

Sanjukta Gupta, *Lakṣmī Tantra: A Pāñcarātra Text, Translation and notes with introduction*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, first Indian edition, 2000 (first edition, Netherlands, 1972), xxxix+398 Pp., Index and Appendix, Rs. 295 (Paper).

This is an English translation of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* (= L.T.), a text belonging to the Pāñcarātra, the oldest surviving Viṣṇuite sect. It was first published in the Netherlands in 1972. This edition has been published by Motilal Banarsidass, the world famous Delhi publisher as the first Indian edition. The theological and ritualistic aspects of this sect have attracted some scholarly attention in recent years. Among them F.O. Schrader is regarded as a pioneer. His work (*Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and the Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā*, Madras: Adyar Library, 1916) still ranks as the most comprehensive. Dr. Sanjukta Gupta can be said to be his successor because her book is of such a high standard. Not only the English translation but also the many notes and the introduction are very useful for aspirants who want to explore the domain of Tantrism and Viṣṇuism. I also entered the field of the Pāñcarātra after reading this book. I was lucky enough to receive her guidance in the study of the *Sātvata Saṃhitā*, a fundamental text of the Pāñcarātra at Oxford.

Among the many books of the Pāñcarātra sect, the *Lakṣmī Tantra* deals exclusively with the Viṣṇuite mother-goddess Lakṣmī, the Śakti of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. In this text, the supremacy of Lakṣmī as equal to Viṣṇu is achieved by emphasizing the unity in duality, the two-in-one (*advaya*), accepted by the Śākta theorists. The term *tantra*, in a narrow sense, denotes a Śākta text. So there is a strict relationship of this text with other Śākta texts. In regard to the Vyūha theory, it follows the tradition of the *Sātvata Saṃhitā* and proceeds to elaborate on its philosophy. In regard to the ritualistic aspect of worship, it follows the tradition of the *Jayākhya Saṃhitā*, in which worship of Viṣṇu and His consort Lakṣmī take up the central position. Concerning the date of the *Lakṣmī Tantra*, Dr. Gupta assumed some time between the ninth and twelfth centuries in the original edition, but has shifted the date forward to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century in the Indian edition. Concerning its place of origin, she does not draw a clear conclusion from two pieces of evidence: the first is the bark of the Himalayan birch tree (*bhūrja*) and the second is the Malaya range situated in the South.

Although the *Lakṣmī Tantra* tries to follow the pattern of four divisions, *jñāna*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *caryā*, the *kriyā-pāda* (a section of the installation of the images) appears only in 49.62-149 and the *caryā-pāda* (a section of the performance of daily worship) is reduced. The term *kriyā-pāda* is used in the unusual sense of *upāsana* and *ārādhana* (the ritual worship of God, p. xxi, L.T. 53.1). The *jñāna-pāda* (a section of higher knowledge which gives access to final emancipation), on the contrary, occupies almost one third of the entire treatise. This text, not following any particular philosophical system, incorporates various sources such as Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, Mahāyāna Buddhism, etc. and attempts to make them into a synthesis. The main purpose of the author of this text is to establish the supremacy of Śakti (Lakṣmī) as the basic philosophical principle. Brahman is the state of the Absolute where all God's qualities are latent like a 'waveless ocean', whereas in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa state all these qualities are manifest. In this state Brahman is polarized into the divine power (*śakti*) and the possessor of this power (*śaktimat*). Lakṣmī or Śakti is an integral part of the God Nārāyaṇa. She is inseparable from Him but not absolutely identical to Him. The relationship between God and Śakti is explained as 'I-entity' (*ahamartha*) and 'I-hood' (*ahaṃtā*), or 'the existent (principle)' (*bhavat*) and 'the state of existence' (*bhāva*).

Several distinguished features are seen in the *Lakṣmī Tantra*. Most of them have already been explained in the introduction of this book. I would like to add further features to these. The first is that this text admits even a Śūdra as an initiate if he is devoted to Viṣṇu (p. 118, L.T. 21.39). This text, however, does not oppose the caste system. It keeps that system, saying, for example, "performance of one's duties as befitting one's caste" (p. 80, L.T. 15.17a: *svajātivihitaṃ karma*), "painted according to the social class" (p. 123, L.T. 23.6a: *varṇānurūpa-varṇāḍhye*), "three social classes" (p. 129, L.T. 24.19d: *varṇās trayah sarvāḥ*). The second is that it admits the right of a woman to be initiated if she obtains her husband's permission (p. 118, L.T. 21.40-41). The right of young unmarried girls (*kanyā*) and married women (*strī*) to be initiated receives special emphasis (p. 270, fn. 4, L.T. 41.13ab). Since this text insists on the inseparability of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, women are highly esteemed in several places such as p. 148 (L.T. 27.42-48), p. 282 (L.T. 42.37-38) and pp. 291-292 (L.T. 43.60-77). Such esteem is regarded as the supreme secret rule of the tantra (L.T. 43.59c: *tantrasya paramaṃ guhyaṃ vratam*). Moreover the Vaiṣṇava couple (*dampatī*) is also highly esteemed (p. 284, L.T. 42.61). So the *Lakṣmī Tantra* should not be taught to those who are against married couples or who hate women (p. 372, L.T. 57.50ab). The third is the relationship of this text with other sects. Such terms as the Buddhist and Jaina systems (p. 113, L.T. 20.50: *baudhair ārhatair*), the Sauras (p. 138, L.T. 25.42: *saure*), the Jains (p. 138, L.T. 25.44: *ārhatais*) and the Lokāyata (p. 138, L.T. 25.43) appear in this text. But the most striking feature is the close relationship of the text with the Śaivism, in particular the Pāśupata sect. Such terms as Pāśupata (p. 5, L.T. 1.42; p. 268, L.T. 40.119), Paśupati (p. 372, L.T. 57.53) and mercury (p. 312, L.T. 46.28: *rasendra*), the forefather of the Rudras (p.339, L.T. 50.52: *rudrāṇaṃ pravaraḥ*), Śaivas (p. 138, L.T. 25.41) appear in this text. Dr. Sanjukta Gupta indicates the possibility that the Pāśupata

sect was influential in the same region as the Pāñcarātra (p. 5, fn. 3). In the Pāśuptatas, the oldest Śivaite tradition in the North, the ascetic tendencies were remarkable. Moreover they emphasized the monotheism in spite of the closeness of their doctrine to those of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga. So the author of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* might have preferred this sect.

I agree with most of her opinions concerning this text. But I would like to indicate two points upon which we differ. The first is on the origin of this text. Although Dr. Sanjukta Gupta does not draw a clear conclusion, she seems to indicate the possibility that this text may have originated in a colder region like Kashmir (p. 249, fn. 2), referring to the use of tepid water (*uṣṇāmbu*, L.T. 39.9a). But the reviewer takes note of the two Vedic Schools of Kāṇva and Mādhyandina of the White Yajurveda on page 277 (L.T. 41.69 preserved only in the Telugu printed edition). These two are considered to have settled in some Middle India regions such as Orissa, Vidarbha, Gujarat, etc. See M. Witzel, "Regionale und überregionale Farktoren in der Entwicklung vedischer Brahmanen-gruppen in Mittelalter (Materiallien zu den vedischen Schulen, 5)", *Regionale Tradition in Südasien*, herausgegeben von H. Kulke und D. Rothermund, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1985, pp. 41 and 51. The *Jayākhya Saṃhitā* which originated in Middle India (p. 242, fn. 4) was the basic text of the *Lakṣmī Tantra*. Therefore, this text might have originated in Middle India.

The second point is with regard to the verse 11.34cd (*vāhanāni vicitrāṇi satyādyāni sureśvara*). She says that Satya cannot be the name of any vehicle belonging to a deity (p. 61, fn. 2), but Satya is enumerated as one of the vehicles of Viṣṇu in the *Sātvata Saṃhitā* 12.178ab (*satyaḥ suvarṇo garuḍas tārksyaś ca vihageśvaraḥ*), 24.229cd (*sapaḥsam imam āyāmaṃ sātyaṃ tv avayavānvitam*) and 25.43c (*yajet satyādikam tatra*). Hence, it is indeed true that Satya is the name of the vehicle.

It is surprising that there were so few mistakes in typing her manuscript at the time of writing, when computer technology was not yet highly developed. Some misprints are to be enumerated with their corrections in brackets; entail (p. 96, fn. 2: entail), O Śureśvara (pp. 126, verse 35 and 127, verse 9: O Sureśvara), Māya (p. 175, verse 69: Māyā), adhāracakras, adhārapadmas (p. 182, fn. 3: ādhāracakras, ādhārapadmas), sukṣmā (p. 189, verse 15: sūkṣmā), Tārika (p. 209, verse 61: Tārikā), durvā (p. 245, verse 71: dūrṅvā), paryaṅkāśana (p. 248, fn. 1: paryāṅkāśana), ucāṭana (p. 262, fn. 5: uccāṭana), the should (p. 310, verse 2-17: he should), al (p. 350, verse 168-169: all).

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