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**Tantric Elements Embedded in a Purāṇic Context: the Example of the *Māhātmyakhaṇḍa* of the *Tripurārahasya***

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*Tripurārahasya* (TR) (South India, c. 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century CE, if not later), associated with the Śākta tradition of Tripurā, later known as Śrīvidyā. Two extant sections of the work: *māhātmyakhaṇḍa* (*mk*) and *jñānakhaṇḍa* (*jk*).

***Dīksā***

TR, *mk*, 1, 42c-51b: *atha taṃ rāma āhūya vatseti madhurasvaram* || 42cd || *puṣpāñjalim prayojyāgra\*sthita* (em. *sthitā*) *haimāsane śubhe* | *yā bālā tripurā proktā lalitā śrīkumārikā* || 43 || *tasyā vapurvāṇmayam yat tac chiṣyāya pradattavān* | *sāṅgaṃ pūṭhaṃ samabhyarcya nānāvibhavahetubhiḥ* || 44 || *prajaptadivyakalaśatoyaiḥ sasnāpya mārgataḥ* | *pāśatrayam api chitvā cāddivāsya nisāṃ tataḥ* || 45 || *grāhayāmāsa tadrūpaṃ ādhāratrayaśobhitam* | *dvādaśādyam turyamadhyam avasānacaturdaśam* || 46 || *tridhāsthitaṃ ca tadrūpaṃ tathā caryākramaṃ śubham* | *ācārakramamudrādi rahasyam akhilaṃ kramāt* || 47 || *mūrdhahṛṇmūladeśeṣu prasādaviniojanam* | *svātmāgnāvāhutim tattvatrayāṇaṃ kramaśo'bravīt* || 48 || *iti procya samādiśya tatsādhanavidhau tataḥ* | *vatsa itad brahma paramaṃ sādhasvāvilambitam* || 49 || *tataḥ pūrṇapadaṃ tubhyaṃ dadāmy acirakālataḥ* | *iti samprāptasarvasvarahasyo hāritāyanaḥ* || 50 || *triḥ parikramya natvā taṃ śrīśailaṃ prāviśad drutam* | 51ab.

"Now [Paraśu] Rāma summoned [Sumedha] calling him 'my dear child' with a sweet voice [and] offered flowers with opened and hollowed hands [to the Goddess] seated on the top of a splendid, golden throne, she who is called Bālā, Tripurā, Lalitā, Śrīkumārikā. [42c-43] After having worshipped [her] throne with all its paraphernalia by means of various rich items, he gave to [his] disciple that which is her form made of word (i.e. her *mantra*). [44] [Once he had] whispered [the *mantra*], he made [the disciple] bathe with the waters of a consecrated pot in the proper way, he cut off the threefold bond, then he made [him] settle for the night. [45] He made [him] learn the [Goddess's] form adorned with a threefold support [made of] the twelve, the fourth and the fourteen [elements which are] at the beginning, middle and end [respectively], [46] and also her form consisting of three parts, [namely] the righteous rules of conduct (*caryā*), the method of [ritual] practice (*ācāra*) beginning with the *mudrās*, and, according to order, the entire secret (*rahasya*) [doctrine of the Goddess]. [47] He gradually taught [him how] to assign the [divine] favour to the places of the head, the heart and the *mūlādhāracakra* (i.e. the bottom of the spine) [and how] to

offer the oblation of the three *tattvas* in the fire of one's own self. [48] After having thus taught and communicated that discipline (*sādhana*) and prescribed rites, then [he said]: 'O child conquer without delay this supreme *brahman*, [49] thus I will soon grant you an accomplished rank.' Once he had obtained the whole secret, Hārītāyana, after having circumambulated [Paraśurāma] three times and bowed to him, quickly reached Śrīśaila. [50-51b]".

## Mantra

### *pañcadaśākṣarī*

KA E Ī LA HRĪM  
HA SA KA HA LA HRĪM  
SA KA LA HRĪM

TR, *mk*, 24, 50c-54b: *nāmastotre sunihitā guptā pañcadaśātmikā* || 50cd || *navadhā saṁsthitā tatra dviṣaṇnāmasamāśrayā* | *ādyam ādye-vasau-tryake (em. trayodaśake?) pañcamaṁ vedadiṅmanau* || 51 || *ṣaṣṭhaṁ rasāṅkayor antyam aśve sūrye ca saṁsthitam* | *dvitīyayuktam etāvāt tṛtīyaṅ ca caturthakam* || 52 || *dvitīye tatpare sthāne bhūtarudratithau sthitam* | *ṣaṣṭhasaptamaturyāṅyāṅ yogam aṣṭamasamṣrutam* || 53 || *etan mahākāraṇaṁ vai tripurārūpam adbhutam* | 54ab.

"The [*vidyā*] consisting of fifteen [syllables is] well established [and] concealed in the hymn of the [108] names. [50cd] There (i.e. in the hymn of the 108 names) [it is] ninefold, relating to eight [series of] names. [51ab] The first [letter] (i.e. KA) [is] in the beginning (i.e. in place one in the *pañcadaśākṣarī*), in the Vasus (i.e. in place eight) [and] in [place] thirteen. The fifth [letter] (i.e. LA) [is] in the *Veda* (i.e. in place four), in the directions (i.e. in place ten) [and] in the Manus (i.e. in place fourteen). [51cd] The sixth [letter] (i.e. HA) [is] in the tastes (i.e. in place six) and in the goad (i.e. in place nine). The last [letter] (i.e. SA) [is] placed in the horse (i.e. in place seven) and in the Sun (i.e. in place twelve). [52ab] Truly the third, [the letter] E is connected with the second [place]. And the fourth [letter] (i.e. Ī) [52cd] [is] in the place following the second (i.e. in place three). The combination of the sixth (i.e. HA), the seventh (i.e. RA) and the fourth (i.e. Ī) [letters] connected with the eighth [letter] (i.e. AM) (= HRĪM) [is] placed in the elements (i.e. in place five), in the Rudras (i.e. in place eleven) [and] in the lunar days (i.e. in place fifteen). [53] Truly this is the great origin, the wonderful form of Tripurā. [54ab]".

### *ṣoḍaśākṣarī*

TR, *mk*, 53, 46-47, 58cd: *śrīvidyety aham ākhyātā śrīpuraṁ me puraṁ bhavet* | *śrīcakraṁ me bhavet cakraṁ śrīkramaḥ syān mama kramaḥ* || 46 || *śrīsūktam etad bhūyān me vidyā śrīṣoḍaśī bhavet* | *mahālakṣmīty ahaṁ khyātā tvattādātmyena saṁsthitā* || 47 || ... *tvam ahaṁ devy ahaṁ tvaṅ ca nāvayor antaraṁ bhavet* || 58cd ||.

*Ibidem*, 55, 57ab, 58ab: *ahaṁ vidyātmikā yat tad bījaṁ te sarvaśobhanam* | *pūrṇā tena samādiṣṭā mahāśrīṣoḍaśākṣarī* || 55 || ... *sūkte'rtharūpā guptāhaṁ madbījaṅ cāpi gopitam* | 57ab ... *nānyat priyataraṁ loke tvatsūktād bhavati kvacit* | 58ab.

"I am known as Śrīvidyā, my city shall be Śrīpura, my diagram shall be the Śrīcakra, the method [of my worship] shall be the Śrīkrama. [46] This Śrīsūkta shall be my *mantra* (*vidyā*) [and] shall be [made of] the sixteen [syllables] of Śrī; I am called Mahālakṣmī because of our sameness of nature. [47] ... You are me, o goddess, and I am you, there shall be no difference between the two of us. [58cd]".

"I am the *vidyā*, which is declared to be complete with your all-auspicious phonic seed (*bīja*, i.e. *śrīm*), [thus becoming] the great *mantra* of Śrī, made of sixteen syllables (*mahāśrīṣoḍaśākṣarī*). [55] ... I am concealed in the [Śrī]sūkta [*mantra*] in the form of [its] meaning and my phonic seed (*bīja*) too is kept secret [57ab] ... Nowhere in the world is there another [*mantra*] dearer than your Sūkta. [58ab]".

### ***Pūjā***

TR, *mk*, 51, 29-33; 55, 26c-31:

- Sacrifice performed by the gods, combining Vedic and Tantric elements. Tripurā manifests out of the sacrificial fire of Consciousness (*cidagni*) burning in the fire-pit located on the altar.

Source:

*Lalitopakhyaṇa* (LU), appendix added to the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* (Kāñcī, early 13<sup>th</sup> century CE).

LU, 10, 88-90; 12, 65c-73:

- Sacrifice performed by the gods, combining Vedic and Tantric elements. Lalitā arises from the fire of the great sacrifice (*mahāyāgānalāt*)

TR, *mk*, 30, 12-16, 30ab:

- Tantric *pūjā* performed by Gaurī.

TR, *mk*, 80:

- Regular worship of Tripurā (*ārādhana*, *nityakriyā*) performed by human devotees.
- Special ritual (*viśeṣa karman*) performed in a temple.

### ***Maṇidvīpa* and Śrīcakra**

TR, *mk*, 54:

- Description of the Island of Jewels (*maṇidvīpa*), rising in the midst of the ocean of nectar, abode of Tripurā.
- The mansion made of gems yielding all desires (*cintāmaṇigṛha*) located at the centre of the island is the pattern according to which Śrīpura, the city-stronghold of Lalitā, is constructed; this pattern is the Śrīcakra.

Purāṇic Sources:

LU, 31-37:

- Description of Śrīpura, the city of Lalitā built on mount Meru, matching with the description of the *maṇidvīpa* in the TR.
- The *cintāmaṇiḡṛha* located at the centre of Śrīpura is the abode of the Śrīcakra.

*Devībhagavatapurāṇa* (DBhPur) (Northeastern India, 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, completed in its final redaction over the course of the succeeding four or five centuries).

DBhPur, XII, 10-12:

- Description of the *maṇidvīpa*, similar but not as detailed as in LU and TR.

Tantric Sources:

*Paraśurāmakalpasūtra* (PKS) (South India, 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century CE).

PKS, 3, 10:

- Outline of the *maṇidvīpa* as a *yantra*.

*Kulārṇavatāntra* (KāT) (South India, after the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE).

KāT, 4, 108c-110a; 6, 13-15:

- Mention of the *maṇidvīpa* as a *yantra*.

TR, *mk*, 56-57:

- Distribution of the *śaktis* of Tripurā's retinue on the geometric, pyramidal structure of the Śrīcakra.

Source:

LU, 36-37:

- Distribution of the deities of Lalitā's retinue on places (*antara*) ascending along the pyramidal structure of the *cintāmaṇiḡṛha*, *alias* Śrīcakra.

Source of both LU and TR:

*Yoginīhr̥daya* (Kashmir, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century CE), third chapter (*pūjāsaṃketa*):

- *śrīcakrapūjā*, cult of Tripurasundarī and of the goddesses of her retinue, surrounding her and dwelling in the constituent parts of the Śrīcakra.