

The tantric tradition of Kashmir Shaivism

IN THIS WEEK'S ASSIGNMENT we will deepen our understanding of the teachings of Kashmir Shaivism by studying a verse from one of its key texts, called the *Pratyabhijnabrdayam*. This text was written in the 11th century by Kshemaraja, a disciple of the great Kashmiri sage Abhinavagupta. In twenty terse verses, or *sutras*, Kshemaraja summarizes the teachings of the Kashmir Shaivite tradition. He begins by describing how the universe is manifested through the creative power of the goddess Citi, whose name means "supreme consciousness" and who is Shiva's *shakti* in this text. Moving down the ladder of creation from her supreme power into the contracted multiplicity of the universe and the embodied individual, he then demonstrates the path that we can take back to supreme awareness and freedom.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

READ "Consciousness: The Creative Power of the Universe" by Swami Shantananda: A western swami who has made this tradition his life-long study and practice writes a commentary on the first verse of the *Pratyabhijnabrdayam*.

STUDY this map of the *tattvas* according to Kashmir Shaivism (taken from *Tantra: Path of Ecstasy*, by Georg Feuerstein). Which of the *tattvas* did we encounter in our study of Samkhya? Which in Advaita Vedanta? Which are new to us? Why do you think these additional principles of reality have been added in this description of the cosmos?

PRACTICE: Try the exercise that Swami Shantananda gives on page 46. Find a time and place where you can be alone and quiet for at least 10-15 minutes, and follow the instructions that he gives. If possible, practice this at least 2-3 times. Journal about what you experience, and how you would answer the questions that he poses.