

# Bhairavī Cakra: Goddess Mandalas/Rituals in Contemporary Tantra's Nondualism

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## INTRODUCTION

THE PHRASE *BHAIRAVĪ CAKRA* appears in descriptions of at least two distinct contemporary tantric rites. In the first case, Bhairavī Cakra is the name given to a tantric ritual *sādhana* (spiritual practice) performed collectively, and in the second its physical manifestation is the name of a tool that may be used by an individual in graveyard or cremation ground practices. The followers of Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava guru Baba Hari Dass (b. 1922) use the group of *sādhana*s called Bhairavī Cakra. This type of ritual appears to be based on the sattvic (subtle) or yogic variety of *cakra pūjā* (circle worship) rites described in the *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*. That text has been variously dated till as late as the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Baba Hari Dass says that the Bhairavī Cakra that his *pūjāris* (ritual or worship specialists) teach predates the kinds practiced during India's late medieval period. The Vairagī Ritual is a circular *sādhana* performed with an equal number of men and women that employs *yantras* to invoke the various forms of Devī. It does not have a sexual component.

The second utilization of Bhairavī Cakra is by Ānanda Mārgiis, whose ideology is based on the writings of the twentieth-century tantric guru Śrī Śrī Ānandamūrti (1921–1990, a.k.a. P. R. Sarkar). For them, Bhairavī Cakra is a *yantra* that has internal microcosmic aspects and two external aspects. One of the latter is a diagrammatic device that may be produced by an individual practitioner with various materials while the other is a macrocosmic and always-present energetic relationship between *puruṣa* (consciousness) and *prakṛti* (energy) that they believe forms a universal mandala. The mental, microcosmic equivalent of the mandala is Bhairavī Cakra as a matrix of extroversive and introversive forces operating within the ambit of the spiritual aspirant's mind. This

research will discuss, analyze, and compare the two rites, as well as some of their related practices.

### BHAIRAVĪ AS A DEITY

Within Hinduism, Bhairavī or Tripura-Bhairavī ranks as a goddess who is often listed among the ten *mahāvīdyās*.<sup>2</sup> The *mahāvīdyās* are energy aspects of transcendent knowledge usually associated with Śiva's destructive power.<sup>3</sup> They take both horrible (*ugra*) and peaceful or benevolent (*saumya*) forms. David Kinsley says that among the *mahāvīdyās*, no goddess has more forms than Bhairavī.<sup>4</sup> She may appear as an attractive young woman or look threatening and wild. She is usually counted as the sixth *mahāvīdyā* and is associated with fire, destruction, and the southern point of the compass ruled by Yama, the king of death.<sup>5</sup>

Harish Johari describes her bodily seat as a triangle inside the *mūlādhāra cakra* (base of the spine) and her role as that of the destroyer of nine mental impediments to union with supreme consciousness.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes Bhairavī is referred to as the one "who multiplies herself in an infinity of beings and forms."<sup>7</sup> The *Tripurā-bhairavī-tantra*, the *Śāradā-tilaka-tantra*, and the *Bṛhat Tantrasāra* describe her in predominantly benevolent, cosmic terms.<sup>8</sup> They evoke images simultaneously powerful and graceful, but discordantly seductive when mixed with items associated with violence. All three depict her as awesome, with the crimson glow of the rising sun, three beautiful eyes, a garland of skulls, blood smeared on her breasts, and wearing the moon on her head. Several portray her as smiling and adorned with jewels and rich clothing.

The ninth-century *Śāradā-tilaka* is of particular note because it is attributed to Lakṣmaṇa Deśikendra, the guru of the tenth- to eleventh-century Kashmiri Śaivite Abhinavagupta.<sup>9</sup> It repeatedly delineates an image of Bhairavī as the creatress and controller of the manifested universe.<sup>10</sup> Ānandamūrti describes Bhairavī Śakti this way in his twentieth-century *Ānanda Sūtram* and in some of his discourses. Deśikendra's literary style is decidedly more poetic and devotional in tone, but the import is identical.<sup>11</sup>

According to Śāktas, Bhairavī is the supreme conscious entity who causes the universe to come into being as well as the universal doer-entity. She is praised and blamed as responsible for everything in the devotional poetry of Bengali native Rāmprasād Sen (ca. 1718–1775).<sup>12</sup> In the *Śivacarita* she is listed as the form of Devī associated with the major

*śākta pīṭha* (energy center) at Haridvāra.<sup>13</sup> There are also references to Bhairavī or a *bhairavī* as the female practitioner within a Śaivite *cakra pūjā* ritual.<sup>14</sup> Male practitioners sometimes refer to their wives as *bhairavīs* or *śaktis*. Ānandamūrti says that female practitioners of tantra have been called *bhairavīs* ever since Śiva first taught his daughter Bhairavī the burial ground meditation called either Kāpālika Sādhana or Night Sādhana.<sup>15</sup>

### BHAIRAVĪ AS A YANTRA/MANDALA

Bhairavī assumes an abstract, energetic form when represented by a *yantra*. Defining the words *yantra* and *mandala* is daunting because they are multivalent. A perfectly valid definition for either word may still remain only partial. Sometimes these words are used interchangeably, and more recently, but less often, the word *cakra* is also used for either term.<sup>16</sup> *Yantras* are commonly executed with material substances on flat surfaces but can also be rendered three-dimensionally. When they are visualized internally as part of spiritual practices, the instructions may require *yantras* to be imagined as solid, moving, or both.

Laura Kaufman defines mandalas as abstract diagrams of “sacred cosmic totality” that may also “depict places regarded as intrinsically numinous.”<sup>17</sup> She makes this observation with regard to Japanese architectural mandalas (Jpn. *mandaras*), but it holds true for Hindu mandalas as well. That is because once these temporary or permanent diagrams/structures are executed they delineate a space that is considered supramundane in some way. The diagram/space becomes a liminal area: either a direct portal onto transcendent consciousness or an access point into an elevated aspect of a tantric cosmology. Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis says that in Vajrayana Buddhism, “the mandala represents the realm of enlightenment, the locus for the identification of practitioner and Buddha.”<sup>18</sup> The Hindu *Brāhmaṇas* indicate that a mandala may serve as a “sacred enclosure” and sometimes a place specifically constructed for ritual purposes.<sup>19</sup>

John Woodroffe (1865–1936) describes a *yantra* as both a tool that holds one’s attention and an object of worship that represents a particular deity.<sup>20</sup> The deity may or may not be considered cosmically pervasive. The *Kaulāvaiṇyam* and *Kulārṇava-tantra* liken the relationship between *yantra* and deity to that between a body and its soul.<sup>21</sup> The *Kulārṇava-tantra* 6.87 reads, “As the body is for an embodied soul like oil for a

lamp, my beloved, so likewise the *yantra* is the place of all divinities.”<sup>22</sup> *Yantras* are said to become powerful and kinetic when enlivened through mantra and ritual.<sup>23</sup> But these activities may not have much influence on some types of *yantra* described by Ānandamūrti. Those *yantras* that he says have an innate or inherent presence within a human or natural structure would be activated and controlled predominantly through cosmic consciousness.

One *yantra*/mandala used by Ānanda Mārga has some stationary elements and some mobile elements. Ānanda Mārga’s organizational emblem, called the *pratīka*, has two equilateral triangles that form a hexagon, within which there is a rising sun. Inside the sun there is a *svāstika* (swastika).<sup>24</sup> Ānandamūrti said the *svāstika* should be visualized three-dimensionally and as turning in a counterclockwise direction, but not that the two triangles should form a tetrahedron, nor be mobile. During a talk on tantra in 1995 Baba Hari Dass opined that *yantras* are expanding patterns of energy that are constantly in motion.<sup>25</sup> He said that the *bindu* (point or drop of divine consciousness) turns into a triangle, whose sides “bulge out” to form the circle of a mandala. Within the mandala, formless energy patterns are made visible so that the symbol’s “gross, subtle, and causal meanings” can be “read like a book.”<sup>26</sup> He associated each *yantra* or mandala with a presiding deity and mantra.

#### BHAIRAVĪ CAKRA ACCORDING TO THE MAHĀNIRVĀṆA-TANTRA

The eighth chapter of the *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra* contains a rather succinct description of a Bhairavī Cakra ritual associated with the Kula Mārga (path).<sup>27</sup> This form of worship is less ritualistic compared to other *cakra pūjā* rites in the text. It advises the aspirant to draw a *yantra* with vermilion, red sandalwood paste, or water in the form of a square inscribed with a triangle. It does not say in which direction the apex of the triangle should face. A decorated wine jar is placed on the *yantra* and one’s *iṣṭa-deva* (personal deity) is worshiped therein. Then Ānanda-Bhairavī as a rosy-colored, smiling, and ornately dressed young woman is visualized. It is interesting to note how closely her image is associated with the dawn and thereby with the beginning of creation. This theme is reiterated in the *Tripurā-bhairavī-tantra*, the *Śāradā-tilaka-tantra*, and the *Bṛhat Tantrasāra* and seems to have developed a foothold in popular Indian culture.<sup>28</sup>

After Ānanda-Bhairavī is worshiped, her male counterpart Ānanda-Bhairava is visualized and revered. The pair is then imagined in cosmic or sexual union within the jar. At this point five substances or items referred to as the *pañcha makāra* (five “M”-words) are consecrated with mantra and offered to Ānanda-Bhairavī. The five substances (*tattvas*) are usually understood as meat (*māṃsa*), fish (*matsya*), wine (*madya*), parched grain (*mudrā*), and sexual ritual (*maithuna*), though the interpretation of words’ meanings varies from one tantric group to another. The practitioner eats or drinks the first four items after they have been offered. The text suggests adjustments in the *tattvas* for the Kālī Age. They include substituting *madhura-traya* (a combination of milk, sugar, and honey) for purified wine and mantra meditation on Devī’s feet for sexual ritual.<sup>29</sup> Where meat, fish, wine, and sexual ritual were used as *pañcha makāra* ingredients, Woodroffe said their purpose was as a means of controlling and curbing appetites and ultimately associating them with religious worship.<sup>30</sup>

In an essay from *Śakti and Śākta*, Woodroffe describes the possible use of sexual ritual in Bhairavī Cakra as a process that takes place between the worshiper and his wife. If the worshiper is not married or his wife is unable to participate, the worshiper may ritually marry one other woman for the purpose of the ceremony only.<sup>31</sup> Traditionally, the decision to utilize sexual ritual is said to depend on the capacity of the participants for elevated ideation. The evaluation of a practitioner’s ideation was left up to his or her guru. In Hindu tantra three categories of ideation (*bhāva*) are used in developmental comparison: *paśu* (animal), *vīra* (human/ brave), and *divyā* (divine). The true human being is said to be brave (*vīrya*) and self-controlled in all ways.<sup>32</sup> He or she strives for the expression of divinity within.

Woodroffe says that for the *divyā* aspirant, the five *tattvas* are yogic processes.<sup>33</sup> Hugh B. Urban describes Woodroffe’s interpretation of the *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra* as an attempt to defend, rationalize, and purify tantra by removing or deemphasizing some of its antinomian, worldly, and nonmystical aspects.<sup>34</sup> Woodroffe’s objective was to portray yogic processes as a superior expression of tantric ritual. He distinguished Bhairavī Cakra from other *cakra pūjā* rituals by saying that it does not involve restrictions on who can participate.<sup>35</sup> Regarding participation in Bhairavī Cakra, Baba Hari Dass expressed the same opinion.<sup>36</sup>

## BABA HARI DASS AND THE VAIRĀGĪ VAIṢṆAVA LINEAGE

Baba Hari Dass was born in the Almora District of the Kumaon region of the Himalayas.<sup>37</sup> He is a *sannyāssi* (renunciant) of the Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava lineage of north central India and guru to people in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and India. He took a vow of perpetual silence (*maunavrata*) in 1952. His lineage was founded by Ramanandin during the fifteenth century and is an offshoot of the Viṣiṣṭādvaita school of qualified nondualism that was established in south India by Rāmānuja (1017–1137).<sup>38</sup> Ramanandin rejected caste distinctions and sexual discrimination, creating *sannyāsiniṣ* (female renunciants) as well as *sannyāsins* (male renunciants).<sup>39</sup> Baba Hari Dass was initiated by a Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava *sādhu* named Raghubir Dass.

In 1971 Baba Hari Dass was invited to the United States, founded the Hanuman Fellowship, and three years after that established the Mount Madonna Center at Watsonville, California. His Indian headquarters is at Shampur Kangri village in the Haridvāra District of Uttar Pradesh. Baba Hari Dass's followers established the Shri Ram Ashram there through their guru's Sri Rama Foundation. The ashram is both a residence and a school for needy children. Other branches of the Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava Order in India are independent of Baba Hari Dass's organization.

The Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas are an order of married and unmarried *sannyāsins*. The word *vairāgī* means a renunciant, literally one without (*vai*) passion (*rāga*). Dr. Sarasvati Buhrman, a Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava *sannyāsini* and an Ayurvedic physician, explained that those who are married are termed "householder celibates" and have no children. They limit their sexual activity to once a month in order to conserve *ojas* for higher spiritual practices. *Ojas* is recognized by both the Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas and Ānanda Mārgiis as a subtle product of *shukra dhātu*, or lymph. Buhrman said that the topic of *ojas* and its conservation is articulated in Ayurvedic manuals and Hatha yoga texts of a tantric character, as well as within the tantric tradition itself. She identified the latest of the written sources as thirteenth- through sixteenth-century Hatha yoga texts.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond the fact that they are qualified nondualists, the beliefs and practices of the Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas do not appear to be uniform on the Indian subcontinent or in diaspora.<sup>41</sup> There is a tradition among them of relying on personal experience and study to shape one's worldview and instructions to others.<sup>42</sup> The author was able to observe this herself. Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*, which was published from 1875,

classified some Bengali Bāuls as Vairāgīs.<sup>43</sup> Given the lack of concurrence in Vairāgī beliefs and practices, this classification may have some merit in the sense that the Bāuls of Bengal are also known for their eclecticism. But it does not seem to signify that Vairāgīs, like Bengali Bāul *sannyāsis*, engage in sexual ritual.<sup>44</sup> At least the American branch of Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas does not. It may mean that some Bāuls, like Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas, lead a very controlled sexual life and that a portion of the membership of both groups does not marry.

#### MOUNT MADONNA AND BHAIRAVĪ CAKRA SĀDHANA

The 350-acre Mount Madonna Center offers a wide spectrum of seminars and each person is encouraged to follow practices according to his or her personal inclinations. Baba Hari Dass's disciples say he teaches different meditation techniques according to the needs he perceives in his students. He and his staff primarily teach classical Aṣṭāṅga yoga according to Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtras*. They also make extensive use of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Works like the *Mahānirvāṇa-tantra*, *Kulārṇava-tantra*, *Śiva Samhita*, and *Hatha Yoga Pradīpika* are employed as source books for their yoga teachers because they believe that combining tantric and yogic practices helps aspirants refine the *cakras* of the subtle body.<sup>45</sup> Baba Hari Dass is the author of at least ten books, including a commentary entitled *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (1999), *Ashtanga Yoga Primer* (1981), and *Essays 3: Selfless Service; The Spirit of Karma Yoga* (no date).

Baba Hari Dass's followers have practiced their traditional Bhairavī Cakra ceremony at Mount Madonna gatherings since 1975 or 1976. The rituals were incorporated as part of their general retreats. Janardan Dass, the Bhairavī Cakra *pūjāri*,<sup>46</sup> said that sometimes over a hundred people at a time participated in them, making it necessary to form circles of participants within other circles. In addition to the ceremonies held at Mount Madonna, authorized Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava teachers such as Sarasvati Buhman in Boulder, Colorado have held portions of the rite. The staff at Mount Madonna began to offer seminars for the public in the 1980s.

In 1998 a *Yoga Journal* advertisement announced a four-day "Rituals of Tantra" seminar that described tantra as "an ancient system of transcending the senses by using the senses." The use of the senses in this context refers to channeling energy awakened through the senses towards one's divine object of ideation. The ad pointed out that tantra is "sometimes misunderstood in the West as a path of sensual indulgence,"



while in fact it is a path that requires considerable discipline.<sup>47</sup> The seminar would involve the use of mantra, visualization, *āsana* (yoga postures), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control techniques), dance, and music. It would also include “traditional Bhairabi Chakra Sadhana—a unique and rare practice which is done in a circle (Chakra) with equal numbers of men and women.” It stated that the seminar was designed for participants with differing levels of experience.

This ceremony may have been the last one of a series open to the public, as there are currently no plans to restart them. Any future decision on the issue rests with Mount Madonna’s retreat committee. Janardan Dass cited skewed Western perceptions of what tantra is as a cause of their suspension.<sup>48</sup> The view that tantra is a form of sexual therapy with positive spiritual implications stems from any number of New Age seminars and books that have appeared in the last thirty years.<sup>49</sup> Urban has documented how Americans’ perception of tantra as liberating sexual activity began from the early twentieth century with Pierre Bernard’s establishment of the Tantrik Order in America.<sup>50</sup>

The idea that Bhairavī Cakra in particular is associated with sexual rites obviously had some currency among nineteenth-century subcontinent Indians. A painting from Rajasthan, dated to approximately that time period, portrays the *pañchamakāra* utilizing sexual ritual. It was reproduced in *The Tantric Way*, published in 1977. The painting’s caption identified it as an illustration of “Bhairavī-chakra.”<sup>51</sup> The format of the painting is similar to an “attraction yantra” (*ākaraṣaṇayantra*).<sup>52</sup> However, only some *cakra pūjā* rites involve sexual ritual.

Traditionally, practices like Bhairavī Cakra have been kept secret to all but the initiated within a tantric group. When the Mount Madonna seminars were held for the public participants were not required to take Vairāgī initiation, but they were asked to maintain the secrecy of the practice, not to tape record it, and not to take any notes during the ceremony. The following information about the ritual comes from its *pūjāri* Janardan Dass, authorized instructor Sarasvati Buhman, and informants who attended a segment of the rite at a September 1–3, 2001 seminar in Boulder, Colorado.

#### THE RITUAL PROCESS STARTS WITH A YANTRA

Mount Madonna’s Bhairavī Cakra ritual actually starts the night before the participants assemble, when Baba Hari Dass chooses a single



*yantra* for the ceremony from among ten Devī *yantras*. The *pūjāri* said the patterns of the *yantras* come from an unpublished manuscript of Baba Hari Dass entitled *Dāsmahāvīdyas*. The names of the *mahāvīdyas* listed in other texts are usually Kālī, Tārā, Tripura-Sundarī (sometimes Sodaśī), Bhuvaneśvarī, Chinnamastā, Bhairavī, Dhūmāvātī, Bagalāmukhī, Mātāṅgī, and Kamalā. Baba Hari Dass’s disciples understand the *mahāvīdyas* to be aspects of a singular Devī. One of them, however, asked the guru to comment on the goddess Bhairavī. Baba Hari Dass wrote that Bhairavī is the “power of death.” He continued to write that “Destruction begins from the very first moment of birth. Death is ever present in everything. Bhairavi is a fearful-looking female servant of Shiva and of Durga.”<sup>53</sup> Baba Hari Dass’s choice of *yantra* is at least partly an astrological calculation and may include such factors as the month of the year, the lunar date, and the day of the week as well as the constellation (*nakshatra*).<sup>54</sup>

A *pūjāri* constructs the *yantra* in the open air utilizing colored sand, reaching dimensions of up to ten feet in size. According to Hèléne Brunner’s classification of mandalas, these would correspond to type 2 powder mandalas (*rajomaṇḍala*).<sup>55</sup> The Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas’ use of a *yantra* is meant to perform the traditional function within Hinduism of invoking the presence of a deity. After the formation of the *yantra* the goddess chosen to preside over that particular Bhairavī Cakra ceremony is installed by means of a mantra. In 1995 Baba Hari Dass identified mandala, *mudrā* (here meaning symbolic gesture), and mantra as the instruments that help an individual achieve tantra’s main objective of purification.<sup>56</sup> In Jayaratha’s commentary on the *Tantrāloka*, he says that *vidyās* (feminine mantras) are a fourth item that make up the foundation of Bhairava’s teachings.<sup>57</sup> The Vairāgī’s Bhairavī Cakra ceremony includes all four tools.

#### THE CEREMONY ITSELF

The participants were instructed to consider each man in the circle as the embodiment of divine consciousness and each woman in the circle as the embodiment of divine energy. For the duration of the three-hour practice, all the interpersonal relationships of the participants were to be seen as dissolved. They were told that the aim of the practice was to be able to see the divine in all beings. I believe this practice is a simple auto-suggestion that mimics what an individual might experience while looking at the rite from a spiritually elevated perspective. Vairāgī

Vaiṣṇava instructor Buhrman said that the dissolution-of-temporal-relationships ideation assisted people in redefining their relationships in a spiritual way. She contrasted this ideation with that of many seminars advertising tantric practices. These, she said, may be characterized as couple's therapy for intimates in that they seek to reinforce and restate the relationships that people have to other individuals.

An equal number of men and women were instructed to sit in a circle, alternating male and female participants. There is no question of couples in this ceremony, or of women occupying any particular position in relationship to male partners. In fact there are only several occasions when the men and women sitting next to each other have physical contact at all. One is at the time of performing hand *mudrās*, when each participant performs a *mudrā* that brings his or her hand in contact with the hand of the person sitting alongside. The other is at several points when all people in the circle simply hold hands.

Regarding the layout of the ritual area, it is noteworthy that the *pūjārī* and his wife sit at the center of the circle. A *pūjā* (worship) table laden with pictures of many deities accompanies them. There is no sacrificial fire. The position of the sand yantra in relation to the circle of participants is unclear. The ceremony includes a series of āsanās, some of which are performed in gracefully coordinated collective movements. This creates an effect akin to that of a dance. The *pūjārī* recites many *bija* mantras ("seed" mantras that contain vibratory syllables) while the participants concentrate at different cakras within their bodies. They perform *sabija* (with mantra) and *nirbija* (without mantra) *prāṇāyāma* (breath control techniques) as well as *sakumbhāka* (with breath retention) *prāṇāyāma* and types of *prāṇāyāma* without the restriction of the practitioner's nostrils.

The participants are directed to execute various hand *mudrās* intermittently. Hand *mudrās* are gestures that have a practical, yogic effect and a religiously-toned association. From the yogic standpoint the execution of hand *mudrās* ensures the channeling of energy into the spinal column and assists in the raising of *kuṇḍalinī* (a coiled, serpentine, spiritual energy in the spine). Baba Hari Dass's students perform two series of hand *mudrās* connected to their daily meditation practice. These contain twenty-four *mudrās* produced before meditation and eight completed afterwards.<sup>58</sup> Four of the *mudrās* in the pre-meditation group are specifically associated with incarnations of Viṣṇu (numbers 18–21 represent the Fish, Tortoise, Boar, and Lion).<sup>59</sup>

The religious pairing of hand *mudrās* with deities is a common feature of tantric practice. The hand *mudrās* described in the *Yoginīhṛdaya* are particular to ten aspects of Tripura-Sundarī.<sup>60</sup> Those in the *Kulārṇava-tantra* include, but are not necessarily limited to, Śiva/Bhairava, Śrī (the goddess), Viṣṇu, the Sun, the Moon, and Gaṇapati,<sup>61</sup> while in the *Tantrāloka* they are dedicated to various aspects of Śiva/Sadāśiva/Bhairava, Parā, Parā-parā, and Aparā.<sup>62</sup> Citing Abhinavagupta, Padoux states that *mudrās* are meant to bring about the practitioner's mental and bodily identification with the deity to which they correspond.<sup>63</sup> James H. Sanford says that hand *mudrās* are used to invoke, compliment, and disperse deities within some of Shingon's Japanese Buddhist rituals.<sup>64</sup> The hand *mudrās* in Baba Hari Dass's Bhairavī Cakra ritual are probably linked to the worship of deities as well. Buhrman said their ritual includes the worship of a number of deities including the *navagrahas* (planet-deities).

The recitation of mantras in this form of Bhairavī Cakra includes 108 repetitions of what they refer to as "Bhairavī mantras." This is an example of one of their *vidyās*. They offer flowers and perform various types of meditation, concluding with a mantra meditation on Devī. As the yantra was meant to be a temporary installation, it is dismantled at the end of the rite. To summarize, the ceremony is characterized by an emphasis on mantra meditation, mandala, *āsanas*, *mudrās* and *prāṇāyāma*. All of the elements that might be seen as ritualistic are described as either spiritually efficacious or devotional. There is no consumption of materials such as wine and meat, nor sexual ritual. Baba Hari Dass's followers are vegetarians and also do not substitute *madhura-traya* for wine.

Participants said that they were impressed with the ceremony because it had a striking impact on their meditation practices and created tremendous amounts of energy. At the conclusion of one ritual, several informants had a visionary experience in which they saw the entire group encircled by a mandalic configuration of two rings of rotating light. A vertical ring of light was said to arch over the circle of ritualists while a horizontal ring encircled them. They associated the former with Śaivite energy and the latter with Śakti. One informant described the participants at this ritual as deeply affected and outside ordinary consciousness.

SPECULATIONS ON THE EVOLUTION OF  
SEXUAL AND NONSEXUAL TANTRIC PRACTICES

As part of my 2000 interview with her, Buhrman summarized Baba Hari Dass's views on the evolution of tantra as a system of spiritual practices. He believes that tantra was originally a system of nonsexual rituals and that these predate the sexual types of *cakra pūjā* prevalent in the Middle Ages. He explained to his disciples that a deterioration of Indian society occurred when the *varnas* (social groups) lost their equality. With the acceptance of the Vedic caste system, only men of the upper three castes (whom he identified as Brahman, Kṣatriyan, and Vaeshyan) were permitted to engage in certain religious practices. Women and Śūdra caste were excluded.

This caused practitioners of tantra to seek outward forms that the general society thought was acceptable for lower caste individuals. The tantras had female gurus and female practitioners. It was very likely that women and men of lower caste who were found to be teaching or involved in subtle spiritual practices would be persecuted. Therefore, they adopted exterior forms that did not cause concerned, high-caste individuals to suspect that their domination of the religious sphere was being challenged in any way. They concealed or disguised their true intentions due to social prohibitions. For example, they used *sandhyā bhāṣā* (twilight language), in which words have multiple interpretations. They practiced a subtle version of the *pañcha makāras*.

Baba Hari Dass said the cruder interpretations of the *pañcha makāras* came about as a result of individuals mistakenly trying to practice what they thought was being done in the name of subtle spiritual science. These individuals were imitators. They were not yet qualified for the subtlest practices, but decided to attempt practice without the guidance of people who were knowledgeable. They created a separate branch of tantra. In Baba Hari Dass's opinion it is not a branch completely without merit, but he does not teach it. He said that something like ninety percent of people who try that form of tantra fail to reach their spiritual goals. It is appropriate only for people who simultaneously have two very strong, seemingly contrasting desires. On the one hand they have strong physical desires for drugs or sex while on the other they have a strong desire for contact with cosmic consciousness.<sup>65</sup> He commented that the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās were engaged in the rajasic (mutative) or tamasic (static) practice of the *pañcha makāras* as Vīrachari (brave) ritualists.

Therefore, Buhrman said, at Mount Madonna they refer to their Bhairavī Cakra as a very old, traditional form of the ritual because it is nonsexual. Baba Hari Dass wrote that Bhairavī Cakra is used “in all different kinds of Tantric rituals,” including those of the Bengali Sahajiyās and perhaps those of Buddhists.<sup>66</sup> The Bengali Sahajiyās have a Śaktic orientation but it is unclear to what extent their philosophy and practices correspond to those of the Buddhist or Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās.<sup>67</sup> Baba Hari Dass said the Bengali Sahajiyās were a group composed of mainly householders who practiced in secret and did not proselytize their beliefs.<sup>68</sup> This fits June McDaniels’s description of medieval Śaktism as an “esoteric religion practiced by small groups of Tantric yogis.”<sup>69</sup>

Ānandamūrti asserted that Sadāśiva designed the sexual and nonsexual forms of tantra simultaneously about seven thousand years ago.<sup>70</sup> He said the cruder forms including sexual rites were meant for less-developed aspirants to help them “limit the degree of their indulgence.”<sup>71</sup> Like Baba Hari Dass, he said that they were those who were unable to understand the subtler interpretations of the *pañcha makāras* (the imitators), but as a social reformer he was more critical of them, labeling their *sādhana* “an immoral antisocial activity.”<sup>72</sup> His interpretation of Bhairavī Cakra will be discussed below.

Among scholars of Hindu and Buddhist tantra the current, prevailing opinion is that ritual practices with a sexual component preceded the yogic forms without one and that the sexual rituals were not a degeneration of mysticism. David G. White describes “sexualized ritual practice” as “the sole truly distinctive feature of South Asian Tantric traditions.”<sup>73</sup> He says that scholastic tantric works are a “secondary development, a hermeneutical transformation of an earlier body of practice into a mystical metaphysics.”<sup>74</sup> Meanwhile, systems of tantra with a sexual component, whether ancient or re-invented, show no signs of extinction.<sup>75</sup> Sanford notes that we are likely to find sexual ritual and other liminal practices as part of the tantric corpus when he observes that “Worldly and antinomian themes lurk at or just beneath the surface of virtually every tantric tradition.”<sup>76</sup>

#### BHAIRAVĪ IN ĀNANDA MĀRGA IDEOLOGY

Ānanda Mārga (The Path of Bliss) is an international socio-spiritual tantric sect that was founded in 1955 at Jamalpur, Bihar State, India. It is a new, alternative religious movement whose tenets view proselytizing

as a part of spiritual practice. Ānanda Mārga has a presence in over one hundred countries. The organization sent its *ācāryas* (spiritual teachers) to the United States in the late 1960s and registered as an American religious entity soon afterwards. The founder and guru, Ānandamūrti, did not claim to be part of any current lineage and associated himself with tantra yoga reaching back to Sadāśiva. He said that Sadāśiva was an historical figure from about seven thousand years ago who was the first to systematize tantra.<sup>77</sup> Before the advent of Sadāśiva, Ānandamūrti said that tantra existed in scattered and primitive forms within its Kashmiri and Bengali schools.<sup>78</sup> The organization's ideology emphasizes social service work along with the search for self-realization.

Ānanda Mārga's ontology is monistic and microcosmic. Their *ācāryas* teach a tantra yoga based on Aṣṭāṅga yoga. Since its inception, the organization has been reformist with a large number of *sannyāsis* as organizational workers. Ānandamūrti was the author of over two hundred books on a wide range of topics. Some of his books, originally written in Bengali, remain untranslated. He tried to visit the United States in the late 1970s but was refused a visa. This may be due to the socialist character of his socio-economic and political ideals, which are embodied in PROUT, his Progressive Utilization Theory. Ānandamūrti created a wing of Ānanda Mārga, called PROUTist Universal, to propagate those ideas in 1959. Ānanda Mārga/PROUTist Universal accepts revolutionary social theory and has a controversial position on the use of force.<sup>79</sup>

The name Bhairavī appears in the ideology of Ānanda Mārga in several instances. Ānandamūrti used it to delineate a portion of their cosmology and to describe the process of Śākta tantra. In some of his discourses on spiritual practice he spoke about Bhairavī Cakra specifically. With regard to the unfolding of the cosmos, Ānandamūrti said Bhairavī Śakti is the name given to Prakṛti at the stage in which Puruṣa is qualified by the *guṇas* (binding principles).<sup>80</sup> She was identified as the creatress of the manifested state, while Bhairava was conceived of as her witness.<sup>81</sup> This is not to indicate that Ānandamūrti and his followers accept any form of Prakṛti as having independent agency.<sup>82</sup> He called *Prakṛti Puruṣa* "Operative Principle" and his ontological stance was essentially monistic, though he did accept the distinctiveness of Prakṛti and Puruṣa as philosophical concepts.<sup>83</sup>

Within his description of Śākta tantra, Ānandamūrti utilized the name Bhairavī Śakti while elucidating the stages of Śāktācāra; the Śakti cult he said appeared after the Purānic doctrine was established.<sup>84</sup>

He indicated that Śāktācāra is a process in which successive stages of energy-qualified consciousness are dissolved in one another until they arrive at the supreme state. The followers of Śāktācāra attempt to merge the static principle within *tāmasik* energy into Bhavānī Śakti or Kālikā Śakti, the mutative principle from Bhavānī Śakti into Bhairavī Śakti, and the sentient energy from Bhairavī Śakti into Kaośikī Śakti or Mahāsarasvatī, the “spiritual effulgence.”<sup>85</sup> Kaośikī Śakti is called Ādyā Śakti, a combination of the three *guṇas*. Ānandamūrti defines Bhairavī Śakti as “energy in action,” and says her acoustic root is *śam*.<sup>86</sup> The historical, literary association between Bhairavī and the color red (cited above) lends weight to his identification of her with the mutative principle, or *rajas*.<sup>87</sup>

#### BHAIRAVĪ CAKRA ACCORDING TO ĀNANDA MĀRGIIS

In some of Ānandamūrti’s spiritual discourses he discussed the nature of *yantra*. He defined it in an expanded sense, as a controlled machine that is capable of a specific output.<sup>88</sup> The *Bhagavadgītā* 18.61 also describes *yantra* as a machine.<sup>89</sup> Ānandamūrti observed that because *yantras* have special forms and designs, they yield particular effects. It is a concept similar to the idea of *yantra* expressed by Vidyā Vācaspati in the *Kalyāṇa Upaniṣad*,<sup>90</sup> namely, that the forms of all manifested things are *yantras*. Ānandamūrti’s point was that the human body, due to its form, produces particular effects not obtainable from other bodies, such as those of animals.<sup>91</sup> Specifically, the human body is a *yantra* capable of producing or creating divinity.<sup>92</sup> I would like to stress that Ānandamūrti was not restricting himself to the idea that the human mind is capable of conceiving divinity or imagining divinity. His intention here was to communicate that the physical material of the human body itself, with its human-specific glandular structure and concomitant mental configuration, was capable of converting mind-stuff into divine-stuff, or consciousness.<sup>93</sup>

Ānandamūrti implied that within the human mind, the centrifugal and centripetal tendencies towards the material and spiritual spheres manifest as a mental *yantra* or microcosmic mandala. André Padoux says that the *Yoginīhṛdaya* from the Śrīvidyā tradition and Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka* describe comparable embodiments of mandala as a result of a divine cosmic process.<sup>94</sup> While there is more emphasis on the concept of “descent” of consciousness in ontologies and cosmologies of and related



to Kashmir Śaivism, Ānanda Mārga's ontology has a certain degree of resonance with them, being both monistic and microcosmic. The *Śākta Darśan* says, "The disc of the body-cosmos is the best of all yantras."<sup>95</sup>

Ānandamūrti said that the better the adjustment and relationship between the centrifugal and centripetal mental tendencies, the more an individual would be able to use his or her mental capabilities.<sup>96</sup> He translated the concepts of introverted and extroverted mental tendencies into the basic philosophy of his socio-spiritual organization and used his *pratīka* (organizational emblem) to represent them. The symbolic elements of the *pratīka* are dominated by two equilateral triangles forming what resembles the Seal of Solomon. Ānanda Mārgiis call it the Star of Śiva. They use this mandala/*yantra* as part of their initiation (*dīkṣā*) rite by asking the initiate to place his or her hands within it for part of the process.<sup>97</sup> The mental manifestation of this *yantra* would be diagrammed as a hexagram alone.

Throughout much of the Hindu world, a triangle with its apex pointing upwards is thought to represent consciousness. Ānanda Mārgiis have a contrary, minority viewpoint. They say the *ūrdhva trikoṇa* (upward-pointing triangle) signifies energy, *prakṛti*, and the mind's relationship to the physical world. In social terms they say it represents service to humanity. One of the few experts in the use of *yantras* to agree with them is Harish Johari, who identifies a *yantra* with a central upward-pointing triangle as a Śākta *yantra*. The *adhah trikoṇa* (downward-pointing triangle) is described by Mārgiis as denoting the introverted search for self-realization through spiritual practices. Therefore they associate it with Puruṣa, rather than Prakṛti. There is a *yantra* called Kāla Bhairava Cakra that prominently features three downward-pointing triangles as well as a hexagram.<sup>98</sup> Therefore the Ānanda Mārgiis do not appear to be completely alone in their views on the symbolism of Hindu geometric iconography. Their use of triangles to represent Prakṛti and Puruṣa echoes, in a simple way, Shingon's "grand mandalas": Garbhakoṣa (Womb Mandala) and Vajradhātu (Vajra Mandala).<sup>99</sup>

Some Ānanda Mārgiis utilize the hexagram of their *pratīka* as an ingredient in what they refer to as *kāpālīka* practices. The nature of these practices will be discussed below. Ānandamūrti called the stand-alone hexagram Bhairavī Cakra. Its name is derived from the fact that Bhairavī Śakti is said to determine the relationship between the physical, vibrational world and the causal matrix, or spiritual sphere.<sup>100</sup> Ānandamūrti said that Bhairavī Cakra, as a pattern of active energy, is

instrumental for inspiring, elevating, and guiding the mind towards supreme consciousness.<sup>101</sup> He explained that this was why some *sādhakas* sit in its physical manifestation for spiritual practices performed in the burial ground.<sup>102</sup> By sitting in the *cakra* they imbibe its ideation. Ānandamūrti said that the spiritual aspirant who enters the realm controlled by Bhairavī Śakti experiences the unity of the universe.<sup>103</sup> According to S. K. R. Rao's system of defining yantras,<sup>104</sup> sitting in Bhairavī Cakra would convert the *yantra* into a mandala because a ritual object would be placed upon it. In this case, the tantra yogis would be using their own bodies as ritual objects. Gudrun Bühnemann notes that *yantras* of this category, called “*yantras* for establishing a foundation” (*sthāpanayantras*), present simple geometric shapes and function as seats.<sup>105</sup>

#### KĀPĀLIKA SĀDHANA, MADHYAMIKA BUDDHISM, AND THE RITUAL USE OF THE HUMAN SKULL

Ānanda Mārga's *kāpālika sādhanas* are yogic and esoteric. The process for the meditator involves concentrating his or her individual Bhairavī Śakti at a “nuclear point” (*cakra*) in the body and using this internal seat as a point from which to pass into the Kaośikī Śakti described above.<sup>106</sup> Because the three *guṇas* are unexpressed in Kaośikī Śakti, merging into it is said to signify the dissolution of the individual mind into cosmic consciousness. Ānanda Mārga's *kāpālika sādhanas* traditionally take place around the time of the new moon (*amāvāsyā*).<sup>107</sup> While they do not always occur in cremation or burial grounds, that is their practitioner's first choice of site. One reason for this is the belief that cremation and burial grounds are locations of elevated concentrations of *prāṇa* (energy), resulting from the decomposition or destruction of human physical bodies.<sup>108</sup> Another reason has to do with the assertion that these are ideal places to engage in struggle with mental restrictions that Ānanda Mārgiis call the *pāśas* (bonds or fetters) and *ripus* (enemies). This idea will be elaborated below. Informants indicate that Ānanda Mārga's *kāpālika* practices differ from individual to individual as well as between their male and female *sannyāsis*, called *avadhūtas* and *avadhūtikās*.

Though the activities of Hindu *kāpālikas* are not usually associated with Buddhist ideals of spiritual social service, Ānandamūrti believed that there was originally, and still remains, a connection between the two. The name *kāpālika* appears to come from the Sanskrit word for skull (*kāpāla*). Since the medieval period *kāpālikas* have been associated with

spiritual practices that utilize a human skull.<sup>109</sup> Ānandamūrti said this was accurate,<sup>110</sup> but he presented an additional etymology of the word *kāpālika*. He said that one of the meanings of the phoneme “ka” is the objectivated world.<sup>111</sup> Therefore human beings who take on the moral responsibility “of serving this objectivated world are called *kāpālika*.”<sup>112</sup> He traced the first use of the term *kāpālika* to the Madhyamika Buddhists and said that they used it for those *sādhakas* “who took the noble vow of serving all in the living and non-living worlds.”<sup>113</sup> This is a bodhisattva-like vow. Madhyamika Buddhism was founded in second-century India by Nāgārjuna and introduced into China by Kumārajīva (334–413).<sup>114</sup> It was known as the San-lun Tsung, or Three Treatise school of Buddhism in China, Korea, and Japan.<sup>115</sup> Ānandamūrti consistently asserted that it is “absolutely wrong” to make a distinction between Hindu tantra and Buddhist tantra because “Tantra is one and only one.”<sup>116</sup> Not surprisingly, his *avadhūtas* and *avadhūtikās* dedicate lifetime after lifetime to spiritual social service.

McDaniel says that the *avadhūtas* and *kāpālikas* were traditionally “folk tantric sects” who tried to achieve supernatural powers through penance-related *sādhana*s.<sup>117</sup> She uses the terms *folk tantra* and *classical tantra* to distinguish between tantras that emphasized the application of supernatural knowledge and the acquisition of *siddhis* (occult powers) from those that were more academic and concentrated on identification with divinity.<sup>118</sup> Woodroffe described *avadhūtas* as those who have “caste aside” the world or separated from it so that they might constantly contemplate supreme consciousness.<sup>119</sup> Ānandamūrti believed that they were more integrated into the world. He said *avadhūtas* are those who view “everything with equanimity” and live in the world as if they are secondary manifestations of Śiva.<sup>120</sup>

Ānandamūrti cast his twentieth-century *kāpālikas* in a classical mold. He emphasized the yogic attainment of self-realization and required these practitioners to take on social service responsibilities of a socio-economic and political, as well as spiritual, nature. The glossary of his *Discourses on Tantra, Volume 2* defines *kāpālika sādhana* as a form of spiritual practice that “causes the aspirant to confront and overcome all the inherent fetters and enemies of the human mind.”<sup>121</sup> Ānanda Mārgiis consider the eight fetters (*aṣṭa pāśa*) to be *ghrṇa* (aversion or hatred), *lajjā* (shame), *kula* (pride of lineage or caste), *śīla* (habit), *māna* (pride of knowledge), *jugupsā* (censure), *bhaya* (fear), *śaṅkā* (doubt).<sup>122</sup> The six enemies (*ṣaṭ ripu*)

are said to be *kāma* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (avarice), *moha* (blind attachment), *mada* (pride), and *mātsarya* (jealousy).<sup>123</sup>

Ānanda Mārga's definition of *kāpālīka sādhana* refers not only to the internal aspect or mental struggle of the practices, but also to the external aspect. Ānandamūrti said that the external aspect of the fight against fear, hatred, and shame involved cremation ground practices, but he did not express any confidence in the public to understand them.<sup>124</sup>

When those who have little knowledge of *sādhana* see the style of this external fight, they think that the Tantrics moving in the cremation ground are a sort of unnatural creature. Actually the general public have no understanding of these Tantrics. In the direct fight against *ripus* and *pāshas* they may appear to be unnatural for the time being, but one cannot ignore the fact that in wartime every person becomes, to some extent, unnatural in his or her activities.<sup>125</sup>

Ānandamūrti's service hermeneutics regarding *kāpālīkas* are classically oriented. But those of his followers who utilize a human skull in their spiritual practices appear to be making use of techniques that come directly out of folk tantra. Here we encounter an ambivalence of his concerning the acquisition of supernatural powers. Classical tantra, whether Hindu or Buddhist, condemns the attempt to acquire *siddhis* as "wastes of time and energy, and as moral temptations."<sup>126</sup> In the late 1970s Ānandamūrti used to gather his *sannyāsis* around him and go around the room asking many individuals, "Do you want the toys or the Maker of the toys?"<sup>127</sup> Here "toys" should be understood as *siddhis*. Each *sannyāsi* was expected to reply that he or she was only interested in the Maker of the toys, as the Entity through whom one could attain self-realization. Ānandamūrti must not have had much confidence in his *sannyāsis'* ability to resist temptation because he told them that he was going to "lock up" their occult powers until such time as they might really need them for some dharmic (proper) purpose.<sup>128</sup>

Ānandamūrti's idea of the proper time to use occult powers was when a certain amount of deviousness might make the difference in defeating egregious immoralists. He cited with approval Kṛṣṇa's use of occult powers to deceive and kill a warrior named Jayadratha in the *Mahābhārata* war.<sup>129</sup> From this example, and his own statements on the matter,<sup>130</sup> we see that Ānandamūrti was not actually opposed to the acquisition of occult powers or their use, just their indiscriminate use. The self-oriented goals of folk tantra feel antinomian because specialized

powers do not appear to be available to everyone and they could possibly be used against those who do not have them. *Tāntrikas'* attempts to acquire powers will be viewed as a threat by just about everyone, even if it is claimed that such powers are only meant to be employed in social service work. The endeavor to acquire powers supports Sanford's observation, cited earlier, that antinomian themes are an integral aspect of tantric traditions.

Sanford describes how the use of human and animal skulls in magico-religious practices is a global phenomenon.<sup>131</sup> The human skull in particular has a deep impact on us by helping us to recall that our embodied state is transient. Zen master Ikkyū Sōjun (1394–1481) employed the human skull in an outrageous and delightful way to prod the people of the city of Sakai along the spiritual path towards *satori*.<sup>132</sup> Sanford says that Ikkyū's doctrine of *sokushinjōbutsu*, or "buddhahood in this very body," was inherited from Shingon, "an almost purely Indian form of tantrism."<sup>133</sup>

The Tachikawa-ryū was a movement within Shingon that was most active during the twelfth through sixteenth centuries.<sup>134</sup> Shinjō's *Juhō Yōjinshū*, written around 1270, describes the fascinating Tachikawa Skull Ritual.<sup>135</sup> Sanford reveals that the Skull Ritual was a rite whose aim it was to reanimate quiescent spirits associated with human skull bone.<sup>136</sup> Seven *p'o* souls in the skull were to be awakened or reintroduced into it by the repeated application of combined male and female sexual fluids.<sup>137</sup> Through this particular folk rite "wealth, social position, knowledge, and magical powers (*siddhi*)" were said to be obtained.<sup>138</sup> The *p'o* souls were *yin*, or feminine, in quality, and female spirits called *dākinī* were also associated with the rite.<sup>139</sup> The *p'o* souls or *dākinī* were responsible for helping the practitioner gain power.<sup>140</sup>

The Śākta *tāntrikas* of West Bengal use the skull as an image of death and transformation in a way similar to master Ikkyū. Śākta tantra folk ritualists also consider the skull to be a direct link to spirits through whom they can gain power.<sup>141</sup> A visitor to an Ānanda Mārga *avadhūta* the day after his Night Sādhana observed that the monk was still wearing the remnants of a red *sindūra* (vermilion) *tilakaṃ* (auspicious marking) between his eyebrows. So was the human skull sitting on the floor. The visitor told me that the *sindūra* on the skull immediately reminded him of blood,<sup>142</sup> more so than seeing it on the monk's forehead. He was somewhat taken aback because he claimed that the use of external worship materials is rare in Ānanda Mārga. Especially the renunciants of

the organization restrict themselves to yogic techniques that are purely internal. The use of external worship materials is considered permissible, but not indispensable, and there is a doctrinal tendency to be wary of activities that approach the category of image and idol worship.

Whether the application of vermilion (as a symbolic form of sanitized menstrual blood) was meant to enliven the skull and assist in passing certain powers from the skull to the monk remains open to question. This speculation would combine sympathetic magic and the tantric folk rationale of the reanimation of spirits that is found in the Tachikawa Skull Ritual. As Ānandamūrti was not totally opposed to the development and use of occult powers, but was more concerned with their potential for abuse, we cannot rule out that his *kāpālikas'* ritual use of a skull in their *sādhana* might be connected to the acquisition of occult powers.

There is one aspect of the use of Bhairavī Cakra as a *yantra*/mandala in *kāpālika sādhana* that has not been discussed. It appears that there are similarities between the formation of a Bhairavī Cakra hexagram and protective acts of *kīlana*, which “nail off” and sacralize a space. Some Ānanda Mārgiis are reported to utilize *kīlana* as a *raṅṅā* (protection) during other types of spiritual practices. Because burial grounds may be dangerous places to visit at night, perhaps the formation of such a *yantra*/mandala acts as a type of protection. The protective aspect would be enhanced if mantra were used in a traditional way as an integral part of the *cakra's* construction. The manuscript that mentions Bhairavī Cakra does not state which material is used in its formation, nor does it describe the procedure for its assembly. Therefore it cannot be said with any certainty if compasses and straight edges are employed. But the facts are that this is a *sādhana* performed at night around the time of the new moon, when there is little light. It makes the use of such implements appear to be counter-intuitive. These practices must emphasize ideation and intention rather than mathematical precision. Lastly, if Bhairavī Cakra did not also have a protective aspect for *kāpālikas*, it seems the ritual would have remained exclusively on the mental level.

#### CONCLUSION: TWO VERY DIFFERENT TANTRIC SĀDHANAS WITH THE SAME NAME

There are yogis within Baba Hari Dass's Vairāgī Vaiṣṇava lineage and among Ānanda Mārga's *kāpālikas* who practice Bhairavī Cakra *sādhana*. But the practitioners from within each group are referring to two very

different rituals. The similarities are that both rituals are yogic forms of tantra, which employ mandala or *yantra* and whose philosophical underpinning is a subtle, nonsexual interpretation of the *pañcha makāras*.<sup>143</sup> The differences, however, are more numerous. Bhairavī Cakra for the Vairāgīs is a collective rite while for Ānanda Mārga's *kāpālikas* it is a solitary one.

It is possible to make a general assertion that both rituals are an invocation of Devī. This would be reasonable despite the fact that Ānanda Mārga is a Śaivite tantric sect and not all the Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas are Śāktas. Because Ānanda Mārga's doctrines are monistic and similar in some ways to Kashmir Śaivism, it would be more accurate to call their *kāpālikas'* Bhairavī Cakra an invocation of energy as a philosophical concept. This is how Ānandamūrti characterizes both his descriptions of the various *śaktis* in Śāktācāra<sup>144</sup> and of *prakṛti* in his own Śaivite tantra.<sup>145</sup> Those members who practice *kāpālika* ritual involving a human skull appear to be utilizing folk tantra. Whether this is a degeneration of second-century Madhyamika Buddhist belief or represents the true roots of *kāpālika* practice awaits further research.

The Vairāgīs consider their philosophy to be monistic. Nevertheless, they allow room in it for the manifestation of Devī in many forms and appear to consider these as semi-distinct entities, somewhat like contemporary Hinduism. So while their Bhairavī Cakra ceremony is tantric, the majority of their practices are more accurately characterized simply as yogic.<sup>146</sup> The invocational objectives of the two *cakras* are similar, but the means they employ to achieve success in them are distinct.

To begin with, the Vairāgī's Bhairavī Cakra is on the one hand a physical circle of participants as well as the *yantra* used at any particular performance of the ceremony. That of the Mārgiis is the mandala/*yantra* alone. The *rajomaṇḍala* type of *yantra*, constructed by Vairāgīs from colored sand, has an artistic appeal for the participants as well as being thought of as a spiritually efficacious means of inviting Devī to preside over their rite. The mandala/*yantra* formed by the Mārgiis is strictly utilitarian. Its aspect or shape could be highly variable, so it must be ideation or correct intention that they are emphasizing.

My judgment is that the Mārgiis' mandala/*yantra* is predominantly a device whose elevating vibrational capacity is exploited in a nonvisual fashion. A single practitioner models it and views it under reduced light conditions, after which it acts as his or her "seat" for the duration of the ritual. Their mandala/*yantra* may additionally serve as a protective



*rakṣa* by demarcating a sacred space. This type of ritual practice reveals a tendency towards yogic symbolization and bodily interiorization of ideology among the Mārgiis as well as an apparent *aparigraha* (thriftiness or restraint) with regard to the use of materials.

The Vairāgī's selection of *yantra* involves astrological calculations and their Bhairavī Cakra ceremony includes a worship of the nine planets (*navagraha*). Ānanda Mārgiis do not accept a deification of the planets. They do not use astrological calculations for Bhairavī Cakra, nor any other ritual of theirs, because Ānandamūrti considered the procedures impractical.<sup>147</sup> His orientation was strictly microcosmic in that he did not think *anything* superfluous to the human body-mind complex was necessary for carrying on spiritual practices.

The *cakra* at Mount Madonna is the sum total of the ritual actions of their circle of participants: the effect of their collective *prāṇāyāma*, chanting of mantras, performance of *mudrās*, and meditations. They are consecrating a rather large physical area, when on some occasions there are hundreds of participants. The Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas utilize the ritual circle shape and performance, in addition to their *yantras*, to create Bhairavī's Cakra and invocation. For the Ānanda Mārga *kāpālikas*, the *cakra* is a physical mandala that represents the play of universal forces within the macrocosm and microcosm. They believe its physical use, as described, can improve a *sādhaka*'s psycho-spiritual state by calibrating extroverted material and social tendencies with introverted spiritual inclinations. Simultaneously, they consider the complete manifested universe to be Bhairavī Cakra.

## NOTES

1. Georg Feuerstein, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), 204 says the text dates to the eleventh century. Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 142 points out that many people suspect it of being composed in the late eighteenth century.
2. Ānandamūrti said the ten *mahāvīdyās* originated about two thousand years ago. Shrii Shrii A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: A'nanda Ma'rga Publications, 1993), 230. The system of Sanskrit diacritics that Ānanda Mārga uses in its publications is one of Ānandamūrti's inventions. He chose a simplified way of writing Roman Sanskrit that uses the “ ’ ” or “ ˘ ” almost exclusively. However, even the application of this system was not uniform from one of his books to another and sometimes was not uniform even within a single book. Therefore I have replicated the diacritical marks that were used on a book-to-book basis within quotes of his and for footnote material that pertains to his books (for example, “A'nandamu'rti” versus the academic standard of “Ānandamūrti”).
3. Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, Bollingen Series LXXIII (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 268 and David Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine: The Ten Mahāvīdyās* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 172.
4. Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, 172.
5. Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 281; Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, 170–171 and Madhu Khanna, *Yantra: The Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1979), 58.
6. Johari lists the impediments as “sickness, incompetence, doubt, delusion, sloth, nonabstention, erroneous conception, nonattainment of any yogic state, and the inability to stay in a yogic state.” Harish Johari, *Tools for Tantra* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1986), 105.
7. Ajit Mookerjee and Madhu Khanna, *The Tantric Way: Art • Science • Ritual* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 190–191.
8. Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 282 and Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, 167.
9. Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, 167.
10. *Ibid.*, 169. For another portrayal of Bhairavī as the cosmic controller see the *Kulacūḍāmaṇi Nigama* referred to by Rita DasGupta Sherma, “Sacred Immanence: Reflections of Ecofeminism in Hindu Tantra,” in *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*, ed. Lance Nelson (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998), 108–109.

11. There are a number of similarities between the philosophies of Kashmir Śaivism and Ānanda Mārga. See Helen Crovetto, “The Changing Face of Śaivite Tantrism” (BA thesis, University of South Florida, 1999), 73–74.
12. Rāmprasād Sen, *Grace and Mercy in Her Wild Hair: Selected Poems to the Mother Goddess*, trans. Leonard Nathan and Clinton Seely (Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, 1999), 55.
13. D. C. Sircar, *The Śākta Pīṭhas*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), 40.
14. June McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 117. Though *cakra pūjā* literally means “circle worship” the phrase has become commonly associated with sexual rituals.
15. Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications, 1994), 168, 170.
16. Gudrun Būhnenmann, “Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations,” in *Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst, Brill’s Indological Library, vol. 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 50.
17. Laura Kaufman, “Nature, Courtly Imagery, and Sacred Meaning in the *Ippen Hijiri-e*,” in *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, ed. James H. Sanford, William R. LaFleur, and Masatoshi Nagatomi (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 65.
18. Elizabeth ten Grotenhuis, “Chūjōhime: The Weaving of Her Legend,” in *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan*, ed. James H. Sanford, William R. LaFleur, and Masatoshi Nagatomi (see note 17), 182.
19. Denise Patry Leidy and Robert A. F. Thurman, *Mandala: The Architecture of Enlightenment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), 17.
20. Sir John Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta: Essays and Addresses*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1987), 349–350. See also the *Yoginī Tantra* in Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 351.
21. Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 350 and Khanna, *Yantra*, 12.
22. Douglas Renfrew Brooks, “The Ocean of the Heart: Selections from the *Kulārṇava Tantra*,” in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 356.
23. Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 351 and Khanna, *Yantra*, 19.
24. The swastika is an ancient, auspicious Hindu symbol said to bestow good luck.
25. Baba Hari Dass, Talks with Babaji, “Tantra,” <http://www.mountmadonna.org/yoga/talks/twb9510.html>.
26. *Ibid.*

27. Arthur Avalon (John Woodroffe), *The Great Liberation: Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1963), 227–233. Ānandamūrti told his followers that they practice Kaola (Kula) *sādhana*. “You are all Kaola and I am Mahākaola,” he said. He defined a Kaola *sādhaka* as one who practices the raising of *kulakuṇḍalinī* (coiled serpentine spiritual energy in the body) and a Mahākaola as a guru who can raise the *kuṇḍalinī* of others. See Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra* 2:41, 2:53. On the division of the “Kaula” or “Kaola” and “Tāntrika” sects see David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yoginī: “Tantric Sex” in Its South Asian Contexts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 18.
28. Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 282 and Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, 167. See an art image of Bhairavī in association with a rosy-colored dawn at <http://www.artoflegendindia.com/browse/P/10/>.
29. Avalon (Woodroffe), *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, 230 and Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta*, 389–390.
30. Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta*, 401.
31. *Ibid.*, 389 and 393–395.
32. *Ibid.*, 412. The same view is expressed in Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti, *Ānanda Vacanāmrtam Part V* (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Saṁgha, 1987), 3–4.
33. Woodroffe, *Śakti and Śākta*, 401.
34. Urban, *Tantra*, 136.
35. Avalon (Woodroffe), *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, 227 and 232.
36. Baba Hari Dass, personal communication, May 18, 2001.
37. Rebecca J. Manring, “An Unlikely Donor: A Hindu Response,” in *Ethics and World Religions: Cross-Cultural Case Studies*, ed. Regina Wentzel Wolfe and Christine E. Gudorf (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 346.
38. *Ibid.*, 346.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Sarasvati Buhman (a disciple of Baba Hari Dass), interview by author, October 7, 2000, Boulder, Colorado, longhand notes. The Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas principal concern seems to be the attainment of self-realization rather than the establishment of a social vehicle. They would presumably refresh their membership over the years with the entry of new spiritual seekers from outside the original founding members.
41. Manring, “An Unlikely Donor: A Hindu Response,” 346.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bāuls of Bengal* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press/Foundation Books, 2004), 22.

44. R. M. Sarkar, *Bauls of Bengal: In the Quest of Man of the Heart* (New Delhi: Gian Publishing, 1990), 73–74.
45. Buhrman, interview by author, October 7, 2000.
46. Janardan Dass (disciple of Baba Hari Dass), personal communication, November 12, 2000.
47. “Rituals of Tantra” advertisement, *Yoga Journal Magazine*, September/October 1998, p. 62.
48. Janardan Dass, personal communication, November 12, 2000.
49. Urban, *Tantra*, 227–229 and 252.
50. *Ibid.*, 203–205 and 215.
51. Mookerjee and Khanna, *The Tantric Way*, 186.
52. Bühnemann, “Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations,” 53, fig. 1.
53. Baba Hari Dass, “Tantra,” <http://www.mountmadonna.org/yoga/talks/twb9510.html>.
54. Johari, *Tools for Tantra*, 59.
55. Bühnemann, “Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations,” 19.
56. Baba Hari Dass, “Tantra,” [www.mountmadonna.org/yoga/talks/twb9510.html](http://www.mountmadonna.org/yoga/talks/twb9510.html). On impurity (*malam*) as the root of ignorance see White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, 80–81.
57. André Padoux, “Maṇḍalas in Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka,” in *Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst (see note 16), 18:231.
58. Baba Hari Dass, *Ashtanga Yoga Primer* (Santa Cruz, CA: Sri Rama Publishing, 1981), 61.
59. *Ibid.*, 64.
60. André Padoux, “The Śrīcakra According to the First Chapter of the *Yoginīhṛdaya*,” in *Maṇḍalas and Yantras in the Hindu Traditions*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst (see note 16), 18:246–247.
61. Brooks, “The Ocean of the Heart,” 353–355.
62. Padoux, “Maṇḍalas in Abhinavagupta’s Tantrāloka,” 234–235.
63. *Ibid.*, 231n11, 232.
64. James H. Sanford, “Literary Aspects of Japan’s Dual-Gaṇeśa Cult,” in *Ganesh: Studies of an Asian God*, ed. Robert L. Brown (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 294.
65. The argument presented by some tantric groups is that all desires are disguised longings for contact with the divine. My understanding is that the

activation of sexual, sensual, or nonsexual/sensual desire strengthens willpower (*iccha śakti*). This contributes to a one-pointedness of mind that can be utilized in spiritual pursuits. Therefore, whether the tantric groups in question are practitioners of sexual ritual or not, they can all reasonably be described as manipulators of energy, or *śakti*.

66. Baba Hari Dass, personal communication, May 18, 2001.

67. The sexual rites of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās are described in Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaiṣṇava-sahajiyā Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

68. Buhrman, interview by author, October 7, 2000.

69. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, 11.

70. Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 2:46–47.

71. *Ibid.*, 2:47.

72. *Ibid.*, 2:28.

73. White, *Kiss of the Yoginī*, 13.

74. *Ibid.*, 16. Some scholars hold the opposite view. See T. N. Mishra, *The Impact of Tantra on Religion and Art*, Tantra in Contemporary Researches, vol. 1 (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld Ltd., 1997), 39.

75. See Urban, *Tantra*, 204–205, 227–228 for a discussion of sexually-oriented forms of Western tantra. See Helen Crovetto, “Embodied Knowledge and Divinity: The Hohm Community as Western-style Bāuls,” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10, no. 1 (August 2006): 69–95 for a description of a contemporary Western tantric group with some traditional Bengali Bāul practices.

76. James H. Sanford, “The Abominable Tachikawa Skull Ritual,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 46, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 2.

77. Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 2:91, 2:124–125.

78. *Ibid.*, 1:193–194, 1:244.

79. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, *Ananda Sutram* (Calcutta: A'nanda Ma'rga Praca'raka Sam'gha, 1984), 33 and P. R. Sarkar, *PROUT in a Nutshell*, vol. 6 (Calcutta: A'nanda Ma'rga Praca'raka Sam'gha, 1987), 60. P. R. Sarkar was Ānandamūrti's legal name under which he wrote social philosophy. In vol. 6 of *PROUT in a Nutshell* he said, “Like materialism, spirituality based on non-violence will be of no benefit to humanity. The words of non-violence may sound noble, and quite appealing, but on the solid ground of reality have no value whatsoever.”

80. Anandamurti, *Ananda Sutram*, 30.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Ibid., 2–3.
83. Ibid., 1.
84. A'nandamu'rṭi, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:240.
85. Ibid., 1:240–241.
86. Ibid., 241.
87. Elizabeth U. Harding, *Kali: The Black Goddess of Dakshineswar* (York Beach, ME: Nicholas-Hays, Inc., 1993), xxx; Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 282 and Kinsley, *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, 167, referring to works such as the *Tripurā-bhairavī-tantra*, the *Śārādā-tilaka-tantra*, and the *Bṛhat Tantrasāra*. Johari associates Bhairavī with the active energy (Kriya Śakti) aspect of *kuṇḍalinī*. Johari, *Tools for Tantra*, 105.
88. Śrī Śrī Ānandamūrti, unpublished longhand manuscript based on his discourses, 1978, 3.
89. Būhnmann, “Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations,” 28n39.
90. Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, 350–351.
91. Ānandamūrti, unpublished manuscript, 4.
92. Ibid.
93. Ānandamūrti spoke of the human mind as composed of varying proportions of *mahat* (I), *aham* (I do), and *citta* (I have done). A summary of Ānanda Mārga cosmology and eschatology relative to the human mind is available in Anandamūrti, *Ananda Sūtram*, 10–12. An expanded version is contained in Shrii Shrii Ānandamūrti, *Ānanda Mārga—Philosophy in a Nutshell*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Saṅgha, 1988), 22–51. On the fact that the human body itself is a significant, distinguishing factor when comparing humans to other embodied organic beings see also M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 1962) cited in Michael Jackson, *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 119.
94. Padoux, “The Śrīcakra According to the First Chapter of the *Yoginīhṛdaya*,” 238 and Padoux, “Maṇḍalas in Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka*,” 233.
95. *Śākta Darśan* (15, 1, 30) cited in Khanna, *Yantra*, 128.
96. Ānandamūrti, unpublished manuscript, 5.
97. For the purpose of initiation, most Ānanda Mārga *sannyāsis* use an image of the *pratīka* printed with ink on paper.
98. Khanna, *Yantra*, 91, plate 53.
99. James H. Sanford, “Wind, Waters, Stupas, Mandalas: Fetal Buddhahood in Shingon,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24, nos. 1–2 (Spring 1997): 9–10.



100. Ānandamūrti, unpublished manuscript, 5–6 and Anandamurti, *Ananda Sutram*, 30.
101. Ānandamūrti, unpublished manuscript, 6.
102. Ibid.
103. A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:4.
104. Bühnemann, “Maṇḍala, Yantra and Cakra: Some Observations,” 31–32.
105. Ibid., 33.
106. A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:7.
107. Ānanda Mārga informant, personal communication, June 11, 1984. McDaniel says that one of the “most important times for worship of the goddesses in West Bengal” is the night of *amāvāsyā*. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, 92.
108. Ānanda Mārga informant, personal communication, June 11, 1984.
109. See David N. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas: Two Lost Śaivite Sects*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991).
110. Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 2:62. Another tantric practice utilizes a garland of human skulls (*kaunkālamāla*). See Ibid., 2:91.
111. Ānandamūrti, *Ānanda Vacanāmrtam*, 5:99.
112. A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:72.
113. He also stated that the significance of the term *kāpālika* became “distorted” after its original use. A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:107.
114. For an overview of Madhyamika philosophy see Hsueh-Li Cheng, “The Roots of Zen Buddhism,” [http://www.buddhistinformation.com/roots\\_of\\_zen\\_buddhism.htm](http://www.buddhistinformation.com/roots_of_zen_buddhism.htm).
115. Ibid.
116. A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:163.
117. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, 87.
118. Ibid., 89, 92.
119. Woodroffe, *Mahānirvāna Tantra*, 209n1.
120. A'nandamu'rti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 1:9.
121. Ibid., 2:257–258.
122. The *pāśas* play a central role in the Tamil school of Śaiva-Siddhānta. See H el ene Brunner, “J n ana and Kriy a: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaiv agamas,” in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of Andr e Padoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992),

- 11–13 and Mark S. G. Dyczkowski, *The Stanzas on Vibration: The Spandakārikā with Four Commentaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 5.
123. Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 2:63, editorial footnote (no number).
124. *Ibid.*, 2:27.
125. *Ibid.* Note that the diacritical system in this block quote follows the usage in the source.
126. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, 86.
127. Ānanda Mārga informant, personal communication, June 11, 1984.
128. *Ibid.*.
129. P. R. Sarkar, *Discourses on Mahabharata*, 2nd ed. (Calcutta: Ānanda Mārga Pracāraka Saṁgha, 1991), 47. According to C. Rajagopalachari's version of the *Mahābhārata*, Kṛṣṇa caused darkness before the sun had set so that Jayadratha would be mistaken about the time of day and come out of hiding. See C. Rajagopalachari, *Mahabharata* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1962), 279.
130. See also P. R. Sarkar's, *Problems of the Day*, 4th ed. (Calcutta: Ananda Marga Publications, 1993), 35.
131. Sanford, "The Abominable Tachikawa Skull Ritual," 10–11.
132. The story is that Zen Master Ikkyū went knocking on people's doors on New Year's Day, waving a skull on a stick at them and wishing them long life. The Japanese public associates Master Ikkyū with skulls and skeletons. One of his best prose works is entitled *Gaikotsu* (Skeletons). See James H. Sanford, *Zen-Man Ikkyū*, Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, Studies in World Religions Number 2, ed. Jane I. Smith (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1981), chap. 5 and pp. 40, 272–276.
133. Shingon was transmitted to Japan from China by its founder Kūkai (744–835) in the early 800s. Sanford, *Zen-Man Ikkyū*, 44.
134. Sanford, "The Abominable Tachikawa Skull Ritual," 2–4.
135. *Ibid.*, 4.
136. *Ibid.*, 10, 15.
137. *Ibid.*, 10, 15.
138. *Ibid.*, 5.
139. *Ibid.*, 15–16.
140. *Ibid.*, 15.
141. McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls*, 88.
142. On the use of reddish-brown cinnabar as an enlivening agent in the Tachikawa Skull Ritual, see Sanford, "The Abominable Tachikawa Skull Ritual," 12.

143. Baba Hari Dass's Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas divide their interpretation of the *pañcha makāras* into four categories. At the subtlest level *madya* is drinking the intoxicating knowledge of God through the secretions of the higher glands. *Māṃsa* is control of speech. *Matsya* is controlling *prāṇā* through *prāṇāyāma*. *Mudrā* signifies ritual leading to the dissolution of the mind at *sahasrāra cakra*. *Maithuna* is achieved by raising *kuṇḍalinī* to effect the union of Śiva and Śakti. Ānanda Mārgiis see the *pañcha makāras* as having either crude or a number of subtle interpretations. Their subtle interpretation for the first three items is identical with that of the Vairāgī Vaiṣṇavas. *Mudrā* is taken to mean a mental position or determination to keep company with spiritual persons. Their interpretations of *maithuna* are the same. See Sarasvati Buhman, "Tantra Study Guide Notes" (unpublished work), 108 and Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 2:48–51.

144. *Ibid.*, 1:240–241.

145. Anandamurti, *Ananda Sutram*, 1–3.

146. Ānandamūrti distinguished between the interpretation of yoga offered by Patañjali and that of tantra. He said, "According to Patanjali yoga is the suspension of mental propensities," while in tantra yoga signifies the union of supreme consciousness and unit or individual consciousness. See Ānandamūrti, *Discourses on Tantra*, 2:104. An expansion of this topic is available in 2:194–213.

147. Ānanda Mārga informant, personal communication, June 11, 1984.