

The Relationship between *bindu* and *kalā* in the Śaiva Siddhānta Tradition

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0. In the tradition of Śaiva Siddhānta, i.e., dualistic Śaivism, *bindu* ('drop') occupies a special position as the material cause of the universe and language. A Kashmiri scholar Śrīkaṇṭha (9th–10th c.?) is known for his work *Ratnatrayaparīkṣā* (RTP), which discusses the "three jewel" of the Śaiva Siddhānta — Śiva, *śakti*, and Bindu.¹⁾ This paper will focus on the RTP and examine (1) how the Kalā Path, one of the sixfold Path held in Śaivism, is interpreted by Śrīkaṇṭha, (2) how it encompasses all the other Paths, (3) how the *bindu* aspect, which has five *kalās* inside, is called Śiva's *śakti*.

1. The sixfold Path (*ṣaḍadhvan*) is the cosmic and soteriological course that maps the whole cosmos and is used at the initiation (*dīkṣā*) by the master to lead the disciple from the earth, where he lives, up to Śiva (Padoux 1990, 331). The Kalā Path is one of those six and is closely related to Bindu. We have a brief explanation of the anonymous commentator Ṭṭkākāra on this point in the very beginning of the RTP (k. 6ab): "For, Bindu provides the collection of the principles beginning with Śiva and ending in the Earth and [things] made of the principles, through providing a space [for existence] (*avakāśa*) [to each of them], by means of the *kalās* such as Nivṛtti that are its own modalities." Bindu provides a space for existence by means of the Kalā Path — what does it mean? The Kalā Path consists in five stories (*kalā*) that are called Nivṛtti, Pratiṣṭhā, Vidyā, Śānti, and Śāntyaṭīta. First of all, Śrīkaṇṭha gives a semantic analysis of those names:

1. Nivṛtti: Intention (*saṃkalpa*) of individual souls located there ceases (*vinivṛt*) without attaining any effect. Therefore, [that *kalā*] is called Nivṛtti ('inaction').
2. Pratiṣṭhā: That story is called Pratiṣṭhā ('fixation') because the intention of souls located there is fixed (*pratiṣṭhita*) for achieving the purpose [of getting liberated].
3. Vidyā: It is called the story of Vidyā ('illumination') because all kinds of intention of souls located there illuminates (*dyotaka*) all the purposes.
4. Śānti: It is called Śānti ('still') because the intention of individual souls located there has

been stilled (*praśānta*) because of the absence of hatred, attachment, and so forth.

5. Śāntyaṭīta: Śāntyaṭīta ('beyond still'), the highest story which contains [the other] five Paths, is to be visualized as having the nature of the great ether (*mahākāśa*, i.e., Bindu). In contrast to the Tattva Path (Path of 'principle'), which represents the ontological hierarchy of entities, and the Bhuvana Path (Path of 'world'), which represents the hierarchy of the numerous worlds governed by Rudras, Śrīkaṇṭha interprets the Kalā Path as the hierarchy of mental states of individual souls. Each story, with the names indicating the order of transition in meditation, represents the corresponding state of consciousness of individual souls and the room/frame they reside in. And by virtue of the fact that it pervades the other five Paths, the Kalā Path provides the space for all the material principles to exist, not only individual souls, as seen in the words of Ṭīkākāra. Most importantly, the Kalā Path is a modality of Bindu, of which the topmost Śāntyaṭīta is identified with Bindu itself.

2. The Kalā Path is the most all-inclusive Path among the six. Śrīkaṇṭha does not give a detailed explanation of how it pervades the others, but the 12th century scholar Aghoraśiva, as he himself states in the *Ullekhiṇī*, enumerates all the corresponding elements in his *Kriyākramadyotikā* (KKD). According to this, there are fifteen worlds (*bhuvanas*) in the topmost level, the Śāntyaṭīta story, which are packed into the three "*kalās*" — *śakti*, *nāda*, and *bindu* — of the Śiva principle (*śivatattva*). In other words, each of the three *kalās* in the Śāntyaṭīta *kalā* contains five worlds. Among them, the worlds of the *bindukalā* are called *śāntyaṭīta*, *śānti*, *vidyā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, and *nivṛtti*, whose names are exactly the same as what we see as the stories of the Kalā Path. What are these *kalās* in the first place, and what is this other '*bindu*'? The repetition of the same words and names here is confusing, but it suggests that the Kalā Path did not originate as a Path.

The word *kalā* traditionally means the sixteen digits of the moon, especially the last sixteenth (sometimes even seventeenth) digit, which is the invisible, imperishable, essential element of the moon. This concept of *kalā* comes to be adapted into the dynamic energy of Śiva. It is, however, not the same as *śakti* (Śiva's power), which is inherent in Śiva and is nothing but Himself. To distinguish *kalā* from *śakti*, I translate in this paper *kalā* as 'aspect' of Śiva (see Padoux 1990: 89–91). The three aspects of *śakti*, *nāda*, and *bindu*, again with rather confusing names, can be traced back to the 7th century *Svacchandatantra*, 4.195: *bindur nādas tathā śaktiḥ śivatattve vyavasthitaḥ* 'Bindu, *nāda*, and *śakti*, are

established in the Śiva principle.'

3. Another set of *kalās* comes into play in the discussion of Bindu in the RTP, where Śrīkaṇṭha argues that Bindu is the cause of the three states (*avasthā*) of *śakti*, and accordingly Śiva. These three states are called Laya ('resorption'), Bhoga ('enjoyment'), and Adhikāra ('office') and are well known as the three highest principles (*tattvas*) of the *Matanṅapārameśvara*,²⁾ which generally correspond to Śiva's three different phases, namely Śiva, Sadāśiva, and Īśvara, respectively. In Śrīkaṇṭha's theory (kk. 179cd-180ab), those states are brought to Śiva as the result of limitation by Bindu with three different conditions: inaction (*atikrānta*), being ready for activation (*akṣubdha*), and activation (*kṣubdha*). Furthermore, from RTP k. 265 onwards, these three states are identified with another three states of Śiva: Śaktimat ('potential'), Āhitodyoga ('ready to act'), and Pravṛtta ('active'). Among them, Bhoga or Āhitodyoga is the state where Śiva gets ready for cosmic emanation, and in this state, Śrīkaṇṭha says in kk. 270-271, Śiva's *śakti* manifests in five ways: *bindu*, *sānti*, *vidyā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, and *nivṛtti*. In other words, in the Bhoga state, Śiva's *śakti* has five phases with *bindu* at the top, and at the last, highest level, *śakti* is identified with *bindu*. These five phases are considered to be the "locus of experience" (*bhogasthāna*). Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha³⁾ refers to the same phases in his commentary on the *Matanṅa* Vidyāpāda 3.21c-23b and argues that they are the elements that constitute the Bhoga principle, which is Śiva's *bindu* aspect. There are only four parts here after *bindu*, excluding *sāntyatīta*, but as Goodall (1998, 292) pointed out, Rāmakaṇṭha identifies the last *sāntyatīta* with *bindubhuvana*, just as Śrīkaṇṭha identifies the *Sāntyatīta* story with Bindu itself. Aghoraśiva also referred to these five as the worlds (*bhuvana*) encompassed by the *bindu* aspect (*bindukalā*) of the Śiva principle. Thus, the relationship between *bindu*/Bindu and *kalās* gradually comes into view:

- (1) Bindu, when activated by Śiva, brings about a change of state in Śiva.
- (2) Bindu brings about the Kalā Path consisting of five *kalās*.
- (3) *bindu* is an aspect (*kalā*) of the Śiva principle, and it consists of five worlds with five *kalā* names.
- (4) Śiva's *śakti* in His Bhoga state has five phases (*kalās*) beginning with *bindu*.
- (5) The *Sāntyatīta* story in the Kalā Path, and the last *sāntyatīta kalā* in *bindu*, are identified with Bindu and *bindu* respectively.

The first thing that can be said is that Bindu brings about certain external and physical

changes in Śiva, and that of the altered states of Śiva, the state of Bhoga is the one in which its nature as Bindu is most pronounced. In the Bhoga state, Śrīkaṇṭha says (k. 273), *śakti* figuratively becomes Śiva's body, i.e., the material support for his enjoyment/experience. His statement indirectly supports what Ṭīkākāra mentioned about Bindu in the opening stanza of the RTP: *bhoga* 'enjoyment' or 'experience,' meaning material happiness in this life through the acquisition of supernatural powers, is another important goal in Śaivism, comparable to liberation (*mokṣa*). Whereas Śiva is the cause of liberation, Bindu is the cause of enjoyment/experience of individual souls. In the present text, we can see a similar structure of *bindu* and Bhoga in relation to Śiva Himself.

Second, Bindu/*bindu* is almost always accompanied by four or five *kalā* subdivisions. The *bindu* aspect (*bindukalā*) described by Aghoraśiva in the KKD, which is subdivided into *nivṛtti* and others and correspond to the Śiva principle, shows the development of the concept of *bindu*. Although in his description it is incorporated into the world hierarchy (Bhuvana Path), the *bindu* aspect is clearly equivalent to *bindu* as a part of Śiva's *śakti* in the Bhoga state. But if so, it is difficult to argue that *bindu* is exactly the same as Bindu as the material cause of the universe, because by virtue of its materiality it cannot belong to Śiva, which is pure consciousness; Ṭīkākāra in fact distinguishes between the two by calling *bindu* "*bindu* as the effect" (*kāryabindu*). How can we clarify this problem?

4. Far before the RTP, we find probably one of the earliest descriptions of the four *kalās* in the *Nayasūtra* 3.72 (before 7th c.)⁴⁾ of the *Niśvāsataṭṭvasaṃhitā*. There the Lord Śiva teaches that the four *kalās* of God, i.e., *śānti*, *vidyā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, and *nivṛtti*, should be known as *bindu*. There is a close parallel in *Svacchandatantra* 12.157, which takes over much of the content from the *Niśvāsa*. In both cases, there is no mention of the fifth *kalā*, *śāntyatīta*, nor does the *Niśvāsa* refer to the Kalā Path. Goodall (2015, 464) says: "Throughout the *sūtras* of the *Niśvāsa*, it seems that they are still only four and that they are the four powers of Īśvara, who is identified with *bindu*." This makes it almost certain that the cosmic and soteriological course of Kalā Path is a later development. Goodall identifies these *kalās* as Śiva's 'power' distinct from *śakti*; and they are identified as *bindu*, which again implies 'power' or aspect of Śiva. This confirms that our previous considerations are along the same lines. The association of the four *kalās* and *bindu* is already found here, but the *kalās* are not those of the individual souls, as in the RTP; for the names of the four *kalās* Goodall (2015, 464-465) suggests that "they might have originated as names for aspects of Īśvara when

engaged in different cosmogonic activities". If so, it can be assumed that what were originally understood as Śiva's aspects were transplanted into the mental states of individual souls when they became part of a single Path of salvation.

We cannot interpret *bindu* here as the material cause. However, in *Nayasūtra* 2.9–10, there is a description very close to Bindu of that kind. It is where the Lord Śiva teaches the transformation of the principles that form the universe, including the 25 principles of the Sāṅkhya. He says: when the right season comes, Bindu arises from *śakti* "when she is conjoined with the energy of Śiva," and from Bindu arises Īśvara, Vidyā, Māyā, Kāla, Niyati, Puruṣa, and Prakṛti (Goodall 2015, 433). Since *kalās* are not mentioned here, this Bindu, i.e., Bindu as the cause of the principles, does not seem to share the same context as *bindu* we have seen so far. But are the *kalās* really not part of the context? The union of Śiva and his *śakti* in this passage of the *Nayasūtra* reminds us that in another stanza, k. 267, of the RTP, Śrīkaṇṭha describes Bindu as the 'semen' of Śiva impregnating Śakti (as His partner), or as the 'embryo' conceived in her. This occurs when Śiva is in the state of Bhoga. At that moment — now we come back to kk. 270–271 —, Śakti/*śakti* manifests in five different ways: *bindu*, *śānti*, *vidyā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, and *nivṛtti*. Thus, in the RTP we see a synthesis of Bindu, *bindu*, and *kalās*. This may not have been intended at the time of the *Nayasūtra*, but for Śrīkaṇṭha, the polysemic natures of Bindu are integrated under one coherent theory. To summarise it:

- (1) According to the *Nayasūtra*, Bindu produces the universe when the right season comes, which probably means when Śiva is in the state of Bhoga.
- (2) Bhoga implies the sexual union of Śiva and Śakti, which gives birth to Bindu as either the semen of Śiva or as the embryo in Śakti.
- (3) When Śiva and Śakti are united, Śakti (i.e., Śiva) manifests in five ways: *bindu*, *śānti*, *vidyā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, and *nivṛtti*.
- (4) Thus, in His Bhoga state, Śiva also has the five phases of *bindu*, *śānti*, *vidyā*, *pratiṣṭhā*, and *nivṛtti*, and accordingly, Śiva attains the *bindu* aspect.

In this way, the cosmic emanation is likened to sexual intercourse, and the names of *kalās* may not be unrelated to this. These can be interpreted as the changing phases of Śiva either in cosmogonic activity or in intercourse.

5. To conclude, Śrīkaṇṭha's words in RTP k. 22 already suggest that Bindu/*bindu* can be polysemic, but we can still see his efforts to develop a coherent theory. In the RTP, Bindu

is given special status as the eternal material cause, completely distinct from Śiva, so there are several places where there are discrepancies with the old theories. The most obvious is that Bindu cannot be 'generated from' Śiva. This is a problem created by the dualistic philosophy of Śaiva Siddhānta, which became more rigid in later times. The association between *bindu* and language, in my view, derives from two other traditions that were not dealt with in this paper: *nāda* theory and the theory of *bindu* as the source of *mantras*. Therefore, it can be said that the association between *bindu* and *kalā* is not linguistic at all — we should not confuse all the theories of *bindu* with the language philosophy. Here we can see another ideological synthesis of *bindu*, which will be discussed in the future.

1) There are two commentaries on this text: the 12th century Aghoraśiva's commentary *Ullekhinī* and the anonymous author's commentary **Ṭikā*, currently being edited by Francesco Sferra, Dominic Goodall, and Akane Saito.

2) This is also found in *Kiraṇatantra* 3.24c–25b. See Goodall (1998, 297).

3) Rāmakaṇṭha is probably slightly later than Śrīkaṇṭha. See Goodall (1998, ix–xviii).

4) See Goodall (2015, 26).

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Key words *Ratnatrayaparīkṣā*, Śrīkaṇṭha, *bindu*, *kalā*, Śaiva Siddhānta

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