

**Silvia Schwarz Linder. *Goddess Traditions in India: Theological Poems and Philosophical Tales in the Tripurārahasya*. pp. 316.  
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Silvia Schwarz Linder's monograph entitled *Goddess Traditions in India: Theological Poems and Philosophical Tales in the Tripurārahasya* (The Secret [Doctrine] of [the Goddess] Tripurā), opens with an Introduction, and is divided into three parts: 1) Myths and Rituals; 2) Philosophical and Theological Teachings; and 3) Synopsis of the *Māhātmyakaṇḍa* of the *Tripurārahasya*: With an Annotated Translation of the *Stotras* and of Selected Passages. It is further supplemented with a Bibliography, Index of the translated passages and *stotras*, and a General Index.

The Introduction, organized under five heads, sets up the field of enquiry by briefly describing *Tripurārahasya*, the text in focus, and providing basic information regarding its nature, mythical provenance and transmission, textual antecedents and sources, time and place of origin and composition, editions and translations. The text described by the author as of South Indian origin, may be dated between 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> CE, and belongs, to use Alexis Sanderson's classification, to the Kulamārga tradition in its Dakṣiṇāmnāya current (Sanderson 2012–2013). The cult of the goddess Tripurā has as its authoritative scriptures two Kashmirian texts, *Nityāṣoḍaśīkārṇava* and *Yoginīhṛdaya*, both from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. When the cult spread to

South India, it came to include the Kashmirian Śaiva non-dualist elements of the main schools of Pratyabhijñā and Spanda which were introduced therein by the South Indian exegetes (13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century) of the Kashmirian works. With time, the cult of Tripurā, known also as Śrīvidyā, was incorporated into the local cult of goddesses Lalitā / Kāmākṣī of Kāñcīpuram. As Schwarz Linder points out, once the cult of Tripurā was adopted by the Śaṅkarācāryas of Śṛṅgeri and Kāñcī, the superimposition of the local Advaita Vedānta notions on the Kashmirian non-dualism soon followed.

Noting striking absence of references to the *Tripurārahasya* (TR) in other texts and lack of quotations from it in the related literature, Schwarz Linder highlights the isolated nature of the text despite its popularity in many regions of India and its many translations into the vernaculars. Though not studied in depth till now, the TR has had several editions and has been translated into English, German, French and Italian.

As far as the structure of the TR is concerned, it consists of three sections: the *māhātmyakhaṇḍa* (mk) divided into eighty chapters and having *Lalitāmāhātmya* as its final part; *jñānakhaṇḍa* (jk) of twenty-two chapters; and, as the text itself states, *caryākhaṇḍa*, which, however, is not extant and the very existence of which is doubtful. But, as the extant form of the TR is shorter than the self-professed 12000 verses, it is possible that originally it indeed consisted of all three mentioned parts. The author dedicates one section of the Introduction to address this issue as the absence of one part of the text could have had an impact on the shape and content of the other two parts.

As is the case with many other texts of this kind, the TR contains a *śāstrāvatāra* section which outlines text's mythical descent from Śiva himself and its further transmission, right up to its final ascription to its author, Sumedha Hāritāyana. He, being the disciple of Paraśurāma, was initiated into the worship of Tripurā in the Śrīvidyā manner. In this story, involving personages such as Dattātreyā and Saṁvarta, ascetics possessing features of Tantric practitioners, *sādhakas*, Schwarz Linder discerns an attempt to acknowledge

transgressive aspects lying at the root of the Tripurā tradition. However, these elements disappear later from the Śrīvidyā of the South.<sup>1</sup> In Schwarz Linder's opinion, the Tantric elements in the TR do not necessarily speak for the antiquity of the text but rather point to an attempt at keeping distance from the Smārta devotees of the goddess.

While presenting textual sources of the TR, the author tries to establish the probable, relative date of the text. She discerns influences of the Pratyabhijñā, acknowledged also in the one extant commentary on the jk of the TR titled *Tātparyadīpikā* (1832) and written by Śrīnivāsaḥṭṭa who, in turn, evokes such authors as Vasugupta (c. 800–850 CE), Somānanda (c. 875/900–925/950 CE), Utpaladeva (c. 900/925–950/975 CE), Abhinavagupta (c. 975–1025 CE) and Kṣemarāja (c. 1000–1050 CE). In the case of the mk section titled *Lalitāmāhātmya* (LM), Schwarz Linder mentions as its possible source the *Lalitopākhyana* (LU) of the *Brāhmāṇḍapurāṇa* (BP), thus the part of the BP which was probably composed in Kāñcī in 13<sup>th</sup> c. CE. Whereas the source for the description of the *śrīcakrapūjā* seems to be the *Yoginīhṛdaya*, the TR refers also to Puranic sources, for example, by mentioning myths of several deities belonging to the pan-Indian pantheon, while perceiving them as manifestations of the supreme goddess, Tripurā. Schwarz Linder highlights here possible connections with the ideas found in the *Yogavasiṣṭha*, probably a later form of the Kashmirian version of the *Mokṣopāya* (10<sup>th</sup> c. CE).

Plausible date for the composition of the TR is given as sometime between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the place of origin could be South India. For example, the text mentions Mīnākṣi temple at Madurai as well as a Paraśurāma hermitage in the Malabar country. But there are also indications of the North Indian provenance for its teachings. These initial remarks are enlarged on in the subsequent parts of the book.

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<sup>1</sup> Some interesting observations concerning the relations between the North Indian and the South Indian Śrīvidyā were offered by André Padoux, see Padoux 1998.

Part I (Myth and Ritual) is divided into four chapters. The first elaborates on the tradition's affiliation with the Śrīvidyā and the non-dualist Pratyabhijñā in the context of the mk of the TR. Relevant section of the TR provides brief descriptions of *dīkṣā*, *pūjā* and *mantra* of the goddess. The cursory way of describing these ritual elements here could be, in Schwarz Linder's opinion, a by-product of the one-time existence of the now lost, but possibly more detailed *caryākhaṇḍa* (ck), or, if this part of the text had never existed, the result of the general character of the TR itself. Schwarz Linder's reasons for recapitulating the TR account of the above-mentioned rituals is to explain and interpret their meaning, and show their specificity. She then turns to the *mantra* of Tripurā. It is a fifteen-syllable chant, i.e., *pañcadaśākṣarī*, with two main iterations, but has also another iteration consisting of sixteen-syllable, i.e., *ṣoḍaśākṣarī*. Both forms of the *mantra* are presented in the TR within narrative contexts.

Since Tripurā is identified with Śrī (Lakṣmī), Schwarz Linder sees this as an example of the interplay of Tantric and Puranic traditions. She writes (p. 25):

The affinity between Tripurā and Lakṣmī asserted in both the TR and the LU, should be understood in the context of the interplay between Tantric traditions and Purāṇic, popular religion in medieval India. The mutual influences between these two streams of Hinduism impacted the relationships between Tantric and Purāṇic deities in general and goddesses in particular. The TR provides a good instance of this phenomenon.

While discussing the *pūjā* segment, Schwarz Linder refers to Tantric, but also Vedic rituals, especially as in the mk itself Dattātreya declares that there is no difference between Veda and Tantra, though Tantric ritual is superior. She draws further attention to some other references to Veda, while acknowledging the impact of the LU whereby Vedic, Puranic and Tantric elements are clearly visible. She (p. 30) explains:

The presence of these hybrid rituals might have been meant by the author(s) of the TR as a means of exemplifying, through vivid narrative devices, on the one hand the statement of principle that there was no difference between Veda and Tantra and, on the other, the actual integration of Vedic elements in Tantric ritualism.

The description of the crucial *śrīcakrapūjā* in the TR is not very detailed but clearly it is at the centre of the cult as set out in this text. While discussing the *pūjā*, Schwarz Linder draws attention to the specific role and usage of the *sarvatobhadra maṇḍala*, which seems to be a Smārta element. Overall, she makes note of the incompleteness of the ritual descriptions in the mk of the TR, which, for example, may again speak in favour of the existence of the missing *caryākhaṇḍa*.

In the next chapter of Part I, Schwarz Linder concentrates on the description of the iconic form of the goddess, represented mostly by the aniconic Śrīcakra. She points out that the iconic form of Tripurā began to appear in South India in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in bronze sculptures, while as a temple image, it appears only in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. She also notes the differences in the descriptions found in the *Nityaṣoḍaśikārṇava* and the *Yoginīhrdaya*. The description in the TR is definitely of a higher literary and poetical character and value than in the other texts. The idea that the goddess is incomprehensible in her supreme, extramundane manifestation and needs to appear in a tangible, corporeal form to allow devotion, reveals a strong *bhakti* influence. Schwarz Linder meticulously analyzes elements of the Tripurā iconography with reference to source material and earlier scholarship regarding similarities in the iconographies of Tripurā, Lalitā and Kāmākṣī. Her novel findings help in understanding the relationship between different traditions and possible references to the pantheon of the Trika.

Next chapter is dedicated to Tripurā as Kāmākṣī and her connection with Kāma whom she restored to life. In the TR perception, Kāma is Tripurā's son but also her foremost devotee and one who knows her *vidyā*. The identification of Tripurā with Kāmākṣī is ra-

tionalized by way of Tripurā's absorbing Kāma into her eyes (*akṣi*) so as to protect him from Śiva's glance. Thus, she is called Kāmākṣī. Noting the differences between Puranic versions and the TR, Schwarz Linder writes (p. 55):

In the TR instead, while the true Kāma dwells safely in Tripurā's eyes, it is only his replica that is sent to Śiva; this replica is represented by his physical body (*śarīra*, *deha*), which is summoned by the Goddess and addressed by the name of Kāma.

At the same time, she points out differences in the interpretation of the name Kāmākṣī in the TR and LU, the latter being closer to Puranic tradition and interpreting the name as "the one from whose eyes (*akṣi*) Sarasvatī (*kā*) and Lakṣmī (*mā*) were born." The Lalitā form of Tripurā seems to represent her fierce aspect, manifest in her fight and victory over the demon Bhaṇḍa. The description of it constitutes a large part of the mk. As Schwarz Linder sums up (p. 59):

Lalitā, endowed as she is with the contrasting qualities of martial valour, charm and mercifulness, may be recognized as a personification of the archetype of the "murderous mother."

The TR presents Bhaṇḍa as an *aṁśa* (part) of Kāma and a product of Kāma's ashes; thus Bhaṇḍa, too, is perceived as Lalitā's devotee, and therefore his death from the arrow of the goddess brings him liberation. Schwarz Linder follows several threads of the goddess' relation with demons and Śiva, evoking, among others, David Shulman's observations on the goddess's fight which might result in a marriage transforming a fierce woman warrior into a gentle bride.

In the last chapter of Part I, Schwarz Linder presents the concept, as well as the description, of the Island of Jewels, the Śrīpura and the Śrīcakra, and analyzes those on the basis of different sources. She identifies certain mutual influences between different texts as well as the interrelations of different forms of the goddess, of which Lalitā is the one to be installed on the Śrīcakra throne.

Part II of the book is again made up of four chapters. First, devoted to the discussion of the immanent and transcendent features of Tripurā, concentrates on the philosophical and theological teachings of the TR, referring mostly to the jk. In the case of the TR, teachings are “set out within the frame of dramatic dialogues and philosophical tales” (p. 101). The goddess Tripurā is immediately identified with and conceptualized as the highest reality being the *brahman* and the *pranava*; she is the embodiment of the supreme consciousness. Schwarz Linder follows the TR explanations referring to, besides the Trika works of Kashmirian Śaivas, other sources of the tradition. In the TR, superiority of the goddess over Śiva is claimed and she is presented as being beyond masculine-feminine dichotomy. She is envisioned as pervading the whole world. Schwarz Linder notes the apparent paradox of the simultaneous all-pervading presence and the absolute aloofness and otherness of the goddess with regard to the world. This is explained in the text of the TR as the effect of her wonderful, magic power (*māyā*):

You show your own form in that which is different from it: all this manifold extension of worlds that is contained, in various ways, in a portion of a small part of your body. This is your *māyā*... [80]

O mother, you have the nature of *māyā*, because in your pure body you pass for the multifarious world; although you take manifold forms, [you are] the imperceptible *śakti*, whose unique form is Consciousness... [81]

As some of these concepts are treated in the mk of the TR as well, the two *khaṇḍas* must be considered together while presenting philosophical ideas of the text.

In the next chapter, Schwarz Linder analyses the reformulation of the *svātantryavāda*—the concept of the absolute freedom and independence of the goddess, and *ābhāsavāda*—the concept of the world as manifestation or reflection projected by consciousness within itself / herself. The concepts present in Kashmirian thought appear also in the TR, which speaks for yet another Trika influence on the TR tradition. However, Schwarz Linder hypothesizes on an addi-

tional influence coming possibly from a different philosophical background, such as idealism and illusionism of the *Mokṣopāya/Yogavasiṣṭha*. Making note of several related sources defining the nature of the goddess, Schwarz Linder writes (p. 125):

To conclude, the similarities between certain statements of the TR and some formulations of the MU/YV which have been remarked above can certainly be explained by acknowledging the presence of several influences from different sources, and particularly in the case of a text like the TR, whose philosophical teachings make it difficult to classify according to one exclusive doctrinal standpoint. Moreover, the inconsistencies within the text of the TR may be the result of interpolations, which are, however, difficult to ascertain.

Having said that, Schwarz Linder turns in the next chapter to the concept of speech as expounded in Abhinavagupta's works and present in the TR, especially in Hymn in Praise of the Mother-Energy of the Phonemes, i.e. *mātrkāstuti*; here the goddess is perceived as sound. Among possible sources for the TR ideas, the author mentions Pāñcarātrika texts of the *Ahīrbudhnyasamhitā* and the *Lakṣmītantra*. Similarities are visible in the depiction of Tripurā/Gāyatrī in the jk which differs from the descriptions of Tripurā found in the mk of the TR. Schwarz observes (p. 140):

[...] it is also unusual in terms of the related literature. To my knowledge, the only other instances of similar images of the body of the Goddess occur in the AS and in the LT, both Pāñcarātra works are clearly influenced by the doctrines of the Trika.

Yet another Trika concept present in the TR is the notion of six pathways, i.e., *ṣaḍadhvans*, those being the ways whereby universe manifests itself.

The TR's doctrine of liberation, discussed in the fourth chapter of Part II, refers to the concept of *jīvanmukti*, which seems to be the most widely postulated method of attaining salvation. That being so, the type of liberation in death attained by Bhaṇḍa may be considered



most suitable for a demon, who, as Schwarz Linder points out, cannot expect to access the state of the *jīvanmukti*, it being the type of emancipation reserved solely for humans. The description of the figure of the *jīvanmukta* is again presented through the framework of mythological stories. It is specific to the TR that the *jīvanmukta* is shown as consciously participating in ordinary human life and in the world viewed as consisting of substances and reflected in the mirror of his own self as in the mirror of divine consciousness. Such an analogy frequently appears in the TR; therefore, it seems to be an appropriate metaphor for representing encounter with the goddess as an act of mirroring equal to an act of self-recognition.

Schwarz Linder, while presenting the teachings of the TR, comments also on one noteworthy feature of the text, namely its highly literary character. In this context, she draws on Hanneder's reflections on the MU and YH (Hanneder 2006) thus (p. 150):

This use of narrative as a soteriological method through which the teachings are incorporated and somehow enacted in the stories, illustrated by the characters and rooted in their life experiences, is linked with a major characteristic of both the TR and the MU/YV: these are not systematic philosophical treatises, but provide a progressive exposition of tenets, whose possible inconsistencies may be explained by what Hanneder called a "gradation of instruction."

Thereafter, the author discusses and analyses the TR teachings concerning the steps leading to liberation.

Part III of the book presents abbreviated synopsis of the mk of the TR supplemented with annotated translation of selected *stotras* and narrative passages. Of course, the choice of the textual material to be translated and its inclusion in the book is a prerogative of the author, with the reader compelled to rely on her choice. As one would expect of an academic work, material selected for translation bears direct relation to matters discussed in other parts of the book. Altogether, Schwarz Linder offers 27 narrative episodes, each with a descriptive title, and each providing, on one hand, illustrations to topics discussed earlier, and on the other, a taste of text's literary

flavor. For example, Schwarz Linder brings in the whole *śāstrāvātāra* passage and follows it with the presentation of the spiritual teachers appearing in the text; other passages concern Tripurā herself, the story of Kāma, marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, Kāmākṣī, etc., all extensive quotations providing rich source material for analyses presented in part I and II of the book.

Schwarz Linder's original study of the *Tripurārahasya* is a fine work of academic scholarship which meticulously analyses and contextualizes the TR, notes similarities and divergencies in regard to other related texts and accentuates the interplay between different Tantric traditions discernible in the related sources, as well as its links with Tantric and Puranic traditions. It brings out intricate connections between different forms of the goddess, traces appropriations of various elements by different forms of the goddess and processes that lead to changes in their appearance. The same is achieved through resourceful utilization of many different source materials, all analyzed and employed as tools for interpreting doctrines set out in the TR. I personally find this attempt of contextualizing the TR ideas within a more variegated body of texts referring to the Śaiva/Śakta tradition a valuable contribution to the study of goddesses' cults in India.

I found the translations from Sanskrit largely accurate and noticed very few mistakes or typos. To list some: on p. 180, in the footnote, I would rather transcribe *tathā bhūtā devī* as *tathābhūtā devī*; also, I am not sure how the author divides the compound (?) *bhaktehāsamadhikaphalotpādacature* in verse 70. Besides, I noticed typos such as: p. 67, footnote 323, where *strīsvabhāvavivargitā* should be given *strīsvabhāvavivarjitā*; p. 77 and 78 *cintāmaṇigṛha* should be actually *cintāmaṇigṛha*.

Silvia Schwarz Linder's book is a testimony to the growing academic interest in the still poorly researched South Indian sources. Being the very first attempt to analyse and interpret one of important texts of the South Indian Śrīvidyā tradition, presenting it in the broader context of the related literature and bringing valuable in-

terpretations supported by translations of crucial passages, it definitely deserves wide scholarly attention.

## References

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