The Lotus Garland (padmamālā) and Cord of Power (śaktitantu): The Brahmayāmala’s Integration of Inner and Outer Ritual

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The significance of the Brahmayāmala to the history of Śaivism was first identified by Alexis Sanderson (1988), who was gracious enough to read a section of this voluminous text with me at Oxford, in 2004, at an early stage of my doctoral research. This was a formative professional experience, and I remain touched by his generous hospitality towards me as an unknown visiting student. In the present essay, I revisit a particular thread which emerged from these reading sessions: the śaktitantu or śaktisūtra, the “thread” (tantu) or “cord” (sūtra) of divine power (śakti). This is a technical term of ritual distinctive to the Brahmayāmala to which Professor Sanderson first drew my attention. Inquiry into the Cord of Power leads me to examine the ways in which the Brahmayāmala (hereafter BraYā) integrates meditational discipline with the somatic performance of ritual, and to query its understanding of the category yoga.

In chapter 15 of the Tantrāloka, Abhinavagupta invokes the authority of the BraYā concerning the inseparability of “external” (bāhya) and “inner” or “internal” (adhyātma) worship. The passage (15.43cd–44) reads as follows in the printed (Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies) edition:

nādhyātmena vinā bāhyaṃ nādhyātmanāṃ bāhyavarjitam ||43||
siddhyej jñānakriyābhhyām tad dvitiyāṃ samprakāṣate |
śrībrahmayāmale deva iti tena nyārūpayat ||44||

The fourth verse-quarter (44b) is problematic; following the commentator Jayaratha,¹ the passage might be interpreted as meaning,

“Not without the inner (adhyātma) would the outer succeed, nor the inner devoid of the outer. The second [i.e. the inner] manifests through

¹ Tantrālokaviveka ad 15.43c–44: tad dvitiyam iti adhyātmalakṣanam, “the second one’ means ‘characterized by being inner (adhyātma).”
both gnosis and ritual action”—the Lord has explained accordingly in the revered *Brahmayāmala*.

Both the sense and syntax appear doubtful, however. On the grounds of coherence, it seems significantly better in 44b to read *tad dvitayam* (“that pair [of inner and outer]”) for *tad dvitiyam* (“the second one”), an emendation suggested by Harunaga Isaacson. In this case the passage might be interpreted as follows:

“Not without the inner (*adhyātma*) would the outer succeed, nor the inner devoid of the outer. That pair [of inner and outer] manifests through gnosis and ritual action, [respectively]”—the Lord has explained accordingly in the revered *Brahmayāmala*.

Thus it seems that Abhinavagupta places the dichotomy of outer (*bāhya*) and inner (*adhyātma*) worship in correlation with that of *kriyā* and *jñāna*: ritual action and gnosis, respectively. This accords with his remarks prefacing citation of the *BraYā*, which clarify that the performative acts of ritual are valuable only as ancillaries to *śivabhimanata*, conviction of one’s identity with Śiva. This inner conviction alone, a form of knowledge, is the real means of liberation.

One need not follow Abhinavagupta entirely in reading the *BraYā*’s dichotomy between ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ processes in terms of gnosis and ritual: his source scripture draws no such distinction overtly. Nonetheless, Abhinavagupta’s selection of the *Brahmāyamala* is by no means contrived, for in invoking the text thus he highlights a premise central to its systems of practice: the integration of internal and external ritual processes, which mirror each other closely.

Although many of Abhinavagupta’s citations of the *BraYā* may be identified precisely, in this case the passage he had in mind remains uncertain. *BraYā* 87.140 is perhaps the strongest candidate:

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2 Personal communication, 2003.

3 *Tantrāloka* 15.42–43b: *śivabhimanitopāyo bāhyo hetur na mokṣadah | śivo ‘yaṃ śiva evāsmity evam ācāryaśisayati || hetutadvattayā dārḍhyabhimanō mocako hy ānoḥ || (“Conviction of one’s identity with Śiva is the means; no external cause bestows liberation. ‘He is Śiva, and I am nothing but Śiva’: [in the rite of initiation,] this firm conviction of the guru and disciple is indeed what lifts a soul, by way of [the guru’s conviction] being the cause and [the disciple’s] the effect (? *hetutadvattaya*)”).

4 See Hatley 2018, Appendix B.
ādhyātmaṇaḥ cintayed bāhyam bāhyam adhyātmikām tathā |
cakre samānabhāvena tato vinyāsam ārabhet ||140||

One should meditate upon the internal [wheel/cakra] as external, and the external likewise as internal. Considering [these] to be identical, one should then commence installation [of the mantra-deities] on the cakra.

The degree of correspondence is merely suggestive, and Abhinavagupta might have had in mind other BraYa passages. His language is actually somewhat closer to a verse from the Tantrasadbhāva, however, another early scripture of the Vidyāpītha division of Bhairavatantras. This is highly likely to postdate the BraYa and to reflect a degree of historical development vis-à-vis the latter.5 Tantrasadbhāva 6.218 may read as follows:

adhyātmaṃ bāhyato dṛṣṭvā bāhyam adhyātmasaṃsthitam |
yo jānāti sa siddhyeta tadbhāvabhāvabhāvitaḥ6 ||218||

After viewing the inner (adhyātma) externally, one who [also] knows the outer to be located internally will attain success, purified by contemplation of their identity (?).7

It is conceivable that Abhinavagupta has conflated these two sources, though he may instead have had in mind a verse of the Brahmayāmala not preserved in its oldest manuscript. More probably, he simply paraphrases his source with unusual freedom.

Regardless of which passage Abhinavagupta had in mind, a point of significant interest emerges from considering this question, namely that the Tantrāloka, Tantrasadbhāva, and Brahmayāmala all appear to mean something different by the distinction between adhyātma, “inner/directed towards the self,” and bāhya, “external.” For the Tantrasadbhāva, the performative acts and paraphernalia of ritual have superior, inner (adhyātma) equivalents: the outer (bāhya) finds its true meaning in the inner processes of yoga. Thus, for instance, in the section of Tantrasadbhāva 6 quoted above in excerpt, the external rosary made

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5 See the discussion in Hatley 2018, 100–104.
6 For the full passage with critical apparatus, see note 8 below.
7 Tantrasadbhāva 6.218d—tadbhāvabhāvabhāvitaḥ (or tadbhava°)—is unmetrical and problematic; I have understood tad as tayoḥ, referring to the pair of adhyātma and bāhya (inner and outer).
of conch (śaṃkha) has as its inner form the subtle śaṃkha or śaṃkhiṇī channel (nāḍī) of the yogic anatomy, which extends into the crown of the head. The ‘outer’ thus finds true purpose in the ‘inner’ realities of yoga, which supersedes the outer entirely. This principle applies to sacred geography as well, for the Tantrasadbhāva transposes into the yogic body a series of cremation grounds closely related to those of the BraYā. Access to these inner levels of meaning is a form of knowledge: the inner sacred geography is understood (jñātavyaṃ) by those who know the self (viditātmanām), while only “one who knows [the identity of inner and outer] attains success” (yo jānāti sa siddhyeta). Knowledge (jñāna) thus transforms ritual into an inner process through which it

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8 Tantrasadbhāva 6.217–220b (based on the draft edition of Marc Dyczkowski, which reports the readings of three manuscripts, k, kh, and g):

   ete cāṣṭādaśa proktā akṣasūtraḥ bahisthitāḥ |
   adhyātme ca gatās tv ete sāmpratām tān nibodha me ||217||
   adhyātmaṃ bāhyato drṣṭvā bāhyam adhyātmasaṃsthitam |
   yo jānāti sa saddhyeta tadbhāvaḥabhāvabhāvitaḥ ||218||
   ekāvādhyātmaṃ sātraṃ prāg eva kathitam mayā |
   śaṃkhāvartā tu yā nāḍī śikhānte tu vyavasthitā ||219||
   tena śaṃkhamayī proktā akṣasūtraṃ varānane |

217b bahisthitāḥ em.; vahisthitā k, kh, g 217c tv ete] k, g tvate kh 218a adhyātman] corr.; adhyātma mss. 218b "saṃsthitam" em. (Dyczkowski); saṃsthitā mss. 218d tadbhāva° k; tadbhāva° k, g 219b prāg eva] kh; prag eva k, g 219c saṃkhāvartā] kh; saṃkhīvartā k, g 219d śikhānte tu] k, g; śikhāntera kh 220a śaṃkhamayī] k, g; śaṃkhamayām kh 220b akṣasūtraṃ] em. (Dyczkowski); māksasūtraṃ mss.

On śaṃkhāvartā as a nāḍī, see Amaraughaśāsana 60, which describes it as “having the measure of a lotus fibre” (mṛṇālasūtraparimāṇā). The more commonly attested name is śaṃkhiṇī.

9 See especially Tantrasadbhāva 15.62–67:

   prayāgā nābhisaṃsthā tu varunā hrtrapradesāta[k] |
   kolagiryam tu kāntḥatham bhūmanādām tu tālukhe ||65||
   bindusthāne jayantyām tu nādākhye tu caritraqam |
   ekāmkraṃaṃ śaktimadhye jñātavyaṃ viditātmānāṃ ||66||
   guruvaktragataṃ proktām koṭivārṣaṃ tathāṣṭaṃam |
   ete sthānā mayā proktā adhyātme pudgalāśrayah ||67||

For those who know the Self, Prayāga should be understood as located in the [cakra of the] navel, Varuṇā [i.e. Vārāṇasi] in the heart region, Kolagiri in the throat, Bhūmanāda in the palate, Jayantī in the place of Bindu, Caritra in [the plexus] called Nāda, and Ekāmraka in [the plexus of] Śakti. The eighth, Koṭivārṣa, is likewise said to be in the Mouth of the Guru. These are the places I have declared to be present in the person internally (adhyātme). This list of eight pīthas overlaps with the nine śmaśānas or pīthas of the BraYā’s principal maṇḍala (as outlined in chapter 3; see Kiss 2015, 24); however, it corresponds more precisely to the eight delineated in BraYā 87 (see Hatley 2018, 134, table 1.16). Cf., also, Tantrasadbhāva 15.70: kulātmadidyāyanam ca erudī pulivallabham | tāny eva tu samastāni [em.; saman tāni mss.] svadehe saṃsthitāṃ tu ||.
ultimately achieves fruition—an orientation consonant with the Kaula turn towards interiority, which may presage aspects of Abhinavagupta’s gnostic nondualism. Yet in contrast to the latter, for the Tantrasadbhāva, the inner is nonetheless conceived of in terms of ‘doing’ (kriyā) rather than ‘knowing’ (jñāna). The inner and outer, respectively, represent higher and lower arenas of activity, for the mental processes of meditation are also forms of action (kriyā). Chapter 26 of the Tantrasadbhāva colourfully proclaims this principle:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kriyā tu phaladā}^{10} & \text{ puṃsāṃ na vijñānaṃ phalapradam}^{11} \mid |19| | \\
\text{yathā strībhakṣyabhogajño na sukhi kriyayā vinā} & | \\
\text{kriyā tu dvividhā jñeyā bāhyā adhyātmikā smṛtā}^{12} \mid |20| | \\
\text{adhyātmā dhyānayogena bāhyā}^{13} & \text{ pūjāratādibhiḥ}^{14}. \\
\end{align*}
\]

Doing (kriyā) is what gives people results; knowledge does not produce results, just as a man knowledgable in the sexual enjoyment of women is not happy without doing it (kriyā). But doing should be understood as twofold: it is held to be outer and inner. Inner action (kriyā) is through yogic meditation, while outer action is through worship, ascetic observances, etc. ...

Knowledge is here conceptualized neither in processual nor gnostic terms: jñāna and kriyā represent a dichotomy along the lines of “theory” and “practice.”

The BraYā likewise embraces the twofold division of kriyā into inner and outer—adhyātma and bāhya—which refer in its usage to subjective processes performed mentally and to the somatic performance of ritual, respectively. In contrast to the Tantrasadbhāva, the BraYā draws no overt hierarchy between the two. The inner does not represent a higher meaning or reality; the inner and outer rather represent complementary arenas for the performance of ritual whose integration is essential. The inner and outer find their fullest integration in the performance of yāga or yajana, “pantheon worship,” the paradigmatic mode of ritual whose limitless possibilities for inflection account for much of the BraYā’s bulk. Yet the principle of their unity applies widely, extending to all

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10 phaladā] em.; phaladāḥ mss.
11 Cf. Śrīkaṇṭha’s Ratnatrayaparīkṣā, 129ab: kriyā hi phalādā puṃsāṃ na jñānaṃ syāt phalapradam.
12 smṛtā] em.; smṛtāḥ mss.
13 bāhyā] em.; bāhya mss.
14 vratādíbhiḥ] k, kh; vratedibhiḥ g.
of the various practices encompassed by the terms *kriyā* and *karman*, including fire ritual (*homa*), rites of installation (*pratiṣṭhā*), initiation (*dīkṣā*), devotional observances (*vratā*), rites using deity images (*pratimākarman*) or two-dimensional diagrams (*yantrakarman*), and so forth.\(^{15}\) This integration of inner and outer practice makes a rigid distinction between “ritual” and “meditation” artificial: in the context of the *BraYā*, ritual—*kriyā* or *karman*—encompasses both outer and inner forms of action. These are remarkably parallel in structure and process, and aim at the unification of subjectivity, body, ritual space, paraphernalia, and the hierarchy of ontic principles (*tattva*) which comprise the cosmos (*adhvan*). In this respect, despite its cultic affinity to later Kaula systems, the *BraYā*’s harmonious integration of the inner and outer seems largely congruent with classical Śaivasiddhānta ritualism. Arguably, such integration of inner and outer processes is characteristic of tantric ritual, broadly conceived, as reflected in the ubiquitous dichotomy of *antaryāga* (“inner worship”) and *bahiryāga* (“external worship”). What is most distinctive to the *BraYā* is its unique manner of their integration: the “method of the lotus garlands” (*padmamālāvidhi*).

1 **Method of the Lotus Garlands (*padmamālāvidhi*)**

Patterning the processes of inner and outer ritual is the *BraYā*’s pantheon of mantra-deities, whose core comprises the Four Goddesses (*devī*) or Guhyakās, Four Consorts (*dūtīs*) or Handmaidens (*kiṅkarī*), and their lord, Kapālīśabhairava. Secondary members of the pantheon are a sextet of Yoginīs and an octad of Mother-goddesses (*mātr*). These (see table 16.1) are the mantra-elements manipulated in all practice, both inner and outer, and their permutations are the principal ritual variables. Collectively, the deities comprise the Nine-Syllable Vidyā (*navākṣarā vidyā*), mantra of the supreme goddess, Caṇḍā Kāpālinī, as first identified by Sanderson (1988, 672) in his pioneering remarks on the *BraYā*. In syllabic terms, the *vidyā* is \[\text{OM} \text{ HŪM ČANDE KĀPĀLINI SVĀHĀ}.\]

\(^{15}\) Cf. *BraYā* 90.101: \[\text{anena vidhinā devi japahomādikarmasu [corr.; karmaṣu ms.] | bāhyā- dhyātmeva mantrajñāṃ puṣām [em.; pūṣāṃ ms.] kurvan prasidhyati [101]}||\] (“Through this procedure, O goddess, in mantra incantation, fire sacrifice, and other rites, the knower of mantras achieves *siddhi*, practicing both external and internal worship”). In 101c, *bāhyā-dhyātmeva* should be understood in the sense of *bāhyādhyātmāṃ eva*—nominative for accusative, metri causa.
TABLE 16.1 Deities of the Nine-Syllable Vidyā

| Kapālīśabhairava (HŪṂ) |  |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| **FOUR DEVĪS**          | **FOUR DŪTĪS**          |
| Raktā (CAṂ)             | Karālā (LI)             |
| Karāli (ḌE)             | Danturā (NI)            |
| Caṇḍākṣī (KĀ)           | Bhimavaktrā (SVĀ)       |
| Mahocchusmā (PĀ)        | Mahābalā (HĀ)           |
| **SIX YOGINĪS**         | **EIGHT MĀTṛS**         |
| Kroṣṭukī (OM HŪṂ CAṆḌE  | Maheśvari (AṂ)          |
| KĀPĀLINI NAMAḤ)         | Brāhmi (E)              |
| Vijayā (OM ... SVĀHĀ)   | Vaiṣṇavi (Ā)            |
| Gajakarnā (OM ... HŪṂ)  | Kaumārī (A)             |
| Mahāmukhi (OM ... VAUṢAṬ) | Vaivasvati (Ī)        |
| Cakravegā (OM ... VAṢAṬ) | Īndrāṇi (Ī)             |
| Mahānāsā (OM ... PHAṬ)  | Caṇḍikā (SVĀ)           |
|                         | Paramā/Aghorī (HĀ)      |

Virtually all ritual begins with the instruction to enter into a state of meditative concentration, called nirācāra, and to take on a body of śakti, called the avadhūta.Śiva is the nirācārapada, “the state beyond regulated conduct,” while the Goddess is avadhūtā, “the stainless/unblemished one.”17 The avadhūtā-body, the body of śakti, is a body of mantra (mantravigraha) engendered by the placement of mantra-syllables in a series of bodily lotuses. The process of taking on the avadhūtā-body culminates in assumption of one’s inner identity as Kapālīśabhairava at the heart of a maṇḍala of goddesses, all of whom collectively comprise the Nine-Syllable Vidyā. Although framed as a

16 Note, for example, BraYā 3.187c–189b: ekāki vijane tasmīṃ daksīṇābhimukhasthitah |||87|| muktakāsaś ca digvīhāśaśaṃ kṛtanyāśo vidhānavit | avadhūtanur bhātvā nirācāras tu śādhakah |||88|| prathamam pujayaṃt devam karṇākāyāṃ param śīvam ||. Cf., e.g., 8.3–4b: tato hy ekākāṃ bhaṭvā avadhūtanatvā sthitah | nirācāreṇa bhāvena yadā paśyati sarvataḥ |||3|| tātaḥ kāroṇi karāṇi vīcitrāṇi mahātale |. Cf. also 47.17c–18b: tataḥ ekāgraścittas tu avadhūtanasthitah |||17|| nirācāreṇa bhāvena smaret vīdūyāṃ suyaṭrītaḥ |. 

17 BraYā 2.2cd: avadhūtā tu sā śakti nirācārapadah śīvah (= 62.98ab).
preliminary to ritual action, this process of mantra-installation (nyāsa) is in fact the very template of ritual, both inner and outer; it has both elaborate and abbreviated forms, with numerous inflections. I here summarize one of several long descriptions of this process, the *padmamālāvidhi* (“method/procedure of the lotus garlands”) of *BraYā*, chapter 4 (vv. 497 ff.):

First one visualizes the *avadhūtaṃ* (i.e. the *avadhūtā śakti*), whose function in this application is analogous to the *ādhāraśakti* (“basal power”) of most Śaiva systems. This begins preparation of the practitioner’s body as locus for installation of the deities, from the crest (*śikhā*) of the head to the feet. A series of nine lotuses is visualized situated at points in the body called *granthis* (knots or joints). These are located at the crown of the head (*śikhā*), the forehead (lalāṭa), throat (*kaṇṭha*), navel (*nābhi*), knees (*jānu*), mouth (*vaktra*), heart (*hṛd*), genitals (*guhya*), and feet (*pāda*), following the order of their sequence in *nyāsa*. The eight-petalled lotuses situated therein are loci for installation of the principal nine deities: Kapālīśabhairava, who is installed in the crown lotus, and two sets of four goddesses, the Devīs and the Dūtīs. In each lotus one prepares a mantric seat for the deity, whose complete mantra-forms are then installed, inclusive of their ancillary mantras (*aṅga*). Each of the eight goddesses is installed in a lotus along with the mantra-body of Kapālīśabhairava, who is thus coupled with each goddess. This series of nine forms the *Brahmasyāmala*’s principal *padmamālā*, the garland of Devīs and Dūtīs, which is illustrated in figure 16.1. While one might associate bodily lotuses with the body seated in yogic meditation, here a standing position with the legs together is implied, for a single lotus presides over the two knees and likewise feet.

Next is installed a second series of seven lotuses, the garland of Yoginīs (figure 16.2b). In contrast to the first lotus garland, these do not lie in a vertical axis. Three form a kind of girdle, one lotus is placed in the center

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18 Concerning the *ādhāraśakti*, see the article on this term in Tāntrikābhidhānakośa, vol. 1.
19 *BraYā* 4.497c–501b: adhunā [em.; adhuna ms.] sampravaksyāmi padmamālāvidhikramam [em.; *vīdhīḥ kramam* ms. ||497||] *śikhādipādayor antaṃ* [em.; antā ms.] avadhūtaṃ vircintayet | navagranthivibhāgena tayā [?] proktā punah kramāt ||498|| navapadmāni samciyā aṣṭapatrāṇi sadhakah [em.; kesāraśi caiva catuvrinnatiṃ kramāt ||499||] kaṅṇikāyāṃ yutānīha cintanīyāni mantriṇā | *śikhāpadmaṃ* [em.; *padma* ms.] samārabhya āsanāni prakalpayet ||500|| vaksyamānena nyāyena padme padme na samśayaḥ .
20 *BraYā* 4.516–517b: vāmapārśve tatas tasyā kapālīśasya vinyaset | bijamātram mahāprājña vaktānātramāvavartijatam ||516|| tasyopari nyased devi bhairavaṃ mantravigraham .
21 *BraYā* 4.523c–529.
of the waist, on the back (kaṭipṛṣṭhe), while the other two lie on either side of the waist. The remaining four lotuses are situated on the sides of the knees and feet. Installed upon these lotuses are goddesses known as the Six Yoginīs, led by a male deity, Ādivīra (“Primordial Hero”), positioned in the lotus on the back of the waist (see figure 16.2b).

A third series of lotuses serves as the locus for installation of the Eight Mother-goddesses (aṣṭa mātarah), accompanied by the male deity Mātṛvīra (figure 16.2a). In this case as well the lotuses do not form a vertical axis, lying at various positions on the head and torso: the points between the eyebrows (bhrūmadhya) and between the eyes, the tip of the nose, and each ear. Next are a point between the throat and heart, another between the heart and navel, and an unspecified place on the back or spine, locus of the goddess Carcikā or Cāmuṇḍā. The eighth mātṛ, the supreme śakti, Paramā, also called Aghorī or Yogeśī, pervades the entire body, lacking a lotus base and being devoid of ancillary mantras.

In figure 16.2, the second and third lotus garlands are shown together, thus illustrating the empowerment of the upper and lower bodies by mantra.

2 The Cord of Power (śaktitantu, śaktisūtra)

What renders the lotuses into garlands (padmamālā) is the thread which binds them. The BraYā first introduces this idea in presenting the second garland (that of the Yoginīs), describing the lotuses as “bound together by the cord of śakti, like gems [strung] by a cord” (śaktitantunibaddhāni sūtreṇa maṇayo yathā, 4.526cd). The terms utilized are śaktitantu and śaktisūtra, meaning, respectively, a thread or a cord of śakti. This divine power binding the lotuses together is consubstantial with the supreme Goddess herself, the Nine-Syllable Vidyā whose being encompasses the deities of the maṇḍala.

A concept seemingly unique to the BraYā, the śaktitantu or śaktisūtra receives minimal explication. References to it occur almost entirely in the context of the “method of the lotus garlands” (padmamālāvidhi). In what manner the cord connects the lotuses of the three garlands is somewhat ambiguous. For the first garland, whose lotuses form a vertical series, the śaktitantu must

22 BraYā 4.530–538.
23 BraYā 4.532cd: aṣṭaman tu tathā prṛṣṭhe kalpayen mantravit kramāt.
24 BraYā 4.538: sarwvāṁga paramā śakti vakttranetrāṅgavarjītā | padmāsānanvihīnā tu vinyasen mantravit kramāt |.
Figure 16.1 Garland of the Deviś and Dūtiś (padmālā 1)
(a) Garland of the Mātrṣ (padmamālā III)

Māheśvari (between eyes)
Vaiśṇavi (right ear)
Brāhmī (left ear)
Kaumārī (nose)

Mātrvīra & Vīraśakti (between eyebrows)

Vaivasvatī (between throat & heart)

Indrānī (between heart & navel)

Cārkikā (back)

Mahāmukhi (right waist)
Ādivīra (back of waist)
Kroṣṭukī (left waist)

Cakravēgā (side of right knee)
Vijayā (side of left knee)

Mahānāsā (side of right foot)
Gajakarnī (side of left foot)

(b) Garland of the Yogiṇīs (padmamālā 11)

Figure 16.2 Garlands of the Mātrṣ and Yogiṇīs (padmamālās 11–111)
FIGURE 16.3  The pure body of power (*avad-hūtatanu*)
string them together vertically from crest to feet (figure 16.1). In the case of the third padmamālā, the śaktisūtra likely begins from the lotus between the eyebrows (bhrūmadhyā), the uppermost of this series and locus of the male deity Mātrvīra, lord of the Mother-goddesses (mātr). The cord pierces (bhid-) and thus strings together eight lotuses (figure 16.2a).25 Unlike those of the first garland, these do not form a vertical axis in the body, and it is unclear precisely how and in what sequence the śaktitantu links them together: does the cord form a garland-like closed circuit, or connect the lotuses like a strand? This śaktitantu extends through the body in three dimensions, for the seventh lotus is located on the back, forming the locus of Carcikā, i.e. Cāmuṇḍā.26 In the case of the second padmamālā, that of the yoginīs, the manner in which the śaktitantu connects the lotuses seems less ambiguous (figure 16.2b). The garland is threaded from a lotus on the back of the waist,27 extending outwards to lotuses on the sides of the waist, then downwards to lotuses on the sides of the knees and feet. Although this is not explicitly stated, the cord might connect the foot-lotuses together in a garland-like manner, so forming a closed circuit.

The principal series of nine lotuses spans the body’s axis from crest (śikhā) to feet, linked by the śaktitantu and thus forming a vertical strand (figure 16.1). This vertical sequence of bodily lotuses connected by a cord of śakti has obvious similarities with models of the yogic body in which suṣumnā nādi, the central channel, links together an ascending series of cakras or lotuses. This ubiquitous paradigm is exemplified by the system of seven cakras common to Śrīvidyā and Haṭhayoga, identified by Sanderson (1988, 687–688) as being first attested in the Kubjikāmata. Like the śaktitantu, the suṣumnā is closely identified with śakti, especially in the form of the bodily kuṇḍalinī. The suṣumnā of yoga and the BraYā’s śaktitantu both unite a vertical series of lotuses situated at particular “knots” (granthis) in the body, including such standard locations as the crest, forehead, throat, heart, navel, and genital region. While the suṣumnā came to be envisioned as a vertical channel extending upwards from the heart, navel region, or base of the torso,28 there is an old precedent for the idea that it extends, like the śaktitantu, to the feet: the Mataṅgapārameśvara, a comparatively early Siddhāntatantra, envisions the suṣumnā running from

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25 BraYā 4.536cd: prṣṭipadme tu devesi carccikām vinyased budhah.
26 BraYā 4.536cd: prṣṭipadme tu devesi carccikām vinyased budhah.
27 BraYā 4.527c–529: vīraṇ tu trikapadme tu katipṛṣṭhe tato nyaset ||527|| vaktranetrāṅgasa-myuktam vīrasaktīṣyāḥ samanvitām | bijamatraṇivisticāyāṁ vāmapārśve tathaiva ca ||528|| vāmakatyādīm ārabhyo yogīyo vinyayet tathā | vaktranetrāṅgasamyuktāḥ padme padme na śāṃsayāḥ ||529||.
28 See Tāntrikābhidhānakośa, vol. III, entries for piṅgalā, nādi, nābhi, and nābhikanda.
the tips of the big toes to the crown of the head via the navel and heart.29 This archaic model of a central channel extending to the feet, linking together various *granthis*, may underlie the *BraYā*’s conception of the śaktitantu.

It should perhaps be emphasized that the *BraYā*’s series of lotuses do not in any simple sense represent “structures” of a subtle or “yogic” anatomy. The lotus-seats (*āsana*) of the mantra-deities are created through meditative visualization: one actively engenders a divine body of mantra rather than reifying a subtle reality already latent in the body. More precisely, through the *padma-māḷāvidhi*, one imaginatively superimposes the mantric body (*mantravigraha*) of Bhairava upon one’s own corpus and psyche. That the deity-lotuses do not represent fixed structures of a subtle body is illustrated by variations in their sequence: chapter 21 provides an alternative order of the principal nine deities, placing Bhairava in the heart,30 while an inflection of the *padmamāḷāvidhi* in chapter 45 inverts their typical sequence, placing Bhairava in the lotus of the feet.31 An alternative version of the second garland has the lotuses of the Six Yoginis encircle the waist like a girdle.32

Nonetheless, while the *BraYā* does not treat the lotus garlands as fixtures of a subtle body, it does posit the existence of such structures: the body’s channels (*nāḍī*) and vital airs (*vāyu, prāṇa*), for instance, and more pertinently, points known as *granthis* (“knots” or “joints”). A particular series of nine *granthis* forms the locus for installing the nine lotuses of the primary *padmamāḷā*. That *granthis* were considered to be anatomical realities is suggested by their treatment as points in the body rather than as objects to be placed/installed (*nyas*) in the body or engendered through meditation (*kalp-, cint-, etc.*).33 Integral to the idea of the *padmamāḷā* is this correlation between a vertical sequence of

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29 Mataṅgapārameśvara, vidyāpāda 23.21c–22b: pādāṅguṣṭhāgrato vyaktā nābhito hrdayaṃ gatā || 21|| suṣsumnā nāma sa jīteyā brahmaṇarandhrājanīgatā ||.

30 *BraYā* 21.125ab: hrdaye bhairavo nyasya vaktranetrāṅgasaṃyutam (understanding bhai-ravo as accusative in sense).

31 In *BraYā* 45.390–397, the sequence of installation (*nyāsa*) for inner worship is from feet (Bhairava) to head (Paramā Śakti). See the notes of Kiss (2015, 281–282).

32 *BraYā* 21.128–129: nābhyām vai vīra vinyasya tato vāmādi-m-aśṛṭāḥ | mekhalākṛtisamsthānā katyāṃ vai yogini nyaset || 128|| dakṣiṇāpārśvakaṃ yāvad vāran tu varavārṇini | vaktranetrāṅgasaṃyuktā kartavyā nātra saṃśayaḥ ||129||.

33 The *granthi* are referred to solely by their locations in the body. Take for example *BraYā* 4.564c–565, which specifies the “knot of the throat” (*kanṭhagranthi*) as locus for the lotus of goddess Karāli: anenaiva vidhāneṇa karāliṃ [em.; karāli ms.] vinyaset punah || kanṭhagranthigate [em.; °sate ms.] padme nātra kārya vicāraṇat | nābhipadme [em.; °padmes ms.] tathāiveha caṇḍākṣiṃ [em.; °ākṣi ms.] vinyased budhah ||. (Emendation of *sate* to *gate* is trivial, given the frequent confusion of *śa* and *ga* in the old manuscript, and the interchangability of *śa* and *sa*.)
lotuses and the body’s nine knots, which are repeatedly described as dividing the garland.  

In the case of the two secondary padmamālās, the lotuses’ positions in the body do not on the whole correlate with granthīs. This supports the idea that the primary padmamālā is rooted in a model of the yogic body in which nine granthīs are united by a central channel (nāḍī), which the BraYā reconceives of as the śaktitantu. This cord of śakti, unique to the BraYā, appears to combine what in later traditions would be differentiated as the suṣumnā nāḍī and the bodily (as opposed to cosmogonic) kuṇḍalinī.

Although archaic tantric conceptions of the yogic body may have inspired the BraYā’s lotus garlands and cord of power, the concept primarily describes the practitioner’s assumption of a divine body of mantra. This avadhūtatanu, “body of pure śakti,” is formed by lotuses of the three garlands and united by the śaktitantu, shown as whole in figure 16.3. This embodies the entire pantheon of deities as well as the hierarchy of ontic levels (tattvakrama), from the earth element to paramaśiva. The avadhūtatanu taken on by the sādhaka mirrors, in part, the mantra-body of the deity as Sādāśiva; his divine form is composed of a garland of nine lotuses pierced by the cord of power, further augmented by a triad of cosmological powers—vāmā, raudrī, and jeṣṭhā. To assume the

34 Note for instance BraYā 21.123c–124b: śaktitantunibaddhān tu padmamālāṃ [em.; mālā ms.] vicintayet ||123|| navagrahantivibhāgena tato nyāsam prakalpayet | (“One should visualize the garland of lotuses as bound by the cord of śakti, then one should perform mantra-installation, according to the division of the nine knots [where are positioned the lotuses]”).

35 Key to this issue is the question of whether and by what other names the BraYā conceives of a central channel (nāḍī). While the BraYā does attest the common nāḍī triad of idā, piṅgalā, and suṣumnā, the expression suṣumnā (which in most sources refers to the central channel) occurs only once (18.80) in the earlier stratum of the BraYā—its first fifty chapters. Its meaning in later chapters, where it does occur several times, is ambiguous. It may not (always) be the middle channel: it is never specifically designated as such, and BraYā 85.138cd seemingly refers to an unnamed middle channel between idā and suṣumnā (idā-suṣumnayor madhye muktimārggānusārīni). Concerning the early history of suṣumnā, see the preliminary remarks of Goodall et al. (2015, 33–34).

36 Note e.g. BraYā 45.104ab: śaktitantu tato dhyātvā śivādyavanigocare. Similar expressions abound in the BraYā.

37 BraYā 32.42–46:

| evamśvarūpasampannam cintayīta sadāśivām |
| evamśtītō mahādevi ādidevah sadāśivāh ||42||
| svayamśtīto sthītim kuryā trailokyē tu na samśayah |
| samhāram tu sadā kuryād icchayā caiva samharet ||43||
| dahāyātmanah punas sarvām trailokyān saarcārīcāram |
| srjate tu yadātmīnaṃ trailokyāṃ srjate sadā ||44||
| vāmāyā srjate sarvāṃ raudrīačaiva tu samharet |
| jeṣṭhāyā ca sthītim kuryā tritattvatanasaṃsthitāḥ ||45||
avadhūtatantu is, more specifically, to take on the mantra-body (mantravi-graha) of Kapāliśabhairava, the deities of whose largely female maṇḍala pervade the lotus garlands. Strung together by the cord of śakti, the lotuses of all the goddesses are also simultaneously loci of Bhairava, whose seed-syllable HŪM appears in each, paired with the presiding goddess. Thus it is that the BraYā’s opening benediction invokes the bhairavatattva as sporting in the form of the lingam in the lotuses of his consorts.

While the sādhaka seeks apotheosis as Bhairava, the divine body he takes on, the avadhūtatanu, in fact consists of a feminine power which ultimately transcends the male deity. The “unblemished” or “pure” (avadhūtā) śakti is present not only as the cord which unites the lotus garlands: in mantric terms, she also pervades the garlands as HĀM, the final syllable of the Nine-Syllable Vidyā (with the addition of anusvāra). In this form she is known as Paramā or Yogeśī, the eighth and highest Mother-goddess from whom the others emerge, and as Aghorī or Bhairavī, consort of Bhairava. Her simultaneous pervasion of the body and syllabic presence in each lotus are intimated in BraYā 4.595–596b:

\[
\text{sarvāṅge paramā śaktir}^{41} \text{vaktranāṅgavārjita}^{42} | \\
\text{padmāsanavihīnā tu vinyaset sādhakottamah} |[595] | \\
\text{padmamālaiḥ samāyuktaḥ padme padme vikalpayet} | \\
\]

The best of sādhakas should install the supreme sakti [HĀM] on the entire body, without face, eye, or limb mantras, devoid of a lotus seat; one should [also] envision her in each lotus, conjoining/possessing the lotus garlands.

\[
\text{navāṃbhojakṛtāṃ mālāṃ śaktisūtreṇa bheditām |} \\
\text{navagranthivibhāgena bibhrāṇo paramesvaraḥ} |[46]| \\
\]

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38 E.g. BraYā 4.515, concerning the lotus in the forehead of goddess Raktā: vāmapārśve tatas tasyāḥ kapālīsasya vinyaset | bijanātraṃ mahāpātraḥ vaktranāṅgavārjitaḥ |
39 BraYā 1.1b: dūtīnāṃ padmaśaṇḍe ‘samasukhavilasal liṅgarūpaṃ bibharti; see the discussion in Hatley 2018, 383–385.
40 BraYā 2.17–18: hākāreṇa parā śaktir etā yasyā vinirgataḥ | māṭaras te mayā proktā yāge uccuṣmapūjite |[17]| yā sā eva mayī prāktā māṭīṃ na caiva pūraṇi | tasyedaṃ kathitaṃ sarvaṃ yathā jñātvā na vaśpitā |[18]|.
41 śakti] em.; sakti ms.
42 varjitā] corr.; varjitāḥ ms.
As holds true for the deity maṇḍala in all its forms, the supreme goddess has a transcendent, subtle presence, lacking a singular locus. Thus while Kapālīśabhairava reigns from the uppermost lotus, the formless, all-encompassing reality to which the sādhaka aspires is “a feminine power which transcends the male-female dichotomy which patterns the lower revelations” (Sanderson 1988, 672).

3 Yoga and the Integration of Inner and Outer Ritual

The “method of the lotus garlands” (padmamālāvidhi) has more and less elaborate forms and numerous inflections. At its simplest, one installs the seed-syllables of the principal deities in nine lotuses. The procedure of the lotus garlands applies not only to the body, but to ritual involving external supports as well. Thus for the worship system (yāga) taught in chapter 12, one begins by laying out nine lotuses in a square maṇḍala on a substrate, then visualizing the śaktitantu and installing the mantra-deities. After envisioning an elaborate mantric throne for installation of Bhairava in the central lotus, one engages in the somatic performance of worship. Subsequently, the procedure is replicated in full detail inwardly “by the path of yoga” (yogamārgeṇa), seated in the lotus posture. ‘Outer’ ritual thus begins with meditative visualization and is followed by the rite’s recapitulation internally.

While the padmamālāvidhi represents a basic template for ritual and the empowerment of the body, ritual may be patterned by divergent pantheons, especially the practitioner’s personal pantheon (svayāga), a configuration of the mantra-deities established through initiation. These personalized inflections of the root pantheon (the mūlayāga) are nine in number, based on the predominance of each of the nine major deities in turn. In the obligatory daily worship (nityakarman) and much other ritual, inner worship (hṛdyāga) of this specific pantheon forms the standard preliminary to bahirnyāsa, the act of

43 See the discussion of Kiss (2015, 20–22), a section fittingly titled “Where is Caṇḍā Kāpālinī?”
44 This minimal (svalpa) form of nyāsa is described in BraYā 18.75–79.
45 BraYā 12.1–3: athātaḥ sampravakṣyāmi āsanaṃ pūrvam eva hi | yāgam caiva mahādevi sadhakānāṃ hitāya vai ||1|| pūrvvokte maṇḍale caiva gandhamandalake pi vā | puspamandalake vāpi śaktitantu vicintayet ||2|| tasyādho pranavaṃ dadyā kālāgnin tatra vinyaset | ksīroḍam tan tu vinyasaya avadhūtaṃ tato nyaset ||3||.
46 BraYā 12.29 ff.
47 Concerning the nine pantheons (navayāgāḥ), see the brief remarks in Kiss 2015, 16–18, and the article navayāga in Tāntrikābhidhānakośa, vol. 111.
installing the mantra-syllables upon the body or another substratum, whether the fire pit, ritual vessel, or icon.\textsuperscript{48} Applications of mantra-deity pantheons not based upon the Nine-Syllable Vidyā also follow this alternating pattern of inner and outer ritual. While worship (\textit{yāga}, \textit{yajana}) provides the essential paradigm for the \textit{BraYa}'s integration of inner and outer ritual, the principle and practice of their integration applies more widely. This is abundantly evident in the domain of “magic,” including all manner of rites involving alphabetical wheels (\textit{cakra}), images of the deities (\textit{pratimā}), and two-dimensional figures (\textit{yantra}). These processes may entail, for example, the fusion of the channels of one's own body with the spokes drawn in the lotus of a \textit{cakra}—the term \textit{nāḍī} refers to both—which may then be fused with the channels of the targeted victim (\textit{sādhya}).\textsuperscript{49}

Given the integral unity of outer and inner ritual, of somatic acts and subjective processes, the question arises as to whether and in what manner ‘yoga’ represents, for the \textit{BraYa}, a domain of practice meaningfully distinct from ‘ritual’ (\textit{kriyā} or \textit{karman}). The evidence is ambiguous, at least for what seems likely to be the core, early stratum of the text (chapters 1–50, more or less).\textsuperscript{50} Occurrences of the term \textit{yoga} in the sense of meditational practice—often in the phrase \textit{yogamārgena}, “via the path of/by way of meditation”—generally seem synonymous with inner ritual (\textit{adhyātmakriyā}). Chapter 12, for instance, describes the procedure of the inner \textit{padmāsana} as “installation of the \textit{sakti}” (\textit{śaktinyāsa}) through “visualizing by way of yoga” (\textit{yogamārgena sāṃcīntya}, 12.35cd).\textsuperscript{51} On the whole, meditational disciplines are so well integrated into

\textsuperscript{48} E.g. \textit{BraYa} 4.366c–367b: yāgasthānam tato gatyā hrddyāgan tu prakalpayet \textit{||366||} svayāgota-thena mārgena bahi nyāsasam tathaiva ca \textit{||}. A detailed description of inner worship (hrd-yyaga) of one's own pantheon (svayāga) appears in \textit{BraYa} 38.24c–31, in this case as a preliminary to fire ritual (agnikārya).

\textsuperscript{49} To give an example, I quote from my remarks on \textit{parakāyapraveśa} (“entry into the body of another”) in \textit{Tāntrikābhidhānakosā}, vol. III: “PB(H) [Pīcumata-Brahmayāmala] 14.254–263ab describes a practice in which one should fuse (\textit{yojayet}) the \textit{nāḍīs} of the yogic body with those of a \textit{cakra} of the kulavidyā-mantra of this system, inscribed on cloth, metal or wood (PB(H) 14.240). In this case the purpose is the extraction of ‘nectars’: ‘The \textit{sād-haka}, thus exiting the body through the tip of the nose, should enter the body of another and perform the extraction of nectars, after fusing [his with the victim’s] \textit{nāḍīs}; about this, there is no need for deliberation’ (\textit{evaṃ dehā[\textit{d}] vinīśākramya nāśikāgreṇa sādhakaḥ || paradeham vi[\textit{s}]et mantri amṛtākṛṣṭiḥ ca kārayet | nāḍīsaṃdhānakaṃ kṛtvā nātā kārya vicūrānat, PB(H) 14.259cd–260).”

\textsuperscript{50} See Hatley 2018, 64–71, concerning the \textit{BraYa}'s likely stratification.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{BraYa} 12.35c–40b: yogamārgena sāṃcīntya saktinyāsan tu kārayet \textit{|| 35||} padmāsano-paviṣṭas tu cintayītvā tu sādhuḥah | avadhūtaṃ nyasasman mantri pādavay urhayor ubhayor api \textit{||36||} paṅcātmikā mahādevi guhye caturgvanan tathā | hrdayāya trguṇaṃ nyasya lalāte dvigu-
the BraYā’s ritual systems that to treat these as a distinct domain of practice—whether or not designated yoga—seems artificial. However, three brief chapters of the core text do focus on meditational practices which, exceptionally, seem virtually independent from somatic acts and external supports. Moreover, a passage in chapter 25 specifies that a sādhaka who aspires for liberation (the mumukṣu), rather than supernatural experiences and powers (bhoga), should devote himself to a simplified pantheon worship (yāga), giving up all other rituals (karman) and “abiding by the path of yoga.” While not abandoned, outer ritual here assumes a simplified form, the emphasis shifting decidedly toward inner practice. Thus the degree to which meditational disciplines feature primarily as integral elements of ritual may simply reflect the BraYā’s emphasis on supernatural attainment (siddhi): the path of yoga, ultimately, is for seekers of liberation.

The Brahmayāmala likely has two or more distinct textual strata, and yoga proves to be an area in which stark contrasts emerge between these: later chapters of the text introduce yogic practices and emphases seemingly unanticipated in the core fifty-odd chapters. These include systems of meditation focused on a series of inner voids and resonances, a yoga system based on internalization of visionary encounters with the goddesses (yoginīmelaka), yogic practices for cheating death (a system which, in contrast

52 These are chapters 36 (nāḍīsañcārapaṭala), 41 (bindupaṭala), and 44 (krīḍākarmapaṭala). The latter, for instance, describes meditation upon the self in the lotus of the heart; merging with bindu, one gains the ability to traverse the universe in various forms. BraYā 44.2–3; 8: hṛddeśe kamalamā nāḍīsañcāra padmamālān |etakatvē ṣāṭkarāḥ | vayamāṇopetaṃ tārāṣṭakavibhūṣitaṃ | tāṃ dhyāyet paramāṃ rūpaṃ bindulīnaṃ śivātmakaṃ | 3|| ... antarikṣe tathā bhūmau pātāleṣu ca dehiṣu | anya-m-anyesu rūpeṣu vicareṇ nātra samśayaḥ |8||.

53 For another example of the separation of meditation and ritual, BraYā 24.16c–17b speaks of meditative absorption (samādhi) as an activity one may engage in during interludes between the daily rites: japayukto kṣapen mantri prāṭa[r|madhyaḥnikotāraṃ |16||] śāstra-saṅgena vā saṃstho atha vā samādhiṣu sthitah | em.; sthitau ms. ||. [em.; sthitau ms.]

54 As argued in Hatley 2018, 64–71.

55 Chapters 92 and 99, respectively.

56 Chapter 100.
to the core chapters, attests the bodily *kundalini*),\(^{57}\) and a kind of “yoga of absorption” (*layayoga*) based on the *granthis* of the principal *padmamālā*.\(^{58}\) While not embedded within critiques of outer ritual, these diverse yogas of the text’s later stratum tend to eschew external supports and somatic, performative acts. Far from being disciplines limited to the liberation seeker, these yogas offer the possibility of accomplishing the *sādhaka*’s aims through inner acts alone, potentially superceding outer ritual. This is particularly evident in chapter 100, which teaches a “rite for mastery of the clans of goddesses through yoga” (*yogena kulasādhanam*). Attainment of direct, power-bestowing encounters (*melaka*) with the goddesses is one of the *BraYā*’s dominant ritual aims, as illustrated by the “rite for the mastery of *vetālas*” (*vetālasādhana*, ch. 15), “rite of the great churning” (*mahāmanthāna*, ch. 46), “pavilion of power” (*siddhimaṇḍapikā*, ch. 47), and “worship in the pit [of power]” ([*siddhi*]garttāyāga, ch. 48). These virtuoso and macabre performances may culminate with the goddesses manifesting bodily before the *sādhaka* and granting boons. Belying this pattern, the yoga of chapter 100 offers the possibility of accomplishing mastery over the clans of goddesses through a process of inner realization alone.\(^{59}\)

Similarly, the yoga of *BraYā* 99 (called *vijñānapañcaka*, “the five knowledges”) promises the ability to enter the bodies of others without recourse to external supports (*cakra* or *yantra*), through manipulation of a series of inner resonances (*rāva*).\(^{60}\) Incorporation of such meditational disciplines into the text’s latter strata marks a trend towards increasing differentiation between meditation and ‘ritual’—between *yoga* and *kriyā*—and the subversion of outer forms of ritual. The possibility of attaining all ritual aims through yoga alone brings the vulgate *BraYā* closer to the *Tantrasadbhāva*’s hierarchical dichotomy of the inner and outer, whereby the externalities of ritual are subsumed by inner realities. It is thus possible in this literature to trace early steps in the direction of Abhinavagupta’s gnostic nondualism, which further overlays the dichotomy of *jñāna* and *kriyā* upon that of inner and outer ritual.

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57 Chapter 104.
58 Chapter 53 (cf. 99.19–35).
59 *BraYā*100.2–3b, 25–26: kulānāṃ sādhanaṃ nātha kathitan tu purā yathā | tat tathā vidi-
taṃ sarvaṃ kulasiddhipradāyakam || | śālmempatāṃ sarahasyan tu yogena kulasādhanam || | ... mātrayojinikāyāni sākinānān kulāni tu | sidhyanti sādhakendrasya yogenānena suvrate ||25|| yena [conj.; – na ms.] sarvagato bhūtvā yoginisiddhim āpnuyāt | kathavyanti ca sad-
bhāvaṃ kulajamajnānaṃ uttaman ||26||.
60 *BraYā* 99.3:cd: kṛtābhāyāsas tu vai mantrī dehād deham vramjet kṣanāt ||.
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Abbreviations

BraYā  Brahmayāmala
conj.  conjecture
corr.  correction
em.  emendation
ms(s).  manuscript(s)

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