spiritual Life

According to Abhinavagupta, cosmic consciousness is the birthright of every human being. We have only to uncover the Shiva in ourselves. But while we’re in the process of doing this we can also be fulfilling the second goal of Tantra Yoga: to be fully human. Abhinavagupta encourages us not to run away from life but to embrace it. Material life is not an illusion, he tells us, nor is it spiritually polluting. The densest rock is as much an expression of Shiva as the holiest saint, even though the goddess of self-awareness displays herself much more openly in the saint than in the stone. Nature and indeed all natural processes including our desires are sacred and deserve our respect. Our bodies and minds are the tools Shiva uses to explore itself in infinite detail. Our desires are natural expressions of Shiva’s own life force. When we fully respect the Shiva nature in ourselves and in everyone else, too, we will automatically express our desires in a healthy, humane, and ethical manner. To do anything that harms or selfishly uses others would deny their Shiva hood. Therefore you find that saints, those people most closely attuned with the divine in themselves, treat everyone around them with the utmost respect. They actually experience their innermost self as Shiva, the Self of all beings.

I first studied Abhinavagupta’s teachings with the late Kamalakar Mishra, Professor at Banaras Hindu University. Dr. Mishra emphasized how practical this expanded state of awareness really is. “It’s not an otherworldly value,” he taught, “but the ground of overall success in life. All talent and all power to work efficiently and gracefully in every walk of life comes from Shiva, the Self, just as all the electric power that moves fans and lights light bulbs comes from the powerhouse. All creativity, artistic or otherwise, springs forth from the Self. Therefore, the more a person is in line with the Self, the more the power flows. Thus a person of Self-realization will be a better teacher, a better philosopher, a better scientist, a better leader, a better businessperson, a better manager.”

If Abhinavagupta were here today I believe that, based on his tantric perspective, he'd have some sensible advice for the yoga students I've spoken with:

For the yogi who practices in this tradition it wouldn't make sense to say that while she's sitting in meditation she's living spiritually but when she goes to work her spiritual life shrivels. It could be true that she needs to find a job that's more fulfilling, but it's not true that there's any ethical line of work that's less than spiritual. The employees we work with and the customers we serve are aspects of Shiva who deserve our attention and respect. Every situation we find ourselves in becomes a practicum for cultivating Shiva consciousness.

Yoga students don't need to turn their backs on relationships to be spiritual and shouldn't say they need to cultivate "non-attachment" in order to avoid commitment or responsibility. Shiva is not just consciousness, it's also bliss, and that bliss finds expression in loving, supportive human relations.

Nor is the world a bitter illusion we ought to shun. Our world is the play of Shiva and within that play each of us has been assigned a role. Active engagement with the world, helping make it a better place, is a worthy and important practice for yoga students.

Shiva is not just consciousness, it's also bliss, and that bliss finds expression in loving, supportive human relations.

There's no need to beat yourself over the head because you experience desires. Accept them as healthy expressions of the life energy of the universe itself. But direct them carefully and respectfully and without unrealistic expectations.

For the student who worries her spiritual practices might not be as effective as someone else's, Abhinavagupta would advise her that there are many different levels of yoga practice. Each is specifically designed for the particular stage of development a student has reached so far. He'd probably suggest that she honestly identify whether her primary focus is physical, mental, or spiritual, and begin working with the practices that are right for her. Abhinavagupta also strongly believed in the ability of qualified teachers to help us along the spiritual path. He would encourage her to search for a Self-realized guru from an authentic lineage. Once she'd made a commitment to that particular path, she should stick with it, he'd say.

Responding to the student who wonders what part God has to play in yoga, Abhinavagupta would no doubt point out that in the West "God" is a divisive word. Religions here insist their god is the true one, and everyone else's is false. Therefore teachers from India often avoid that word. But yoga teaches there really is only one Divine Being, whatever name you call it, and that by cultivating Self-realization each of us grows closer and closer to that Supreme Being.

Twenty-five years ago I was involved in intensive study of the Yoga Sutra with my meditation teacher, Swami Rama of the Himalayas. The states of consciousness it described seemed so advanced that I was shocked when one day Swamiji referred to this classic text as "just a primer. The real yogis," he said, "work on much higher levels." He was a practitioner of Sri Vidya, a yogic tradition that honors the Great Goddess, or power of consciousness, and is closely allied

with Abhinavagupta's tradition. It was startling to learn that while the Yoga Sutra leads us to the stage of Self-realization, many yogis proceed from there to the still higher level of God-realization. Classical Yoga leads to the experience of your innermost being. The Tantra Yoga of Abhinavagupta leads to the experience of the innermost being of the entire universe.

Abhinavagupta was more than an accomplished scholar; he was a mahasiddha—a yogi of the first magnitude. At the close of his life he disappeared into a cave near Srinagar to perform intense yogic disciplines. According to legend, twelve hundred of his students entered the cave with him to devote the rest of their lives to uninterrupted meditation in the presence of this great master. The clarity of his vision and his remarkable willingness and ability to explain the highest states of consciousness—and how to actually attain them—distinguish Abhinavagupta as one of the most brilliant and generous spiritual teachers in the history of yoga.

4. FOUR

John R. Dupuche - Abhinavagupta The Kula Ritual

<https://www.scribd.com/doc/54134989/John-R-Dupuche-Abhinavagupta-The-Kula-Ritual>

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